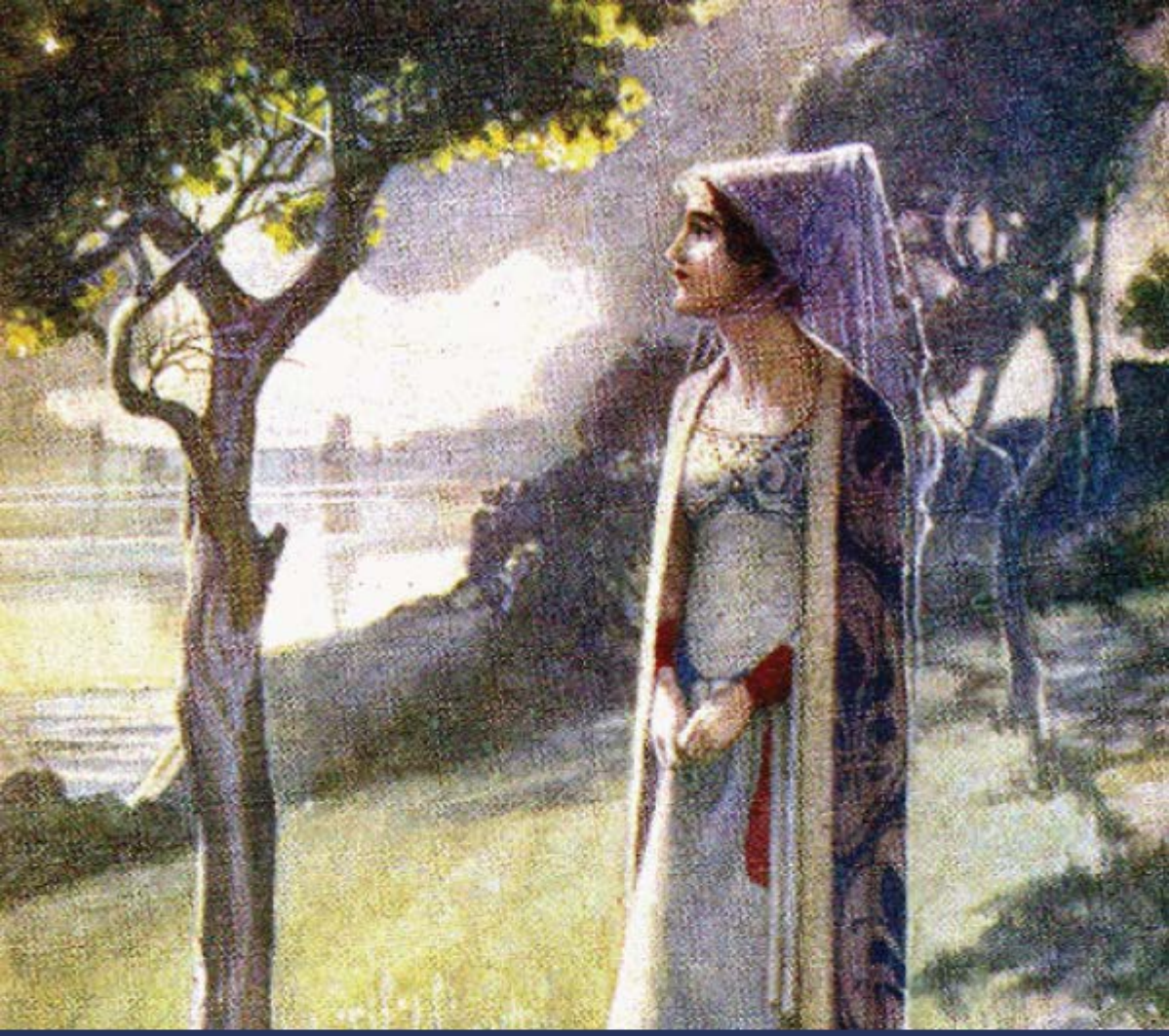


Stories from Chaucer

CLASSIC LIT FOR YOUNG READERS

JANET HARVEY KELMAN

Stories from
Chaucer

Janet Harvey Kelman

Libraries of Hope

Stories from Chaucer
Classic Literature for Young Readers

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Stories from Chaucer

Told to the Children by
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With Pictures by
W. HEATH ROBINSON

Where These Stories Came From

Very long ago, when children still walked softly through the Greenwood to surprise the fairies, and when big people were as fond of stories as little ones are now, a company of pilgrims went on horseback to Canterbury.

The way was long, and, in order to make it seem less tiresome, the pilgrims tried to find out which of them could tell the best story. A grave and gentle man rode with them. His name was Geoffrey Chaucer. He wrote down the stories in a book, in quaint old English words. You would not know in the least what some of these words meant, although you looked at them all day long.

But here, in simple words, are four of

the most beautiful of all those stories that Chaucer tells us the big people loved to hear, when the world was young.

J. H. K.

CHAPTER 1
Dorigen

The Story by the Man of Land

Once upon a time a young knight, whose name was Arviragus, dwelt in Brittany. In the same country lived a beautiful lady called Dorigen. And the knight loved the lady. For years Arviragus did not know whether she loved him or not. She was a great lady and very fair, and he was afraid to ask her. But she knew that he loved her, for when he rode past her window on his way to the wars, she could see her colours streaming from his helmet. At first she did not think much of this, for many knights fought for

love of her; but as she heard of new and greater deeds that this noble knight did year by year, she began to care for him a great deal. When she thought of his goodness and of the honour in which he held her, she knew that there was no one else that she could love as she loved Arviragus. And when Arviragus knew that she loved him and was willing to be his wife, his heart was full of joy. So greatly did he wish to make Dorigen happy with him, that he said to her that he would obey her and do what she wished as gladly all his life as he had done while he was trying to win her love. To this she replied:

'Sir, since in thy great gentleness thou givest me so high a place, I pray to God that there may never be strife between us two by any fault of mine. Sir, I will be thy true and humble wife until I die!'

Then Arviragus took his bride home with him to his castle by the sea. He honoured Dorigen as much as he had done before his marriage, and tried to fulfil her wishes in everything. Dorigen was just as eager to please Arviragus as he was to please her, and they were happy together in all their work and play.

Arviragus stayed quietly at home for a year, but after that he grew restless. He felt that no true knight had a right to live on quietly at home, with nothing to do except to order his castle and to hunt. So he sailed away to England that he might win honour and renown in the wars there.

Dorigen stood by the castle and watched his sails disappear in the north. Poor Dorigen! her husband was gone, and she did not know if he would ever come back to her. For weeks she wept and mourned. At night she could not

rest, and by day she would not eat. All the things that she had cared most to do were now dull and worthless to her because Arviragus was away.

Her friends saw her sorrow, and tried to comfort her in every way they could. When they found she would not be comforted, they spoke harshly to her, and told her that it was very wrong of her to kill herself with sorrow, when Arviragus hoped to come home again strong and famous. Then they began to comfort her again, and to try to make her forget her sadness.

After a long time Dorigen's sorrow began to grow quieter. She could not have lived if she had always felt her grief as deeply as she did at first. Indeed, as it was, this sorrow would have broken her heart, if letters had not come from Arviragus. They brought her tidings of his doings, and of the glory he had won. But

what comforted her most was that they told her that he would soon return.

When Dorigen's friends saw that she was less hopeless, they begged her to come and roam with them to drive away the last of her dark fears. This she did. Often she walked with them by the edge of the cliffs on which her castle stood. But there she saw the white ships and the brown barges sailing, one north, another south, to the havens for which they were bound. Then she would turn away from her friends and say to herself:

'Alas! of all the ships I see, is there never one that will bring my lord home? Then should I need no comfort. My heart would be cured of this bitter smart.'

At times as she sat and thought, she leant down and looked over the brink of the cliffs. But, when she saw the grisly, black rocks, her very heart trembled within her. Then she would sink down



‘Alas! Of all the ships I see is there
never one that will bring my lord

on the grass and wail:

'O God, men say Thou hast made nothing in vain, but, Lord, why hast Thou made these black, grisly rocks? No man nor beast is helped by them in all the world. Rocks have destroyed a hundred thousand men, and which of all Thy works is so fair as man? No doubt wise men will say, "All is for the best." But, oh Thou God, who makest the winds to blow, keep Thou my lord! And — would to God that these black rocks were sunk in the deep for his sake! They slay my heart with fear.'

Dorigen's friends saw that the sea brought back her sorrow. They led her then by rivers and springs, and took her to every lovely place they knew, from which there was no glimpse of the sea.

In the valley, to landward of the castle, lay many beautiful gardens. One day in May, when the soft showers of

spring had painted in brightest colours the leaves and flowers, they spent the whole day in the fairest of these gardens. They had games there, and they dined under a spreading tree. The breath of the fresh green leaves and the sweet scent of the flowers blew round them.

After dinner they began to dance and sing — every one except Dorigen. She had no heart to sing, and she would not dance because, of all who joined in the dance, not one was Arviragus. But, though she would not dance, she watched her friends and sometimes forgot her sorrow for a little.

Amongst the dancers there was a young squire named Aurelius. He was much beloved because he was young, and strong, and handsome. Men thought him wise and good, but he was not always wise and good.

When the dancing was over, Aurelius

came up to Dorigen and asked her to give him a beautiful jewel that she wore on her breast. He said to her, 'Madam, of what use is thy jewel to thee when thou wearest it on thy bosom? Give it to me, and I will share with thee the price of it.'

Dorigen turned and gazed at him.

'Is this what thou dost wish? I knew not what thou didst mean when thou didst look at me, but now I know. Listen, this is all I have to say to thee. I shall never part with my jewel, not though I were in rags and without food.'

Then she remembered how Arviragus had loved to see her wear her jewel, as she always did, on a chain of gold that he had given to her on her wedding day. She thought of the sea that separated him from her, and of the cruel black rocks, and said in play:

'Aurelius, I will freely give thee my jewel when thou dost remove every rock

on the shore from end to end of Brittany.'

Then her anger at the selfishness of Aurelius rose again, and she bade him be gone.

'Madam,' he said, 'it is impossible to move the rocks.'

With that word he turned away, and went home to his own house. There his brother Austin found him in a trance, for Aurelius wished Dorigen's jewel more than he wished anything else on earth, and the thought that he could not get it made him so sad that he became dazed. Austin carried him to bed, and tried to soothe him in his grief and vexation.

The jewel that Aurelius wished to get from Dorigen was no common one. It had been given to her at her birth. It was clear as crystal, but far more rare, and it shone in the daylight like the sun. When Dorigen was a little child her mother told her of this wonderful stone. She told her

that it would bring her joy and peace and the love of all who were good and true, if she kept it bright and pure; but that, if she ever gave it away, she would lose her youth and her beauty, and would be hidden away from all her friends and left alone in the world.

Dorigen shuddered at the thought of parting with her jewel. She did not know how her mother's words could come to pass, if she did give it away, nor by what magic power she could be so lost that no one who loved her could find her again. But she was sure that what her mother had said must be true.

And that was why Dorigen was so angry with Aurelius. She knew that he must have heard what sorrow she would suffer if she gave him her jewel, for all the court knew the story of the wonderful stone.

Not long after this, Arviragus came

home. He had won more honour than before, and was now the very flower of chivalry. I cannot tell you how great the joy was, with which he greeted Dorigen, nor how soon she forgot her fears of the sea and the grisly rocks.

