

Our Little Norman, Frankish, and Saxon Cousins

VOLUME EIGHTEEN

EVALEEN STEIN
JULIA DARROW COWLES

Our Little Norman, Frankish, and Saxon Cousins

Volume 18

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Libraries of Hope

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Our Little Norman Cousin of Long Ago

Evaleen Stein

Illustrated by John Goss


Henri
Alan

Preface

Very likely all you boys and girls of the age of the children in this story will learn, by and by, how important a part in history was played by the people of Normandy, especially under their great Duke, William the Conqueror. And then, if you have read this little book, perhaps you will say to yourselves, "Why, yes, we remember about those people, how they lived and what the children did in the days of Duke William!" And if you read carefully your histories, and books of manners and customs, and tales of that time, perhaps you will say also, "The doings of Our Little Norman Cousin of Long Ago must have been true! At any rate we are quite sure the author tried very hard to make those Norman children in the story behave as proper eleventh-century boys and girls ought to."

Evaleen Stein.

Pronunciation of Proper Names

Bayeux (ba-yuh')

Brecey (bree-sa')

Briouze (bree-ooz')

Brit'-tan-y

Bur'-gun-dy

Caen (kon)

Centeville (sont-vee-'ye)

Crecy (kra-see')

Dives (deev)

Epte (ept)

Eu (uh)

Falaise (fal-aze')

Gervaise (jer-vaz')

Goelet (jo-lay')

Guibray (je-bra')

Laon (Ion)

Noireat (nwar-e-a')

Rouen (rwan)

Seine (sane)

Val-es-Dunes (val-a-dune')

Valognes (val-own')

CHAPTER I
An Invitation

It was a May morning in Normandy in the year 1066, and through all the grassy valleys the pear and apple trees were clouds of white and rosy bloom. Some of them overhung the little thatched huts of the peasant folk, which stood close together making the tiny village of Noireat; and some of the flowery trees clambered up the lower slopes of the steep limestone cliff that rose behind the village. Crowning this cliff was the great gray castle of Count Bertram, the lord of Noireat.

Within the walls of the castle was a large courtyard, where two boys were playing ball. Each was dressed in a tunic of dark green cloth; that is, a close-fitting garment belted at the waist and with a scant skirt reaching to just above the knee; on the boys' legs were long black hose and on their feet shoes of thick soft leather without heels and

with long pointed toes; on their heads were little caps, each with a black cock's feather stuck into a buckle at one side.

Presently, "Hark, Alan!" cried one of the boys, "I thought I heard a trumpet!"

Both lads paused in their play; then as they caught clearly another shrill blast, "Come, Henri," said Alan, "let us go to the battlements and see who is coming!"

Off they scampered across the courtyard, through a narrow doorway in a strong tower near the gate of the castle and up a winding flight of stone steps that led to the top of the wall. This wall, which enclosed the castle, and to which parts of it were joined, was very thick and strong; and in a small tower over the gateway stood a man-at-arms whose duty it was to watch all who came thither, and, if foes, to warn the lord so that he might make ready to defend himself. For in those days noblemen often made war on one another and people who lived in castles expected to keep constant watch for enemies.

But they were quite as often friends as foes who rode along the steep bridle path to Noireat; for people played almost as much as they fought, and liked entertainment as

well as we do today.

As Alan and Henri reached the top step of the winding stair, the man-at-arms, who had been gazing down at the bridle path, turned, and said with a smile, "Well, youngsters, I think we may look for one of those play fights that folks call tourneys. I'll wager yonder horsemen are coming to invite Count Bertram, for they are heralds of his friend the Baron of Brecey. Do you see that zig-zag green band and the three red spots worked on the little flags hanging from their trumpets? That is the device of the Baron of Brecey."

The lads looked eagerly down at the two riders who were by this time quite near the gateway, and, sure enough, they could make out the embroidery of which the watchman spoke.

"I don't think that device is so handsome as the red two-legged dragon on Count Bertram's flag," said Alan critically.

"Why does he have that dragon on his flag, and his shield, too?" asked Henri.

"Well," answered the watchman, rubbing his forehead, "I don't exactly know. Maybe Count Bertram, or some of

his kinfolks, fought a red two-legged dragon somewhere, or maybe he just liked its looks. I don't know either whether there is any particular meaning to those spots and things the Baron of Brecey has. But it's a good thing for a knight to have some kind of a device."

"Why is it?" asked Alan.

"Why, there is a reason for it, youngster," said the watchman, "and it's this; when they go to fight in war or those play-battle tourneys or tournaments, or whatever they call them, their faces and bodies are so covered up by the armor they have to wear to protect themselves, that no one can tell who they are unless they have a device somewhere about them, painted on their shields or worked on their banners. And as most of the knights know the devices of the rest, it is about as good as having one's name told to everybody. The trouble is though that they don't all stick to the device they pick out, but a good many of them change it sometimes when they take a notion to, and that gets people mixed up about their names."

"Count Bertram always has the red two-legged dragon," said Henri.

"Yes," replied the watchman, "and he says that by and by all the knights will have to settle on regular devices and hand them down in their families, so people can always be sure who they are. And maybe they will," he added.

But while Alan and Henri had been talking with the watchman, the heralds had reached the gate of the castle where they halted and each blew another shrill blast on his trumpet.