For two years, while they lived a joyful life together, Aurelius lay in bed unable to rise, with no one to take care of him except his brother Austin. This brother mourned over Aurelius in secret and wept at his unhappy fate, till one day he remembered a book of magic that he had seen when he was a student in Orleans. In that book he had read of the strange ways in which Magicians can make things seem what they are not. His heart leapt up. He said to himself, 'My brother shall be cured. I am sure I have heard of stranger things than that the rocks should seem to vanish. Once I heard of a Magician who made every one believe

that a great brown barge was rowing up and down a sheet of water inside the hall of a castle! If he could do that, then surely we shall be able to find a Magician who will make those black rocks seem to vanish. Then Dorigen will have to keep her promise and give Aurelius her wonderful jewel.'

Austin then ran to his brother's room and told him about the book of magic at Orleans. No sooner had Aurelius heard him than he leapt out of bed. In less time than one would think possible he was ready to start on the long ride to Orleans.

When they came near the city they met a Magician. They knew him to be a Magician because of the strange look in his eyes, and because of his curious dress. When they rode up to him he bowed before them and wished them 'Good-day.' Then he began to tell them why they had come to Orleans. Aurelius

wondered how it was that this stranger knew so much about him and his errand. He thought he must be a very wise man indeed, and, leaping from his horse in surprise and joy, he went home with the Magician to his house. His brother went too.

The house was the finest that Aurelius had ever seen. When he entered the study he looked in wonder at the rows of books that lined the walls and at the quaint pictures and the strange old armour.

In one corner a curious light burned. It was not like the light of a lamp or of a candle, but cold and blue. Above it hung a map of the stars, and other strange drawings. Below the light stood a table, and on it lay a great book which was chained to the wall.

Austin saw Aurelius look at this book. He whispered to him, 'It is the

same book from which I read long ago.'

This corner with its blue light made Aurelius frightened. A shudder passed over him when he saw the Magician cross over into the circle of the light and wave his wand.

In a moment Aurelius forgot all about the Magician and his own fear, for he and his brother saw before them the edge of a forest with a park stretching from the trees far, far away.

The sun shone, and the branches waved a little in the breeze. In the park the brothers saw herds of deer. Beautiful animals they were, with the highest antlers deer ever had. At first the deer fed in peace and safety. Then archers, clad in green, came to the edge of the forest. They glided out and in amongst the trees to see where they could best take aim with their arrows. When the archers had let their arrows fly, hounds

broke out from behind them, and soon there was not one living deer of all the herd left in sight.

In a moment a calm river flowed where the park had been. In the shallow water at the river's edge tall herons stood. They watched for the little fishes that swam in the river. Again, into this quiet place a hunter came. He had no arrows. He had no dogs. But on his wrist he had an iron bracelet to which one end of a chain was fastened. The other end of the chain was round a hawk's foot, and the hawk sat on his master's wrist. When the hunter came near the river he loosed the chain from the bird's foot. The hawk flew over the river and swooped down amongst the herons. In a moment they had all vanished.

Aurelius had scarcely time to sigh, when the river itself was gone, and a plain lay where it had been. There he saw

the knights of King Arthur's Table jousting. Beautiful ladies sat and watched the struggle, and one more fair than all held the prizes the knights might win.

Then the figures of the knights began to grow dim and uncertain. The plain changed into a great hall where knights and ladies danced. Everything was bright and sparkling. Mirrors lined the walls, and their cut edges flashed back the light that fell on them. As Aurelius watched the dance, he started. There, before him, more beautiful than ever, was Dorigen. His heart gave a great leap, for, as he watched her, he saw that she no longer wore her jewel. In his delight he swayed to the music of the dance. *Clap! Clap!* went the Magician's hands, and all was gone.

The great room that had seemed so splendid to Aurelius when he entered it, looked cold and plain now when he

returned to it from fairyland.

The Magician called his servant and asked for supper. Then he led the brothers away and feasted them royally.

After supper the three men began to talk about what the Magician should get from Aurelius if he made the rocks vanish. The Magician said, 'I cannot take less than a thousand pounds, and I am not sure if I can do it for that!' Aurelius was too delighted to bargain about what the cost would be. He said gladly: 'What is a thousand pounds? I would give thee the whole round world, if I were lord of it. The bargain is made. Thou shalt be paid in full. But do not delay. Let us start tomorrow morning without fail.'

'Thou mayest count on me tomorrow,' said the Magician.

They went to bed, and Aurelius slept soundly and well, because of the hope he had that the Magician would make the

rocks vanish.

Next morning they rose early. It was Christmas time, and the air was cold and frosty as they rode away. The very sunlight was pale, and the trees were bare. When they reached home the neighbours gathered round and wished them a Merry Christmas. 'Noel, Noel,' they said, but they would not have done so had they known what sorrow the riders brought to their beautiful lady Dorigen.

For many days the Magician worked with his maps and figures. Aurelius waited impatiently. There was nothing for him to do except to make the Magician as comfortable as he could, and to show him as much kindness as possible.

One morning Aurelius looked from his window towards the sea. He saw the Magician standing on the shore. As Aurelius gazed out to sea, the rocks vanished from north to south. His heart



He saw the magician standing
on the shore.

stood still. Then he rushed out and away to the edge of the cliffs for fear some rocks might still lie close to the land. But no, there was not one.

He went to meet the Magician and fell at his feet with the words, 'Thanks to thee, my lord, thanks to thee, my cares are gone!'

After he had thanked the Wise Man, he hurried away to meet Dorigen. When he saw her he trembled. She was so pure and beautiful. His heart sank. Then he looked out to sea and saw the smooth surface of the water, and he grew selfish again.

Dorigen came quietly on. She had not noticed that the rocks had vanished, for Arviragus was safe on land, and she did not fear the sea any more. She had almost forgotten Aurelius and his selfish, greedy words. It was more than two years since she had seen him, and she had not

heard of him since then.

She started back when he greeted her. Before she had time to speak he said, 'My lady, give me thy jewel.'

He saw Dorigen's face grow cold and angry, and said, 'Think well lest thou break thy word, for, madam, thou knowest well what thou didst say. In yonder garden in the month of May thou didst promise to give me thy jewel when I should move the rocks. I speak to save thine honour. I have done as thou didst command me. Go thou and see if thou wilt, but well I know the rocks are vanished!'

He left her then. She stood still, white and sick. She had never dreamt that such a trap as this could close on her.

'Alas,' she said, 'that such a thing could happen! I never thought a thing so strange and unheard-of could come to

pass!'

Home she went in sadness and dismay. She was so weak with fear that she could scarcely walk. She had to suffer her sorrow alone for three days, for Arviragus was away, and she would tell no one but him. Her ladies saw her distress, but they could not comfort her. To herself she moaned, 'Alas, O Fortune, I lay the blame on thee; thou hast so bound me in thy chain, that I see no help nor escape save only in death.'

Arviragus came home on the third day after the rocks had vanished. He came at night, so he noticed nothing strange about the shore. Though every one was talking of the curious thing that had happened, no one liked to tell him. They knew he would not like to hear of it. He would think his country was bewitched.

Arviragus looked for Dorigen in the

hall. When he could not see her there, he hurried to her room, to make sure that she was safe and well. As he sprang up the broad staircase, the sheath of his sword and the spurs at his heels clanked harshly on the stone steps.

Dorigen heard him, but, instead of going to meet him, she buried her head deeper in her cushions and wept. Arviragus crossed the room to where she sat, and knelt before her. He drew her hands from her eyes and said, 'Dorigen, what is it? Why dost thou weep like this, my beloved?'

For a little time Dorigen's tears only fell the faster, then she said brokenly: 'Alas, that ever I was born! I have said it! Arviragus! I have promised!'

'What hast thou promised, my wife?'

Then Dorigen told Arviragus all that had happened; told him that she had promised to give her jewel to Aurelius

when he would take all the rocks away.

Arviragus leapt up and went to the window. The moon had burst through a cloud, and everything was bright and clear. He looked away north, as Dorigen had so often looked to watch for his coming. In the moonlight Arviragus saw the sea lie smooth and cold. His eyes swept the skyline. It seemed as if all the rocks had sunk into his heart, it was so heavy.

He turned towards Dorigen, and saw how great was her sorrow.

Then he said very gently: 'Is there aught else than this, that thou shouldst weep, Dorigen?'

'Nay, nay, this is indeed too much already,' she sighed.

'Dear wife,' he said, 'something as wonderful as the sinking of the rocks may happen to save us yet. God grant it! But whether or not, thou must keep thy troth. I had rather that my great love for

thee caused me to die, than that thou shouldest break thy promise. Truth is the highest thing that man may keep.'

Then his courage broke down, and he began to sob and weep along with Dorigen.

Next morning he was strong and brave again. He said to Dorigen, 'I will bear up under this great sorrow.'

He bade her farewell, and she set out with only a maid and a squire to follow her.

Arviragus could not bear to see Dorigen as she went down from the castle, so he hid himself in an inner room. But some one saw her go out. It was Aurelius. For three days he had watched the castle gate to see what she did, and where she went. He came forward and said, 'Whither goest thou?'

Dorigen was almost mad with misery, but she said bravely, 'To thee, to keep my

troth, and give my jewel to thee, as my husband bids me. Alas! alas!'

Aurelius was full of wonder when he heard this. He began to be sorry for Dorigen, and for Arviragus the worthy knight, who would rather lose his wife than have her break her word. He could be cruel no longer.

'Madam,' he said, 'say to thy lord Arviragus that since I see his great honour and thy sad distress, I had rather bear my own sorrow than drive thee away from him and all thy friends. I give thee back thy promise. I shall never trouble thee more. Farewell, farewell! thou truest woman and best that I have ever seen.'

Down on her knees, on the roadway, fell Dorigen to thank Aurelius. Her blessing followed him as he turned and left her.

But how can I tell of Dorigen's

return? She seemed to be treading on air. When she reached the room where her husband sat with his head sunk on his arms, she paused. She had not known the greatness of his love till then. He looked old and forlorn after the night of sorrow.

She spoke, and he raised his eyes to gaze on her, as if she had been a lady in a dream. But when she told him all, when he knew that she was there herself, and for always, he could not speak for joy.

Aurelius wished he had never been born when he thought of the thousand pounds of pure gold that he owed to the Magician.

He said to himself, 'What shall I do? I am undone! I must sell my house and be a beggar. I will not stay here and make my friends ashamed of me, unless I can get the Magician to give me time. I will ask him to let me pay him part of my debt year by year till all is paid. If he will, my

gratitude will know no bounds, and I will pay him every penny I owe.'

With a sore heart he went to his coffer and took out five hundred pounds of gold. These he took to the Wise Man, and begged him to grant him time to pay the rest.

'Master,' said he, 'I can say truly, I never yet failed to keep a promise. My debt shall be paid to thee, even if I go begging in rags. But if thou wilt be so gracious as to allow me two years, or three, in which to pay the rest, I will rejoice. If not, I must sell my house; there is no other way.'

When the Magician heard this he said, 'Have not I kept my promise to thee?'

'Yes, certainly, well and truly!'

'Hast thou not thy jewel?'

'No, no,' said Aurelius, and sighed deeply.

'Tell me, if thou mayest, what is the cause of this?'

'Arviragus in his honour had rather die in sorrow and distress than that his wife should break her word. Dorigen would rather die than lose her husband and wander alone on the earth. She did not mean to give me her promise. She thought the rocks would never move. I pitied them so much that I gave her back her promise as freely as she brought her jewel to me. That is the whole story!'

The Magician answered, 'Dear brother, you have each behaved nobly. Thou art a squire, he is a knight, but by God's grace I can do a noble deed as well as another. Sir, thou art free from thy debt to me, as free as if thou hadst this moment crept out of the ground, and hadst never known me till now. For, sir, I will not take a penny from thee for all my skill, nor for all my work. It is enough!

Farewell! Good day to thee!'

Whereupon the Magician bowed once and again, mounted his horse, and rode away.

Dorigen and Arviragus were walking on the cliffs as the Magician parted from Aurelius. They noticed the two men, and when the horseman rode away they saw a strange white mist rise from the sea and follow the rider.

Dorigen caught her husband's arm, for there, there, out at sea, and close by the cliffs, were the rocks, grisly and black and fearsome as before. The sunlight fell on her jewel, and it shone more brightly than of old, nor did its light ever grow dim in all the happy years that followed.

CHAPTER 2
Emelia

The Story by the Man of Might

Emelia the Radiant lived in a great castle in Athens.

Hippolyta, Emelia's sister, had once been queen of the Warrior Women, and had led her armies to battle. But Emelia had never fought in these battles. When she was still a child, Duke Theseus of Athens had fought with Hippolyta and conquered her. Instead of sending his royal captive to prison, Theseus married her, and took her home to Athens with him. When he took her there, he took Emelia with her. He was very kind to

them both, and the castle in Athens was a happy home for Hippolyta and her little sister.

As Emelia grew up she became most beautiful. She was more graceful than a lily on its stem, and the flush on her cheeks was more delicate than the hue of the rose-petals in the old Greek castle garden. Her golden hair fell in heavy masses round her face, and lay in a great plait down her back. It caught all the light that fell on it, and sent it out again to make glad the hearts of those who looked on her. So men called her Emelia the Radiant, and all who met her smiled for joy at the sight of so beautiful a maid.

One May morning Emelia went into the castle garden to bathe her face in the early dew. Everything was dim and grey in the twilight. She looked up at the great dungeon tower which overshadowed the garden, and thought of the two young



She thought of the two young princes
who were prisoners there.

princes who were prisoners there. Duke Theseus had brought them from Thebes. He was very proud of them, and would not give them up, although the people of their land offered to give him gold and jewels for their ransom. The princes were cousins, and were the last of the royal line of Thebes. In the stillness Emelia murmured their names to herself, 'Palamon and Arcite, Palamon and Arcite.' *How miserable they must be in their narrow cell!* she thought. Then she sighed that life should be so sad for them while it was so bright for her!

As she roamed up and down and gathered roses white and red to make a garland for her hair, the sun broke through the mist and shone into the garden. Once more she raised her eyes to the Tower. This time she did not look at it, but at the sunlit clouds beyond. The light from the east fell on her. Her hair

shone like gold, and her face was radiant with happiness.

Palamon at that moment came to the narrow iron-barred window through which alone he and his cousin could see the sky and the fields and the city. He saw the morning light fall on the fair buildings of Athens, and on the plains and hills beyond. Then a glad song which burst from Emelia's happy heart floated up to him. He looked down. Before him stood the maiden bathed in sunlight.

She seemed to him the very Spirit of Beauty. He thought of all the joy and life and freedom that he could never have. He started back from the window and cried aloud.

His cousin Arcite sprang from his couch and said, 'My cousin, what aileth thee? I pray thee that thou bear our imprisonment in patience. Sad it is in truth, but we must abide it. We can do nought

else.'

But Palamon said: 'Thou art mistaken. Prison walls drew not that cry from me. An arrow hath entered my heart through mine eye, and I am wounded. What life can give is bound up for me in the fairness of a maiden who roams in yonder garden. Be she Spirit or woman I know not! But this I know, was never woman nor Spirit half so fair before.'

'Spirit of Beauty,' he cried, 'if thou choosest to take the form of a radiant woman here before me in this garden, pity my wretchedness! Save us from this prison and if that may not be, have pity on our country and help our fallen friends.'

Arcite pressed forward and leant over Palamon's shoulder. The window was only a narrow slit, and the wall through which it was cut was thick, so it

was not easy for Arcite to see into the garden. At last he caught a glimpse of Emelia.

'Oh, how lovely she is!' he said. 'I shall die of my wish to serve her. Most beautiful of maidens she is, truly!'

When Palamon heard this, he turned to Arcite, looked coldly at him and asked, 'Sayest thou so in earnest or in jest?'

'Nay, truly in earnest, my cousin; I have little will to jest!'

Palamon looked fiercely at him and said, 'Little honour to thee then! Hast thou forgotten thine oath of truest brotherhood to me, and mine to thee? Hast thou forgotten thy promise to help me in all I do? How then, canst thou dream of claiming to love my lady? This thou shalt not do, false Arcite! I loved her first, and told thee, and thou must help me to win her if ever we escape. Thine honour

demands this of thee. Otherwise thou art no true knight.'

But Arcite drew himself up scornfully and said, 'Rather it is thou that art false! A moment ago thou didst not know whether she were maiden or Spirit! I loved her first for what she is, and told thee as my brother! But even if thou hadst loved her first, could I, because of that, refuse to love the fairest of maidens? Besides, why should we strive? Thou knowest too well that thou shalt never win her smile, nor yet shall I! These prison walls so thick and black leave no hope for us. We fight as did the fabled dogs for the bone. They fought all day, yet neither won. There came a kite while they raged, and carried off the bone. Love thou the maid if thou wilt. I shall love her till I die.'

The prison had been narrow and bare and cold before, but now it seemed ten

times more dismal. The world from which it shut them in was so much more sweet because of the maiden who dwelt there, and the friendship for each other which had cheered them through many evil days was broken.

But Emelia the Radiant sang her gay songs and stepped lightly amongst the flowers, with never another thought of the weary eyes that watched her.

One day the greatest friend that Duke Theseus of Athens had, came to see him. This friend had known Arcite in Thebes, and had loved the handsome boy. He begged Theseus to forgive him, and to let him go free. Theseus was glad to find something he could do to please his dear friend, so one morning he took him with him to the prison where Palamon and Arcite were. The attendants could scarcely follow, for the royal robes filled all the dingy little space! A streak

of light from the window fell on the Duke's mantle and on his jewels. They looked strangely bright in that dark room beside the faded clothes of the two young prisoners.

Arcite and the friend of Theseus greeted each other joyously, and the heart of Arcite beat wildly with hope, but when he heard the words of Theseus the Duke it sank like lead.

'Arcite,' said he, 'by the desire of my friend, I grant to thee thy freedom. I grant it on one condition only. Thou must wander away far beyond my kingdom. If ever thou art seen for one moment on any furthest corner of my land, that moment shall be thy last. By the sword thou shalt die.'

Homeward to Thebes sped Arcite with a sad heart.

'Woe is me for the day that I was born!' he moaned; 'woe is me that ever I

knew the friend of Theseus! Had he not known me, I might even now be gazing on the maiden I serve, from the window in the Duke's tower. Ah, Palamon, thou art the victor now! Day by day thou gazest on her, and kind fortune may grant to thee thy freedom and her favour while I am banished for ever! Ah, why do we complain against our fortune? We know that we seek happiness, but know not the road thither! Think how I dreamt and longed for freedom, and thought that if I were only out of prison my joy would be perfect. Behold, my freedom is my banishment, and my hope my undoing!'

As for Palamon, when he saw that Arcite was gone, he made the great tower walls re-echo with his howls of misery. The very fetters on his ankles were wet with his salt tears.

'Alas,' he groaned, 'Arcite, my cousin, thou hast borne off the prize in this

strife of ours! Thou walkest now at liberty in Thebes. Little thou thinkest of me and of my sorrow! Strong thou art, and wise. Doubtless thou art even now gathering together the people of Thebes to invade this land and win the sister of the Duke for thy wife, while I die here in this prison like a caged lion. The prison walls heed my weeping and my wailing not at all.'

He could not even rejoice in the sight of Emelia when she walked in the garden, so fearful was he lest Arcite should win her.

Meanwhile Arcite passed his days in Thebes in grief. He wandered about alone, and wailed and made moan to himself. He cared not to eat, and sleep forsook him. His spirits were so feeble that the sound of music brought fresh tears to his eyes. He grew gaunt and thin, and his voice was hollow with sadness.

At last, when he was nearly dazed with sorrow, he dreamt one night that a beautiful winged boy with golden curls stood before him. 'Go thou to Athens,' said the boy; 'the end of all thy sorrow awaits thee there!'

Arcite started up wide awake and said, 'I will to Athens, to my lady. It were good even to die in her presence.'

He caught up a mirror. He had not cared to look in one for many months, but now that he meant to return to his lady, he wished to see if he looked strong and young as ever. At first he was shocked to see how great a change had passed over his face. Then he thought, 'If I do not say who I am, I may live unknown in Athens for years. Then I shall see my lady day by day.'

Quickly he called to him a squire, and told him all his will, and bound him to keep his name a secret and to answer

no questions about himself or his master. Then Arcite sent his squire to find clothes such as the labourers in Athens wore. When he returned, Arcite and he put on the clothes and set out by the straight road to Athens.

In Athens no one took any notice of the two poor men. Before they came to the castle the squire left his master and found a house to live in, where he could do Arcite's bidding at any time. But Arcite hurried on to the courtyard gate. There he waited till the master of the servants who waited on Emelia came out. Then he said to him, 'Take me, I pray thee, into thy service. Drudge I will and draw water, yea, and in all thou dost command I will obey.'

The master of the servants asked Arcite what was his name. 'Philostrate, my lord,' said Arcite, and as 'Philostrate' he entered that part of the castle where

Emelia's home was.

He could hew wood and carry water well, but he was not long left to do such rough work. The master of the house saw that whatever he trusted to Philostrate's care was rightly done, so he gave him less humble work to do, and made him a page in the house of Emelia. The lords and ladies of the castle began to notice what a gentle and kind page this Philostrate was. They spoke to Theseus about him, and said that he deserved to have a higher place that he might show his goodness and courage in knightly deeds. To please them, Theseus made him one of his own squires.

Seven years passed away, and Palamon was still in prison. This year, however, in the May time, a friend of his, who heard where he was, helped him to escape. During the short night he fled as fast as he could, but when the early dawn

began to break he strode tremblingly to a grove of trees, that he might hide there all day. When the darkness fell once more he meant to go on again to Thebes, there to gather his old armies to make war on Theseus. He wished either to win Emelia or to die. He cared little for his life if he might not spend it with her.

As Palamon lay beside a bush in the grove, he watched the sunbeams drying up the dew-drops on the leaves and flowers near him, and listened to the joyous song of a lark that poured forth its welcome to the morning.

The same lark that Palamon heard awakened Arcite. He was now the chief knight in the Duke's house, and served him with honour in peace and war. He sprang up and looked out on the fresh green fields. Everything called to him to come out. He loosed his horse from the stall and galloped over hill and dale. He

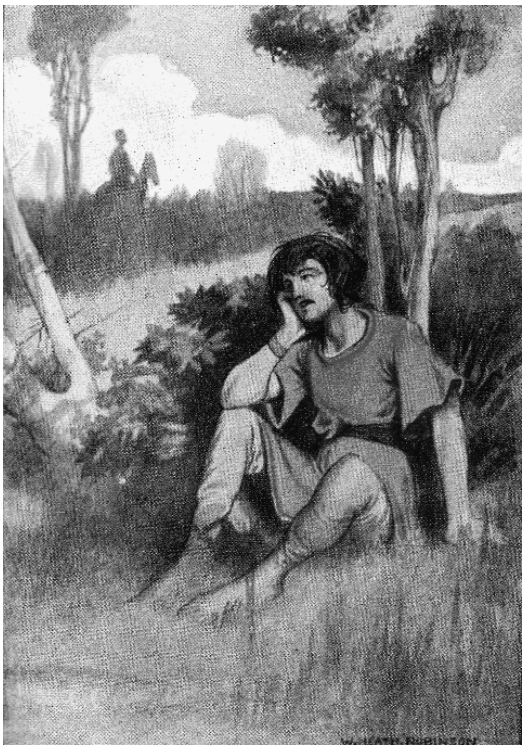
came to the edge of a grove, and tied up his steed to a tree. Then he wandered down a woodland path to gather honeysuckle and hawthorn to weave a garland for himself. Little he thought of the snare into which he was walking.

As he roamed he sang—

> O May, of every month the queen,
> With thy sweet flowers and forests green,
> Right welcome be thou, fair fresh May.'

The grove was the one in which Palamon lay beside a pool of water. When he heard the song of Arcite, cold fear took hold on him. He did not know that it was Arcite who sang, but he knew that the horse must belong to a knight of the court, and he crouched down to the ground lest he should be seen and taken back to prison.

Soon Arcite's joyous mood passed



Palamon lay beside a pool of water.

away, and he grew sorrowful. He sighed and threw himself down not far from the spot where Palamon lay.

'Alas, alas!' said Arcite, 'for the royal blood of Thebes! Alas that I should humbly serve my mortal enemy! Alas that I dare not claim my noble name, but must be known, forsooth, as Philostrate, a name worth not a straw! Of all our princely house not one is left save only me and Palamon, whom Theseus slays in prison. Even I, free though I am, am helpless to win Emelia. What am I to her but an humble squire?'

Palamon was so angry when he heard this, that he forgot his own danger. He started out from his hiding-place and faced Arcite.

'False Arcite,' he cried, 'now art thou caught indeed! Thou hast deceived Duke Theseus and hast falsely changed thy name, hast thou? Then surely I or thou

must die. I will suffer no man to love my lady, save myself alone. For I am Palamon, thy mortal foe. I have no weapon in this place, for only last night did I escape from prison. Yet I fear thee not. Thou shalt die, or thou shalt cease to love my lady. Choose as thou wilt!'

Then Arcite rose up in his wrath and drew his sword. He said, 'Were it not that thou art ill and mad with grief, and that thou hast no weapon here, thou shouldest never step from where thou standest. I deny the bond thou claimest! Fool! how can I help thee to win the lady I fain would wed myself? But because thou art a worthy knight and a gentle, and art ready to fight for thy lady, accept my promise. Tomorrow I will not fail to wait thee here without the knowledge of any other. Also I will bring armour and weapons for thee and me, and thou shalt choose of them what thou wilt, ere I arm

myself! Food and drink will I bring to thee this night into the grove. If so be that thou slay me here tomorrow, then indeed thou mayest win thy lady if thou canst!'

Then Palamon answered, 'Let it be so.' Next morning Arcite rode to the wood alone. He met Palamon on the woodland path where the flowers he had gathered the day before lay withered on the ground. No word nor greeting passed between them, but each helped to arm the other in silence. As the buckles were tightened and the armour slipped into its place, the colour came and went in the faces of the two princes. They deemed that this would be the last of all fights to one of them.

When they were ready they fenced together for a little, and then the real fight began. So fierce was it that the men seemed like wild animals in their rage.

Palamon sprang at Arcite like a strong lion, and Arcite glanced aside and darted at him again like a cruel tiger. In the midst of this they heard a sound of the galloping of horses that brought the royal hunters to the spot. In a moment the sword of Theseus flashed between the fighters, and his voice thundered out, 'Ho! no more, on pain of death. Who are ye who dare to fight here alone, with none to see justice done?'

The princes turned and saw Theseus, Duke of Athens. Behind him rode Hippolyta with her sister, Emelia the Radiant, and many knights and ladies.

Palamon answered the Duke's question swiftly, before Arcite had time to speak. 'Sire, what need of words? Both of us deserve death. Two wretches are we, burdened with our lives. As thou art a just judge, give to us neither mercy nor refuge, but slay us both. Thou knowest

not that this knight, Philostrate, is thy mortal foe, whom thou hast banished. He is Arcite, who hath deceived thee for that he loveth Emelia. And I too love her, I too am thy mortal foe, for I am Palamon, and I have broken from my prison. Slay us then, here before fair Emelia.'

'That is easily granted,' said Theseus. 'Ye judge yourselves. Ye shall die.'

Then the queen began to weep, and Emelia too. They were sad to think that these two princes should die so young, and all for the service they wished to do to the queen's sister.

The other ladies of the court begged the Duke to forgive the fighters. 'Have mercy, sire,' they urged, 'on us women, and save the princes!'

At first Theseus was too angry to listen to them, but soon he thought that he would have done as the princes had

done, if he had been in their place, so he said, 'Arcite and Palamon, ye could both have lived in peace and safety in Thebes, yet love has brought you here to Athens into my power, who am your deadly foe. Here then for the sake of Hippolyta, my queen, and of Emelia the Radiant, our dear sister, I forgive you both. Promise never to make war on my land, but to yield me your friendship evermore.' Joyfully the princes promised this, and thanked the Duke for his grace.

Then Theseus said, 'Both of you are noble. Either might wed Emelia the Radiant, but she cannot wed you both. Therefore I appoint a tournament in this place a year hence. Come here then, ye Princes of Thebes, each of you, with a hundred knights of the bravest, and that one of you, who shall slay or capture the other, he shall wed Emelia.'

Whose face could be brighter than

was Palamon's when he heard those words, and who could step more lightly than did Arcite? Every one thanked the Duke for his kindness to the princes, while they rode off to Thebes with high hopes and light hearts.

When the day of the tournament came, great buildings stood in a circle on the plain beside the grove. Within them stretched an immense arena in which the knights must fight. Great marble gates opened on to the space at either side.

Palamon and Arcite found it easy to bring a hundred knights to Athens. So splendid were the preparations for the tournament that every one was eager to fight in it.

Emelia alone was sad as the day of the fighting came nearer. Her maidens heard her say, 'Oh that I might not wed at all! I love the free life of the woods. I love to hunt, and to ride, and to roam.

Why cannot Palamon and Arcite love each other as they used to do long ago, and leave me free?'

On the morning of the tournament Duke Theseus and his queen sat with Emelia on a high seat overlooking the lists. When the trumpet sounded, Arcite and his knights rode in through the western gate. His red banner shone bright against the white marble pillars. At the same moment Palamon entered from the east, and his white banner floated out against the blue sky.

Soon the heralds ceased galloping up and down, and the whole space was left to the warriors.

The trumpets sounded 'Advance,' and the fray began. Through the bright sunshine they fought, advancing here, and beaten back there, till at last Palamon was hurled from his horse and taken prisoner.

The trumpets sounded, and all stood still while Theseus called out, 'Ho! No more. All is over. Arcite of Thebes shall wed Emelia.' Then the people shouted till it seemed that the great marble gates would fall.

In the eagerness of the fight Emelia had begun to like the warriors who fought for her, and her liking grew ever stronger as they showed their worth. When Arcite rode towards her with glowing face she was proud of him, and leant forward to welcome him gladly.

But as he galloped, his horse started aside and he was thrown to the ground. He was too much hurt to rise. So he was lifted by his knights and carried to the palace. There he was cared for in every way, but nothing could save him.

Before he died, he called for Emelia and Palamon.

'No words can tell the sorrow I bear

because I must leave thee, my lady! Alas, death tears me from thee! Farewell, my wife! farewell, my Emelia! Ah, take me softly in thine arms, and listen while I speak! For years I have had strife with my dear cousin Palamon. Yet now I say to thee, in all this world I never have met with one so worthy to be loved as Palamon, that hath served thee, and will serve thee, his life long. Ah, if ever thou dost wed, let it be Palamon!'

His voice began to fail. 'Emelia!' he said, and died.

Emelia mourned sadly for her valiant knight. As for Palamon, all his old love for Arcite came back, and he wept for him as bitterly as he had bewailed his own sorrow in the dungeon.

When all the Greeks had ceased to mourn for Arcite, Palamon still grieved for the death of his friend, and for the strife that had been between them.

After two years Theseus sent one day for Palamon and Emelia. Palamon came to the court in his black robes of mourning; but Emelia was dressed in white, as she had been on the May morning in the garden years before. She had ceased to mourn for Arcite, and was Emelia the Radiant once more.

Palamon caught his breath, He had not seen her since they parted after Arcite's death.

Duke Theseus said, 'Sister, I desire thee now to take the noble knight Palamon to be thy husband. Have pity on his long service, and accept him.'

Then he said to Palamon, 'It will not need much speech to gain thy consent! Come, take thy lady by the hand.'

Then, in the presence of all the court, they were wed. When all was over, Emelia fled from the noise and tumult of the hall, and beckoned to Palamon to

follow. Out at the great hall doors she led him, and down the pathway to the garden beneath the tower. When he joined her, she pointed to the dungeon window, and told him of the day when she had looked at the prison in the morning mist, and murmured to herself the names of the captive princes, 'Palamon and Arcite, Palamon and Arcite.'

But it was not till many years of joyous life had passed over their home that Palamon told Emelia that he had seen her first on that very morning when she had thought so sadly of his misery.

CHAPTER 3
Griselda

The Story by the Man of Books

Once upon a time there lived a fair young girl whose name was Griselda. Her home was in an Italian village. There she dwelt in a lowly cottage with her father, Janicola. He was too old and weak to work for her, or even for himself.

All round the village lay the fruitful fields and vineyards of the plain, and on the slopes near grew olive trees laden with fruit. Far in the distance rose the snow-capped mountains of the North.

Even in so rich a land it was not easy for this young Griselda to make her

father's life as pleasant as she would have wished it to be. She lived plainly and barely. She was busy all day long. Now she was herding a few sheep on the broken ground near the village, and spinning as she watched her flock. Again she fetched the water from the well or gathered roots and herbs from which to make drugs.

Griselda was not unhappy though her life was hard, because she was so glad that she could serve her father and show her love to him, forgetting about herself and her own wishes.

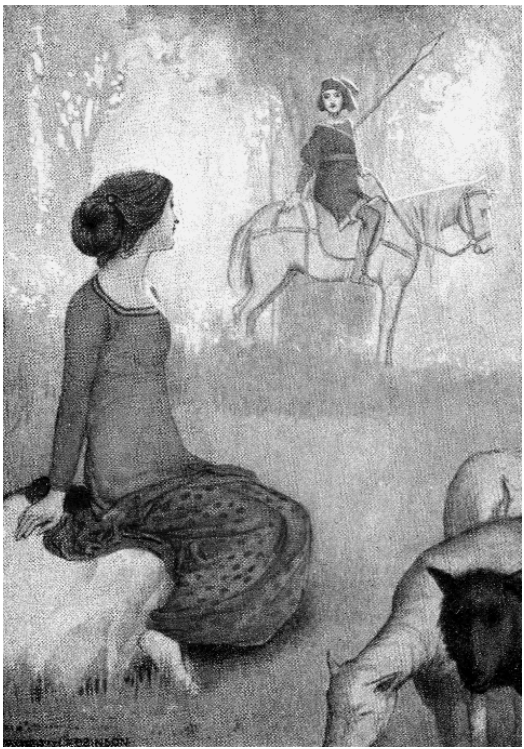
One day as she sat watching her sheep her eyes fell on the white towers of a castle that stood not far from the village where she lived. It was the castle of the Marquis Walter, who was lord of all that land. Griselda looked kindly at the white towers. She thought that their master was the best and greatest man in the

world. She knew that he was kind also, and courteous. When she saw him ride towards her, her face lighted up, and she rose to curtsy to him. She hoped he would draw up his horse beside her, and greet her, and ask for her father Janicola.

This morning, as she looked at the castle, she saw a company of men hurrying along the road that led to its gate. Farmers were there in dull and homely clothes, and knights in armour that flashed back the sunlight, and lords in gay colours that glanced and gleamed among the olive trees under the blue Italian sky.

Griselda knew why they were going to Lord Walter, and she wondered what they would do and say when they reached him. She could not go after them, for her sheep would have wandered away if she had left them.

When the men that Griselda had



She rose to curtsy to him.

watched reached the courtyard gate, they met Lord Walter. He was on horseback ready for the hunt. The foremost of the company prayed him to grant them a little time that they might tell him why they had come.

Lord Walter threw the reins to a squire, and led his people into the great hall of the castle. There he seated himself in state to listen to their grievance whatever it might be. Then the same man who had spoken before said to him:

'Noble Marquis, thy generous kindness in times past giveth us courage to come before thee. Truly, sire, thou and all thou dost art so dear to us that, save in one thing, we cannot wish for better fortune than to live under thy government. One thing alone disturbs the peace of thy faithful people. Though thou art young and strong, yet age creeps on! Time flies and waits for no man. Death

threatens young and old alike. We pray thee, sire, that thou wilt wed, for if swift death should lay thee low ere a son be born to thee, then alack for us and for our children! In the power of a stranger then would lie our fair lands and even our lives. Grant us this boon, noble Marquis, and, if thou wilt, we will choose for thee a wife. Noble shall she be, and good, so that thou shalt have honour and gladness in thy wedding.'

Then the Marquis said:

'My people, loyal and true, ye ask of me that which I thought not to grant, for the free life of the forest and the hunt pleaseth me well. Yet will I do this thing that ye desire. Only to me myself must fall the choice of her whom I will wed. On you I lay this command that, be she who she may, yet shall ye honour her as if she were an Emperor's daughter through all her life. Nor shall ye raise one

word against the maiden of my choice. Unless ye agree to this, I will not wed!'

Gladly the people promised. But ere they left the Marquis, they begged him to fix a day for the marriage lest he should put off too long. The Marquis granted their request, and farmers, knights, and lords trooped joyfully home.

When the morning of the day that was fixed for the wedding came, the castle of the Marquis was gaily decorated. Flags floated out from the towers, and garlands trailed over the doorway and the gate. Within the great hall a royal feast was spread, and there lay royal robes and gems.

In the courtyard and on the terraces lords and ladies stood in groups. Wonder and doubt were on every face. The wedding feast was prepared, the guests were come, but there was no bride.

A trumpet sounded 'to horse,' and all

was hurry and noise. Then Lord Walter rode out through the castle gate. He was followed by bearers, who carried the beautiful robes and gems that had lain in the hall.

They rode out by the same road along which Griselda had watched the people go to ask the Marquis to wed, many months before. Now she saw the bridal train ride down from the castle. 'Ah,' she said, 'they ride this way to fetch the bride. I shall work more busily than ever today that I may be free to stand and watch Lord Walter's fair bride as the riders return with her to the castle!'

Then she went to the well to fetch water. When she came back she found Lord Walter at her father's door. In the narrow lane beside the cottage stood lords and ladies, while their horses impatiently pawed the ground.

Quickly Griselda set her pitcher in a

trough near the cottage door, and knelt before the Marquis to hear his will.

'Where is thy father?' Lord Walter asked.

'Close at hand, my Lord,' said Griselda, and went to bring him without delay.

'My faithful servant,' said Lord Walter to the old man, 'grant me thy daughter for my wife!'

Janicola knew not what to say for surprise. At last he answered, 'My will is thine! Do as thou wilt, my own dear Lord!'

'Then must I ask Griselda if she will be my wife; but stay thou by us. Thou shalt hear her answer.'

Griselda was amazed. She did not know what the meaning of Lord Walter's visit was, and when she stood before him her face was full of fear. Her wonder was very great when she heard him say:

'Griselda, I am come for thee. Thee only will I wed. Thy father also is willing. But ere thou tell me whether or no thou wilt be my bride, listen to the demand I make. Art thou ready to obey me in everything, and to let me do to thee evil or good as I will without so much as turning to me a frowning face?'

This seemed a strange request to Griselda, but she loved and trusted Lord Walter so truly that she said:

'Lord, I am not worthy of this honour. Verily in all things thy will shall be mine. Life is sweet, but I will die rather than displease thee.'

'Enough, Griselda!' he said.

Then Lord Walter turned to the courtiers and the people of the village who had gathered round:

'Behold my wife! Let all show their love to me by the honour and love they bear to her.'

The ladies of the court were commanded to take off Griselda's old clothes and to array her in the costly robes they had brought with them. They did not like to touch the poor soiled clothes she wore, nor to move about in the little cottage with their sweeping gowns; but the gentleness of Griselda made it pleasant to help her. They caught up Griselda's royal robes with great clasps of gold set with gems, and put a crown on her beautiful hair.

She came out and stood in the low doorway, where she had so often stood before. But now the people scarcely knew her: she looked so fair in her new robes and with the love-light shining in her eyes.

Lord Walter did not wait till he reached the castle. He was married to Griselda at her father's cottage door. The villagers gathered round and gazed at the

simple wedding. They saw Lord Walter put a great ring on Griselda's finger, and lift her on to a milk-white steed. Then they led her with joy towards the castle. Wedding bells rang out gladly across the plain, and ever as the wedding party drew near to the white towers with their floating flags, happy bands of people came to meet and welcome Griselda.

Very soon the fame of Lord Walter's beautiful wife spread through the land. Nor was it only for her beauty that men praised her. Gracious she was and wise, able to rule her home, and to bend fiery spirits to her will.

From all the countryside men came to her in trouble. Every one rejoiced in the good fortune that had come to their land, and some even called her an angel from heaven come to right all wrong.

After some time a daughter was born to Griselda. Then she thought she was

the happiest woman in the world. She thought of the care that she would give her child as she grew up, and of Lord Walter's delight in his little daughter when the time should come that she could talk and ride with him.

But before the baby was a year old, all Griselda's dreams were broken. Lord Walter said to himself, 'It is easy for Griselda to keep her promise when I ask of her nothing that is not just and right. How can I trust her until I know that she will obey me in everything? I wonder whether she would be patient still if I hurt our little daughter.'

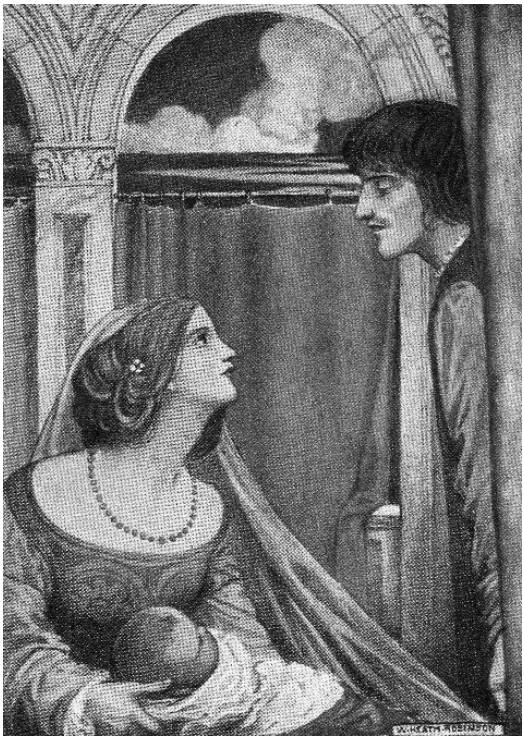
These thoughts came back to his mind so often that at last he resolved to try Griselda's patience by taking away her baby from her.

One evening Griselda was playing with her little child. The baby laughed in her arms and looked sweeter than ever.

At that moment the curtain at the doorway was drawn aside and Lord Walter came into the room. His face was sad and drawn, and as Griselda looked up at him she feared that some great blow had fallen on him, or that some enemy had entered the country.

Lord Walter said to her:

'Griselda, thou hast not forgotten the day on which I brought thee from thy father's lowly cottage to this my castle. Although thou art most dear to me, thou art not dear to my nobles. They say that it is hard that they should serve one so lowly-born as thou. Since thy daughter was born they have said this more and more, I doubt not. As thou knowest, my will is to live with my people in joy and peace. Therefore must I do to my child not as I wish myself, but as my nobles wish. Show then to me the obedience that thou didst promise to show when



Lord Walter came into the room.

thou wert wed in the village street.'

As Griselda heard these words she made no moan. Neither did she let the pain that caught at her heart be seen in her face. When she could speak, she said:

'Lord, we are thine! My child is thine. I also am thine. With thine own thou mayest ever do as pleaseth thee best.'

The Marquis was full of joy because of the patience and humbleness of Griselda; but he appeared to be sad, and left her with a troubled face.

Soon after this, Griselda started as she heard a heavy footstep on the stairway. Then an evil-looking man walked into the quiet room.

'Madam,' he said, 'I must obey my Lord's will. He bids me take this child. Thou knowest we must obey, although we may complain and mourn.'

Then the soldier took the child so roughly that it seemed as if he would kill

it before her. Griselda said:

'Pray, sir, do thou suffer me to kiss my child ere it die.' He gave it back to her. Gently she gathered it in her arms. She blessed it, and lulled it, and kissed it. Then she said in her sweet voice: 'Farewell, my child, I shall see thee never again. The blessing of Him who died on a cross of wood for us, rest on thee. To Him I give thy soul, my little one! To-night thou must die because of me.'

To the rough soldier she said:

'Take again the child and obey my Lord. But if it please my Lord, then of thy kindness bury thou the little body where no cruel bird nor beast can harm it!'

But in silence the soldier carried away the child.

Then Lord Walter looked to see if Griselda would fret or be less kind to him. He watched, but could see no change in her. She was as busy and loving and

cheerful as ever. Neither in earnest nor in play did she name her child.

After four years a son was born to Griselda. The people were very glad because there was now an heir to rule the land at the death of Lord Walter. Griselda too was happy, though her heart longed for the little maid who might have been playing with her brother.

When the boy was two years old, Lord Walter began to wish once more to try the patience of Griselda.

This time he said to her:

'Wife, I have told thee before how ill the people bear our marriage. Now that a son is born they are more wrathful than before. My heart is weary with the thought of their complaints. They say, "When Lord Walter is gone, the grandson of Janicola shall rule us!" Therefore I shall do with my son as I did with his sister. Be patient, I pray thee.'

'Thou art my Lord,' said Griselda. 'My will and my freedom lie in my father's cottage with the poor soiled clothes I left there on the day thou didst bring me hither. Could I know thy will before thou didst tell it to me, it would be done, though it were death to do it. Life cannot compare with thy love.'

Lord Walter looked down to the ground. He could not look at his wife lest he should not have heart to do as he wished.

Again the rude soldier came to Griselda. He was even harsher than before, and carried off the child without a kind word to the patient mother.

When the little boy was gone, the people said very bitter things about Lord Walter. The love they had given him before was turned into hatred because he had treated his beautiful wife so unkindly, and because he had murdered his

children.

Though Lord Walter saw this, he wished to try his wife once more. He knew that he could send away his wife and marry another if he got a letter from the Pope to say that he might. He sent a messenger to Rome, where the Pope lived. This messenger was told to bring back a letter, not from the Pope, but as like one of his as possible.

The letter came. It said that because of the anger of Lord Walter's people at the lowly birth of his wife Griselda, the Marquis might send her away and marry another.

The news of the letter spread throughout the land. Every one believed that it had really come from the Pope.

Griselda's heart was very sore when she heard of this letter. But she went on quietly with each day's work. She did not even speak of the letter to her husband.

At last Lord Walter spoke before all his court, and with no knightly gentleness.

'Griselda,' he said, 'there is no freedom in the life of one who rules. I may not act after my own wish as any labourer on my land may do. As thou knowest, my people hate thy presence, and demand of me that I wed another. The Pope's letter thou hast heard. Return then, swiftly and without complaint, to thy father's cottage, for already my bride cometh hither.'

'My Lord, it is no new thought to me, that I am unworthy to be thy servant—far more unworthy to be thy wife. In this great house of which thou didst make me queen, I have not acted as mistress, but only as lowly handmaid to thee. For these years of thy kindness, I thank thee. Gladly do I go to my father's house. There he tended me when I was but a child. Now I will stay with him till death enters the

cottage door. To thee and to thy bride be joy. To her I willingly yield the place where I have been so happy. Since thou, who once wert all my joy, wilt have me go, I go!'

Lord Walter turned away in sadness. He could scarcely speak for pity, but he held to his purpose.

Then Griselda drew her wedding-ring from her finger, and laid it down. Beside it she put the gems that Lord Walter had given her. Her beautiful robes she laid aside. In the simplest gown she could find, and with head and feet all bare, Griselda went down through the olive trees towards her father's house.

Many of Lord Walter's people followed her, weeping and bewailing the fickleness of fortune. Griselda did not turn to them, nor speak, nor weep. She quietly went on her way.

When the tidings reached her father,

he wished that he had never been born, so sad was he in the sorrow of his beautiful daughter. He hastened out to meet her, and wrapped her tenderly in her old cloak, and led her home with tears.

Griselda spoke no word of complaint, nor did she speak of her former happiness. Once more she tended the sheep on the common. Once more she carried water from the well. Once more she thought first of her father.

After some weeks Lord Walter sent for Griselda. She went to the castle and greeted him humbly as of old. She showed no grudge because of his unkindness.

'Griselda,' he said, 'thou knowest, as doth no other, how all this castle should be ordered for my pleasure. Stay thou then, and have all in readiness for the fair young bride whom I shall wed tomorrow. It is my will that she be welcomed

royally.'

'My whole desire is to serve thee, my Lord. Neither weal nor woe shall ever make me cease to love thee with all my heart.'

At once Griselda took control of all who worked in the castle. Of them all she was the neatest and the quickest. Soon every room in the tower was sweet and clean. The great hall was decked for the wedding feast, and the table glittered with silver.

Early next morning many horsemen came to the castle. Amongst them was a beautiful girl dressed in a shimmering white robe. Near her rode a charming boy younger than the maiden. Round them were many nobles, and a guard of soldiers, who had brought them to Lord Walter's court.

The people crowded round the gates. So charmed were they with the fair

young maid, that some of them forgot their love for Griselda, and were ready to welcome the bride whose coming caused her so much sorrow.

Still Griselda moved about the castle in her old worn clothes. She went to the gate to welcome the bride. Then she received the guests and greeted each of them according to his degree.

The stranger nobles wondered who Griselda could be. She was so wise and gentle, and yet so meanly dressed.

Before the feast began, Lord Walter called Griselda to him. Then he asked her, 'What dost thou think of my wife? Is she beautiful?'

'Never have I seen a fairer,' said Griselda. 'Joy be with you both evermore! But oh! I beg of thee, torment not this child as thou didst me. She has been tenderly cared for. She could not bear what I have borne.'

When Lord Walter saw her great patience, and thought of the pain he had caused her, his heart went out to her in great pity, and he cried, 'It is enough, Griselda; fear no more, nor be thou longer sad. I have tried thy faith and thy sweetness, as faith and sweetness have never before been tried.'

His arms were around her, and he kissed her. Griselda looked at him in wonder. She could not understand.

'Griselda,' he said, 'thou art my wife. I have no other. This is thy daughter; her brother is my heir. Thine are they both. Take them again, and dream not that thou art bereft of thy children.'

When Griselda heard all this she fainted away in her great joy. When she woke again she called her children to her. Timidly they came, but soon they were caught close to her breast. While she fondled them, and kissed them, her

hot tears of joy fell on their fair faces, and on their hair. Then she looked at Lord Walter, and said, 'Death cannot harm me now, since thou lovest me still.' Then she turned back to the children.

'Oh tender, oh dear, oh little ones, my children! Your sorrowful mother thought that cruel dogs or other fearsome beasts had torn you! but God has kept you safe.'

Once again the ladies of the court dressed Griselda in royal robes. Once again they set a golden crown upon her head. Once again the wedding-ring slipped into its own place on her finger.

Ere she entered the hall of feasting again, swift messengers had brought her old father, Janicola, to the castle, never to leave it again.

Then Griselda sat with her children beside her husband. To her feet came lords and nobles, peasants and farmers,

eager to kiss her hand and to show the joy they felt in her return.

Never had the walls of the castle re-echoed the laughter of so glad a people. All day long till the stars shone in the cool clear sky the feasting went on.

For Griselda this was the first of many happy days, happier than she had known before.

In her home sounded the gay voices of happy children as they played with, and cared for, the old grandfather whom their mother loved so dearly. And ever as she moved about the castle she met the eyes of Lord Walter, that told her again and yet again that he trusted her utterly.

CHAPTER 4
Constance

The Story by the Man of Law

Very long ago there lived in Rome an Emperor who had a daughter called Constance. She was fair and good, and was loved by all who knew her.

When she was eighteen years of age a company of merchants came to Rome from Syria. They were treated with respect and honour, for they were very great merchants.

Their ships had often come to the port of Rome, and the people had pressed each other on the shore to see the bales of satin, dyed in rich colours of purple

and blue and scarlet, that the Syrian seamen threw on land. The Romans enjoyed the heavy scent of the Eastern spices that filled the air. They liked to handle the elephants' tusks, that lay white and shining on the beach beside dark strips of ebony wood. So they welcomed the Eastern merchants; and those who had traded with them wished now to show them how beautiful the satin hangings they had bought from them still were, or how dainty the carving was on the ivory tusks.

Soon the merchants were made to feel at home in Rome. While they enjoyed themselves there, and made new friends, they heard the praise of the Emperor's daughter every day.

Something like this was what they heard:

'Our Emperor of Rome, God bless him, hath a daughter so fair and good,

that never since the world began hath there been one like her. May fortune smile upon her! She is worthy to be the queen of all the world. She is beautiful without pride, and young without folly. A pure conscience is her guide in all her ways. Humility hath made her gentle. She is the mirror of all courtesy. Her heart is the home of truth, and her hand the giver of kindnesses without number.'

The merchants wondered why it was that they heard so much about Constance until they saw her themselves. Then they too loved her.

After many days they laded their ships with all that Rome could give them, and set sail for Syria. They reached their haven in safety and good fortune. When they came to their own town, all the neighbours gathered to see the beautiful things that they had brought from the West. Little amber-coloured babies

tumbled about amongst the blocks of white marble. Dark-eyed men and women leaned forward to see pictures made of stones and jewels of beautiful colours, and stood breathless before white alabaster statues.

Towards evening the merchants looked up and saw their camels as they returned across the desert, one behind another. The long line stretched far away into the east. As the first camel sailed into the courtyard, and knelt to be unladed, the merchants knew that they really were at home. They touched the packets of spices, and the ivory tusks from India, more tenderly than they had touched the rare things they had brought from Rome.

A few days after this a message came to them from the Sultan of Syria. The message bade them come at once to see him, and to tell him of their visit to Rome

and of the great Emperor who reigned there, who sent out his armies into every country under the sun.

The merchants came to the palace. They saluted the Sultan, and bowed to the ground before him. When he asked them about Rome and about the Emperor, they told him many strange stories of the buildings and of the people of the city, and of the great battles of the Emperor. But no matter where they began, before their tale was ended, they always spoke of the Emperor's fair daughter Constance. If they spoke of the court, they said that she was the flower of it, more beautiful by far than any other—so gracious too that even the stranger and the foreigner felt at ease in her presence. If they spoke of the people of Rome, then they said that every one loved Constance, and that the poor owed their lives to her gifts. They told too that those who

were sad thought of the gentleness with which she shared their grief, and those who were glad of the brightness with which she heard of their joy.

These merchants painted so bright a picture of this fair lady, that the Sultan loved the very thought of Constance, and wished to marry her and to share his throne with her.

He called his wise men and his courtiers to him, and told them that they must go to Rome in great ships and take gifts with them, and ask the Emperor to allow him to marry Constance.

The courtiers were greatly astonished when they heard this. They feared that the Emperor would not allow his daughter to marry the Sultan, because the laws of the two countries were not the same. The Syrians had not heard much about Christ, nor learned to do His will; they obeyed the prophet Mahomet. But the

Emperor of Rome and his daughter worshipped Christ.

The courtiers tried to prove to the Sultan that the Emperor would never let his daughter marry one who did not serve Christ. But the Sultan only said, 'I will become a Christian, and be baptized rather than lose Constance. I have no choice. My heart is hers. Peace to your words! Do my will.'

At last the ships were ready, and the Sultan watched his vessels sail away into the West to go to Rome.

When the Emperor heard why all the ships had come from Syria, he was sad. He did not wish to let his daughter go so far away to live amongst strangers. But when he heard that the Sultan had promised to serve Christ, he thought how grand a thing it would be if all the land of Syria became Christian, and he agreed to the marriage of Constance with the

Sultan.

All through Rome the command went that every one must pray that God would bless the marriage and speed the voyage.

Constance was very sad. Her heart sank when she thought that she must leave her father and her mother and all her friends. She gazed at every room in her beautiful home and said good-bye to the trees and flowers in the garden she had played in so often. She walked through Rome and looked up at the buildings she had known from her childhood. She knelt for the last time in the church where she had first promised to serve and follow Christ. The poor people who loved her crept to her side in sorrow and kissed her robe, or gazed at her as she passed by. To them she seemed a martyr.

Too soon her wedding robes and her treasures were ready for her. Ships of



To them she seemed a martyr.

Italy, with knights, ladies, and bishops from Rome, lay alongside the Syrian vessels, that Constance might arrive at her new home in such state as became an Emperor's daughter.

On the morning of the day on which she was to sail, Constance was overcome with sorrow. What wonder that she wept?

'Father,' she said, 'thy poor child Constance, the daughter of thy tender care, Constance, thy child, commends herself to thy grace. These eyes shall never see thee more! Alas that I must go to Syria to strangers! May Christ, Who died for us, give me strength to do His will. What then will it matter though I perish!'

They led her to the ship. There she stepped forward bravely. 'Christ be with you all!' she said.

'Farewell, fair Constance!' they

answered, and watched her sail away into the distance.

The Sultan of Syria wished to receive his bride royally. While he planned how he could please her best, a message came to him from his mother to say that she wished to welcome his young wife. She said also that she hoped he would bring his bride and all her friends to feast with her.

The Sultan was glad to find that his mother meant to be so kind, and he promised to bring Constance and the courtiers to her feast. Then he knelt to thank her, but he could scarcely speak for joy because he had feared that she would be unkind to his wife.

But the Sultan did not know what a wicked woman his mother was. Nor did he know that she had called many of his people to her, and had said to them:

'Ye know that my son means to marry

this Roman woman and to cease to obey Mahomet. He has vowed that he will serve Christ. This is a fearful thing, but we cannot defy the Sultan openly, so let us pretend that we too will become Christians. Then I shall make a great feast, and while the feast is at its height, do you burst into the room, and slay every Christian man and woman.'

It was not because this old woman cared about the worship of Mahomet that she planned this horrible thing. It was because she wished to rule the whole country herself.

When the Sultan heard that his ships from Rome had reached the Syrian shore, he sent messages through all the country to bid his nobles ride forth to welcome his bride. The first message he sent was to his mother.

Horses and camels with richly clad riders came from every side to meet the

company from the ships. Foremost of all, and gayest of all, was the mother of the Sultan.

She received Constance as gladly and as kindly as her own mother could have done, but within her heart hate and cruelty raged. Constance tried to return her welcome graciously, but something made her shrink from it. She was very sad, and did not care for the great pomp and show with which she was welcomed. But when the Sultan himself came and knelt before her, a little hope sprang up in her heart. She was sure he was a true man. She thought she might learn to love him, and that it might not be so difficult as she had feared to be good and happy in Syria. As the days went on she became certain of it, and her smile was bright and sweet. She gave her Roman friends many messages to take to her father and mother. Each day these messages were

brighter.

The Sultan's mother wished to hold her feast before the Romans sailed away. Everything was planned so that they might go on the morning after the feast. Constance did not like to think of the feast, because she did not trust the Sultan's mother, and she was sad to think that her friends must sail away when it was over. But when the day came, she put on her most royal robes, and looked bright and glad for her husband's sake.

In the midst of the feast a noise was heard. For some moments swords flashed and all was confusion. Then Constance was left alone with her wicked enemy. Her husband and many another lay dead beside her; and the men who had done this thing had fallen back out of sight. For a moment the two women stood face to face, and the Syrian trembled before the Roman girl.

Then Constance was seized and carried hastily to the shore, and on board a ship that lay in the harbour. In the ship there were clothes, food, and the treasure that she had brought with her. Her guards sprang off into a little boat that lay alongside. The anchor was hauled up into the boat, and the chain that fastened it to the ship was Sawn across.

'Now you may learn to sail with none to steer, far from Syria back to Rome!' they shouted.

The wind blew from the land, and soon the ship was far away out at sea. Constance was alone on the great waters. She knelt in terror. 'Thou who art Lord of fortune be my Steersman!' she pleaded. 'If it shall be that I must sink in the deep, keep me from all evil things that dwell therein. Keep me and grant me Thy grace, O Christ!'

For a long time she knelt there. She

could not tell how long the time had been. She was roused by the tossing of the vessel. A great storm had risen, and the ship danced amongst the waves like a little bit of cork. Every moment it seemed to Constance that the next wave must cover the ship and bury both it and her deep in the water. She crept along the deck a little way to get to the hold of the ship, for the waves wet her through and through. Before she had gone many yards, she stumbled over the anchor chain and fell stunned on the deck.

When she awoke, the sun was shining brightly on her, and the sky was blue above her. At first she could not think where she was, but soon everything came back to her memory. She wondered how it was that she had not been washed overboard in the storm. She tried to rise, but could not. Then she found that the anchor chain over which she had

stumbled had caught her and kept her safe. When she freed herself from the chain, she tried to lift it up to wind it round the pillar to which it was fastened, lest it should lash itself about in some other storm as it had done before. But she was too weak and faint to carry the heavy links of the chain. She let them drop again, and stumbled to the hold of the ship to get food.

When she came to the hold, she found two stone pitchers that had been filled with water lying on the ground. She saw that one of them was broken, but she did not think what that meant. She wanted something to eat.

A bunch of dates lay where the pitcher had fallen when the ship tossed so wildly. She sat down and ate them up. Then she looked round to see what else there was. She found some barley-cakes, and when she had eaten them she began

to feel thirsty, and went to the pitchers to get water. The broken one had none in it at all, and the other had only a little left in it as it lay on its side. Then Constance thought of what she should do when this little drop of water was gone.

She could let her pitcher over the side of the ship and draw up salt water to wash with, but she could not drink salt water.

Constance took a very little water out of the pitcher and sipped it eagerly. She saw that she must make this water last till rain came again, and that then she must put her pitcher on the deck, where it would catch as much rain water as it could hold.

But it was many days before rain came, and Constance was terribly thirsty. When at last the sky did grow grey, and heavy drops began to fall, Constance took a great box in which her jewels had

lain and carried it on to the deck too. She knew that it would hold water enough to last her a long time.

After many days she saw the mountains of Italy. She knew them at once, because she had watched them so long and so sadly as she sailed to Syria.

Her heart beat wildly. Would her ship turn towards them? It was sailing in clear shallow water. Beneath her she could see rocks bedded in sand.

'Ah!' she cried, 'if I only had an anchor, that I might stay my vessel's course until the wind blows towards those beautiful mountains!'

With busy haste she gathered all the heaviest things she could find, even the great jewelled crown the Sultan had given her, and fastened them on to the anchor chain. Her hands were torn and bleeding ere she had tied the last rope tight. She could not lift the heavy mass

from the ground, so she pushed it to the side of the ship and hurled it overboard. It fell into the water with a great splash and sank. For a few moments the ship still moved on, dragging this strange anchor after it. Then the crown caught tight amongst the rocks, and the ship lay at anchor.

As Constance moved about the ship that day her heart was full of hope. Suddenly the ship sprang forward. Constance ran to the chain. It lay loose on the deck. She pulled it in. It came at once, and the loose end showed the marks of a saw where a link had broken. The link had been half sawn through in the boat on the Syrian shore, and Constance had not noticed when she weighted the chain. Poor Constance! She saw the jewels in her crown sparkling in the water as the ship sailed on under the mountains that meant home to her—on

and on, till they were far behind.

Constance stood with her hands clasped tightly, but still she did not give up hope.

Some other wind, perhaps, would come to drive her back again!

But no wind ever came to blow Constance back. When her ship did at last stick fast in the sand, it was not on the coast of Italy, but on a dull grey shore in Northumberland.

High above her as she looked to landward she saw a castle. She did not know whether to be glad or sad. For though land and safety would be sweet to her, she feared lest the people of this strange country would be as powerful and as cruel as the Syrians had been.

After she had watched the shore for hours, she saw a tall old man come striding down to the ship. He had many servants with him, but he left them

behind him and crossed the sands alone. When Constance saw him she hid herself in the hold of the ship and waited. The man climbed up the side of the vessel and searched it. When he came to the hold he was full of wonder. Before him lay gems and gold in a heap. Constance had had to put them on the floor when she emptied the box for the rain water. Beside the jewels lay beautiful dresses of brocade and golden cloth, and behind these Constance herself sat trembling. Her face was worn and weather-beaten, but she was very beautiful still. Her hair lay softly on her forehead, and her tearful eyes shone more brightly than the gems!

She did not know if this stranger would understand her words, but she said to him:

'I pray thee, of thy gentleness, to slay me. So sad am I, that I no longer wish to live.' The man could not understand

every word that she said, but he knew what she meant, because she spoke in Latin, and he had read some Latin books. He told her that he was keeper of the castle, and that his king, Alla, was far away in Scotland at the wars.

Then he took Constance home with him to his castle. He called for his wife Hermegild and said to her, 'See what I have brought to thee from the sea!'

He turned to Constance and said, 'Who art thou, and how camest thou hither?' Constance feared to tell who she was lest the mother of the Sultan should hear and trouble her still more, so she said:

'Ask me not, I pray thee: the sea has wearied me, so that many things are forgotten by me. Also of those things that I remember, there are many that I would gladly forget.'

So he pressed her no more, but

listened while she told of her voyage, and when he and his wife heard of her sufferings they wept for pity.

In shorter time than she could have believed, Constance grew happy and bright in the English castle. All day long she was busy. She tried to please all who dwelt there, and soon they loved her.

Constance heard that all the Christians in that land had been driven into exile, except a few who served Christ in secret.

Hermegild the keeper's wife loved Constance very much. She had never known any one who was so good and true before, and she wondered what it was that made Constance better than every one else she knew.

Sometimes she found Constance on her knees. Then she said, 'To whom dost thou pray? And is it from thy God that thy goodness comes?'

After that Constance often spoke to her of Christ and told her the story of His life and death, till Hermegild loved Him too, and became His servant.

One day, when Hermegild and Constance passed a hut near the castle, they heard the sound of singing. As they listened they knew that the words were the words of a Christian hymn. They went into the hut and found three old men there, one of whom was blind. Hermegild said, 'How is it that ye dare to sing those words in this land?'

'Lady,' the blind man replied, 'we had no money with which to buy food had we left our home and gone into exile. We serve our Lord in secret. How dost thou know that the words we sing are the words of the followers of Christ?'

'Brothers,' said Hermegild, 'I know, because I too serve Christ in secret. I would that I had strength to tell my

husband of my faith, but I fear his anger.'

Not long after this the keeper of the castle and his wife and Constance walked on the shore together. It was a bright sunny day, and they were very happy.

While they talked together they met the blind man they had seen in the hut. He heard Hermegild's voice, but he did not know that her husband was with her. He greeted her joyfully and said, 'The blessing of Christ be with thee!' Hermegild was in terror till Constance said quietly to her, 'Thou must suffer Christ's will in all things as a little child.'

Then the keeper of the castle said, 'What meaneth this?'

'Sir,' said Constance, 'it is the great power of Christ that Hermegild hath felt.' Then she began to tell the keeper of the castle the same beautiful story that she had told to Hermegild. Before evening time that day he too had begun to

serve and honour Christ.

In the town that lay nearest to the castle dwelt a knight who was cruel and wicked. He wished to marry Constance, and to get her gold and gems for himself. Constance did not wish to marry him. She did not love him, and she was very happy with Hermegild.

When the knight heard that Constance would not marry him, he was so angry that he wished to hurt her. He thought of a most cruel thing to do.

One night, when the keeper of the castle had gone to meet the king, the knight entered the castle and slew Hermegild. Then he threw his weapon into the room where Constance slept, that every one might think that she had killed her friend.

When the keeper of the castle returned with King Alla he found his wife dead. He wept and wrung his hands in

sorrow. When the knife was found in Constance's room she knew not what to say. She was dazed with grief.

All that had happened was told to King Alla. He heard too of the strange way in which Constance had come to that land. When he saw her his heart was full of pity that so gentle and beautiful a creature should fall into such misfortune. She stood before the King silent and bewildered like a poor lost lamb. Beside her stood the false knight, who said that she had done this thing.

There was great murmuring amongst the people. They said, 'We cannot believe that she hath done this cruel deed.'

Those who had lived in the castle with her said, 'She loved Hermegild; she could not slay her.'

But ever the false knight said, 'The knife was found in her room. There was no one else there.' The King asked a

great many questions, for he was very unwilling to let Constance be put to death.

While he delayed the trial Constance fell on her knees. 'Immortal God,' she said, 'Thou Who hast saved many an one from false blame, if I be guiltless, save Thou me! Otherwise I must die!'

Then this young maid stood up alone in all the crowd. Her face was white, and those who looked on her knew that she faced death; but she was calm and brave.

King Alla was so sorrowful that the tears ran down his cheeks, but he could see no way in which to save her from death.

Once more he called the false knight. He bade him stand beside Constance, where he could be seen by every one, and said, 'Wilt thou swear that this young maid hath slain Hermegild?'

The false knight began:

'I swear that Constance——'

But ere he had spoken another word, he lay still and senseless on the courtyard.

The King and all his court were frightened at this strange judgment. The King said sternly to Constance:

'By what means hast thou slain the knight who did accuse thee?'

'I wrought it not,' she said, 'but Christ Who is my Lord!'

Then once again she told the story of Christ that she had told to Hermegild and to the keeper of the castle.

The King and all the people listened eagerly. And before many weeks had passed Christ was worshipped throughout the land.

King Alla often thought of Constance as he had seen her stand before him in her sorrow, and of all her grace and beauty.

He loved her so much that one day

he said to her, 'Constance, thou holy maid, most fair and radiant, wilt thou be my queen?'

Constance raised her face to his and answered, 'I will.'

Not long afterwards wedding bells rang joyfully throughout the land. The people who heard them were joyful too for the love that they had to Alla and to Constance.

Only one woman was sad because of this marriage. She was Alla's proud mother Donegild. She could not bear to think that her son had married a woman who had come to his land alone and in so strange a way. She did not pretend to be kind to Constance, but shut herself up in her own castle and kept away from the court.

Alla and Constance lived in joy together for a long time. Then the King had to go to Scotland to fight his foes in

the north. While he was away a little son was born. Constance was very happy. She only wished that her husband would come home to see her baby boy.

The keeper of the castle wrote to King Alla and told him of the birth of his son and how beautiful the baby was. Then he called a messenger and sent him off to the camp where the King was, with this letter.

He told him to go in haste and to enter no house by the way.

But the messenger wished to win the goodwill of Donegild. So he went out of his way that he might pass her home. When he came to her castle and stood before Donegild, he said:

'Madam, rejoice and give thanks! My lady queen hath borne a son to the joy of all the land. Behold the letter in which I bear the tidings to the King with all the haste I may! If thou hast any message for

the King, I am thy servant.'

'Tarry thou here till tomorrow. Then shalt thou bear a packet to the King from me.'

The messenger replied: 'Madam, I dare not; the keeper of the King's castle charged me to tarry no whither. Already I risk my life to bring thee these tidings.'

'Dost thou think,' said Donegild, 'that the King's mother cannot save thee from the power of the keeper of his castle? I command thee to wait my pleasure.'

At night the messenger tried to keep awake that he might guard his letter for the King, but he had taken too much of Donegild's wine, and he fell fast asleep.

While he was sleeping Donegild stole up to him and took away his letter. She carried it to another room. There she broke the seal, and read the letter. Then she wrote another letter. She tried to

make her writing look like the writing of the keeper of the castle, but the words she wrote were very different. She said:

'The Queen's child is so hateful to look at that no one will stay in the castle beside it. Queen Constance is doubtless a wicked spirit who has come to this land to bewitch us all and to work our ruin.' Then she copied the name of the keeper of the castle, in order that the King might think that he had written the letter and sealed the packet with the royal seal. She stole back to the messenger, slipped the letter into his bag, and left him still asleep.

Next morning the messenger hurried on with this letter and the packet from Donegild to the King. He did not know that the keeper's letter was destroyed.

The King was very sad when he read Donegild's letter. He sat down at once and wrote to the keeper of the castle. In

his letter he said:

'Welcome be the will of Christ for evermore, to me who now have learned of Him. His will alone I desire in all things. Keep this child, whether it be fair or fearsome, till my return, and keep my wife the Queen safely, I command thee.'

He wept as he sealed this letter. Then he sent it to the keeper of the castle by the same messenger. But the man went again by Donegild's castle, and again he was commanded to wait; and again Donegild stole his letter and changed what it said.

Donegild wrote as if it were from the King: 'On pain of death I command thee that thou allow not Constance my wife to remain in this country four days longer. Place thou her, and her young child, and all her treasure, in the ship in which she came to this shore. Charge thou her also never to return. Then let the vessel

be pushed from the shore, and cast adrift.'

When the keeper of the castle took this letter from the messenger and read it, he rose and walked up and down his room.

'Alas,' he said, 'alas, alas, some terrible judgment shall fall on us for such a wicked deed as this! Alas, fair Constance, that I must torture thee, or die a shameful death!'

When the news of the King's order spread through the land, every one was full of horror. Even old men and women, who had lived through many hardships, wept when they thought of the fair young child and his mother on the sea.

The keeper of the castle did all he could to lessen the terror of the voyage. He fixed great tanks on the deck that Constance might always have water. He gave her an anchor also that she might

throw it out and stay her vessel if she came near any fair land.

On the fourth day Constance walked down from the castle to the ship. The terror of the nights and days of her last voyage came back to her. 'This time,' she thought, 'my little child must suffer too.'

Her face was deathly white, but she did not weep nor complain. She turned to the weeping people who crowded around her, and said, 'I welcome all the will of Christ. He Who saved me from the death of a murderer while I was with you, can keep me from harm on the deep. Strong is He still as then. In Him I trust. To me He will be wind and sail and pilot.'

Her little child lay weeping in her arms. She drew him close to her and whispered, 'Peace! little son, I will not harm thee.'

Then she covered his eyes with her neckerchief, lulled him to sleep in her

bosom, and murmured, 'O Thou Who pitiest the sorrowful, pity my child!'

Again she crooned to the child: 'O little child, what hast thou done amiss? How can it be that thy stern father wills that thou shouldst die?'

'Have mercy, dear friend!' she cried to the keeper of the castle, 'let my babe live with thee if I must go, and if thou darest not save him, yet kiss him once in his father's name!'

She stepped on board the ship and sailed away once more into the darkness. 'Farewell, thou pitiless husband!' she cried, as she looked back on the land where she had found so sweet a home.

Meanwhile King Alla hurried home to see his wife and child, and to know for himself what the keeper's letter had failed to tell him. When he saw the keeper of the castle, he asked for them.

The keeper turned cold with fear. His

heart beat so that he could scarcely speak. He took the King's letter from his bosom, gave it to him to read, and said, 'Lord, I have done as thou didst command me!'

The King was overcome with grief. And when he heard that the child was no fearsome creature, but a lovely boy, he grew terribly angry.

The messenger was called. He confessed that he had gone to Donegild's castle, and that he had slept there.

It was proved that Donegild had written the letters. She was slain, but her death did not help Alla to bear his sorrow for Constance. Night and day he thought of her and of what she might be suffering. When he walked or rode, when he went out or came in, he remembered how sweet everything was when Constance was with him. Then he thought of the beautiful boy, his son, and wondered

whether he still lived.

For five years Constance and her boy tossed about on the sea. They were not altogether unhappy, for they had each other. As the boy grew older, his mother thanked God that she was no longer alone.

Through the long days Constance told him many tales of heroes and of saints; but however many questions he asked, she would tell him nothing of his father. She could not bear to speak of him. She loved him. When her boy lay asleep she walked up and down the deck, or knelt at the prow, and wondered what could have made King Alla write so strange a letter. She thought that perhaps he had been bewitched.

Long before this time, the Emperor of Rome had heard of the death of the Christians in Syria, and of the dishonour that had been done to Constance. In his



When her boy lay asleep at the prow.

wrath he sent his armies to Syria to punish the mother of the Sultan and those who served her. For years the war had raged. Now the Emperor's ships were on their way back to Rome, crowned with victory, and laden with spoils.

As they sailed towards Rome with gay flags flying from their masts, they met a battered ship that drove helplessly before the wind. In it sat Constance with her little boy.

The general took them on board his ship, but Constance did not dare to tell him who she was. She was sure that if the Emperor, her father, knew how Alla had behaved to her, he would send his armies to destroy him.

The general took Constance and her son home to his wife. She was the Emperor's sister, but Constance was so greatly changed that her aunt did not know her. She was still as good and true

as of old, and once more she won the love of all with whom she dwelt.

But far away in Britain King Alla grew more restless as the years passed on. He could not forget Constance, and he mourned for her more sadly day by day. At last he vowed that he would go on pilgrimage to Rome.

His heralds came to Rome before him. When they told that the great King Alla was on his way to Rome on pilgrimage, the general in whose house Constance lived rode forth to meet him and to welcome him. King Alla and the general showed all honour to each other, and in a few days the general was asked to go to feast with King Alla.

During all the time since the heralds had spoken of King Alla's coming, Constance had known neither what to do nor what to say. She longed to know if her husband was still as hard-hearted as he

was when he sent her away, but she dared not go herself to find out.

When she heard of this feast she said to the general, 'Wilt thou do me this great kindness, that thou take my son Maurice with thee, that he may see the great King Alla?' Maurice was a beautiful boy, and was loved by the general, who gladly took him to the feast.

While every one ate and drank, King Alla suddenly saw Maurice as he stood before him. He caught the arm of the general to steady himself, for Maurice was so like Constance that the sight of him made King Alla tremble all over.

'Whose is that fair child that standeth yonder?' he said.

'Truly I know not,' the general answered. 'He hath a mother, but I know nothing of his father.' Then he told King Alla how the child was found, and added, 'In all my life I have never seen a

woman, be she maiden, wife, or mother, so pure and true as is his mother.'

The face of Constance lived ever in King Alla's heart, and in this child he saw that face again. Could the child's mother be his wife? he wondered. He was so moved that he fled from the feast. One moment he said to himself, 'I am mad, I am mad! My wife is certainly drowned in the salt sea!' The next moment he said, 'How do I know? Christ may have brought my wife hither by sea as safely as He sent her to my land.'

Alla went home with the general. When Constance heard that he had come, and that he wished to see her, she shook so much that she could scarcely walk, yet for her boy's sake she would not refuse to see him.

When Alla saw his wife he wept. He knew her at the first glance. But she stood silent as marble in her sorrow. Her

heart was full of sadness when she thought of his cruelty. He pleaded with her. 'Constance, my wife, I am as guiltless of thy harm as is Maurice, my son, with his fair face, so like, so like to thine!'

It was a long time before he could make Constance understand that he had never written the cruel letter which had caused all her sorrows.

When at last she knew that he had always loved her, and that he had suffered as much sorrow through that woeful letter as she had done, and when she let him take her in his arms and kiss her, their joy was greater than all other gladness. Then Constance told her husband that the Emperor was her father, and begged King Alla to ask him to feast with him next day.

King Alla and his little son went together to the Emperor, who promised to come to the feast at Alla's court. But

ever as he spoke to them his gaze rested on Maurice, and he sighed as he thought of the young daughter whom he had lost so long ago.

When all was ready for the feast Alla and his wife rode out to meet the Emperor. When Constance saw her father she lighted from her horse and knelt before him.

'Father,' she said, 'hast thou forgotten thy young child Constance? I am thy daughter, thy little Constance that thou didst send to Syria long ago. It is I, father, that was set afloat to die, alone on the salt sea. Dear father, send me no more to heathen lands, but thank my lord and husband for his care of me.'

The old Emperor leapt from his horse and clasped his daughter in his arms. But who can describe the joy and gladness of the feast in Alla's court that day?

Soon King Alla had to leave Rome.

Once more Constance sailed away from Italy, but this time her heart was glad and free. Beside her stood her husband and her boy.

In Northumberland the news spread that Alla's ships were in sight. The aged keeper of the castle came to the water's edge to meet his King. Behind him the people old and young pressed forward to welcome their royal master. The keeper of the castle was growing blind. He could not see the ships till they were close at hand. He heard strange whispers in the crowd.

"What is it?' he said. 'What say ye amongst yourselves?' 'Is the King dead?' he asked another, for he had so often heard evil tidings, that he feared to hear any new thing.

'It is the Queen!' they said.

'The Queen!' 'And the King is with her.'

'At her side stands a beautiful boy.'

'He must be Maurice!'

'He is Maurice!'

'May the Prince live!' 'May the Prince live!' they shouted; and the feeble voice of the keeper of the castle echoed, 'May the Prince live!'