At this the lads, with eyes dancing, turned about and racing down the stairs and back to the courtyard joined a group of younger boys, all, like themselves, pages in the household. Indeed, everybody in the castle had come into the courtyard by this time, from Count Bertram, the lord of Noireat and Lady Gisla, his wife, down to the cooks and scullions; for visitors were few, and if they came on peaceful errands were always warmly welcomed.

Meantime Master Herve, the gate-keeper, opened the heavy door at the end of an arched passage under the watch-tower and let down the narrow drawbridge that was held up by ropes to the castle wall. Outside the wall was the moat, a ditch filled with water deep enough to drown

anyone who tried to ride through it; and the drawbridge was so called because it could be drawn up and folded against the wall until the gate-keeper knew whether it was friend or foe who wished to enter.

As now the two horsemen rode into the courtyard of Noireat, a pair of little pages hurried out and held their bridles while Alan and Henri helped them dismount. One of the heralds then blew a third blast on his trumpet as the other, taking his place on the high curb of a well nearby and raising his voice, called out, "My master, the Baron of Brecey, sends greeting to the Count of Noireat and his household, and proclaims a tourney to be held four weeks from today in the meadow adjoining his castle, and he invites all Norman knights who so desire to contest for the prizes, which will be a pair of gilded spurs for the first champion and a silver hunting-horn for him adjudged second winner!"

When he had finished, everybody clapped their hands; and "Oh, Henri," whispered Alan, "do you suppose Count Bertram will take us along?"

"I'm sure I hope so!" answered Henri.

"What is a tourney?" asked one of the little pages, in a low voice, as he clung tightly to the bridle of the herald's horse.

"Why," said Henri, with a superior air, for he had been to one, "it is a kind of game where knights ride on horseback and fight for fun. Their lances aren't sharp, and they don't try to kill each other, but only to see which is the best fighter, and he gets a prize. The most beautiful lady there gives it to him. And there are always lots of ladies who go, for somebody has to look on, you know, and most all the men are doing the fighting."

"Oh," said the little page, with round eyes, "I wish I could go!"

"You probably can't, though," said Henri. "You are too little."

At this, tears sprang to the eyes of the little page, who was only seven years old and very homesick for the castle of Briouze, which was his real home and from which he had lately been brought to Noireat. "Oh," he sobbed, "I wish I was home! Father would let me go! I don't see why everybody has to live in somebody else's house, anyway! I don't

know why I had to come here!" and he began to cry in good earnest.

"There," said Henri, taking the bridle from his shaking little hand, "don't cry! You must be here because your father is a vassal of Count Bertram. So is my father and Alan's and all the other pages'. That's why we're here, too. And I'm twelve and have been here five years. You'll like it when you get used to it; isn't everybody good to you?"

"Y-e-s," sobbed the little page, "but I want Mother!" Here his tears broke out afresh. "Why—why can't I go home?" he quavered.

"Because," said Henri severely, "you're here to be trained. You will be a page for seven years and learn to mind, and run errands, and ride a pony, and ever so many things, and then you will be a squire for seven years more, and learn how to go hunting on horseback, and to fight, and lots more things, and then, if you have behaved right, when you are twenty-one you will be made a knight!" and Henri's eyes sparkled as he added, "And just think how grand that will be! You will have your own war-horse and armor and spurs and lance and banner and can ride out and

go where you please and fight and have all kinds of adventures!" For in those days this was a gentleman's idea of life; it seldom entered their heads to do any real work in the world.

But the poor little seven-year-old was not to be comforted, and crept off to a corner of the courtyard still sobbing, "I want my mother! I want to go home! I don't see why people are other people's vassals! I don't want to be a page! Booh-hoo-hoo!"

And it did seem strange that most of the gently born children of that time had to be brought up in "somebody else's house," as the little page complained. To understand how it came about you must know, to begin with, that the ruler of Normandy was called the duke; then the people were divided into three classes; first, the nobles who lived in castles, and, next to the duke, were of highest rank; second, the people who lived in towns and worked at trades and kept shops and inns for travelers; and the third, or lowest class, who were poor peasants little better than slaves, and who lived in little huts in the country where they had to farm the land for the nobles. Most of the land

was owned by these nobles and they, too, were of different degrees of rank, some having stronger castles than others and more fighting men under them. As a great deal of fighting was always going on, it followed that each weaker noble wanted the help and protection of someone more powerful than he was. In order to get this he must become a vassal; that is, he must promise to be loyal to his overlord, to fight for him in return, and in time of war to furnish him men and supplies. In this way it had come about that everybody in Normandy was the vassal of someone else, and it became the custom for children to be sent to their father's overlord that they might be brought up in his home and trained to be loyal to him. The lord and lady of every castle became foster parents to the boys and girls sent to them and did their best to be kind to them and to teach them all they could.

Count Bertram and Lady Gisla took a real interest in the group of squires and pages at Noireat and were much beloved in return. And now, as the little page still sobbed in his corner, Lady Gisla noticed him and a pitying look came into her eyes. "Poor little man!" she murmured to herself.

Then turning to two little girls who, hand in hand, had been standing nearby watching things, "Blanchette," she said, "go over to little Josef and bring him to me!"

"Yes, Mother!" answered the little girl, as she ran off to do Lady Gisla's bidding.

Blanchette was the only child of Count Bertram and Lady Gisla; and though her companion, Marie, was the daughter of one of the Count's vassals, and had been sent to Noireat to be trained, Blanchette herself had stayed in her own home because Count Bertram's overlord lived in a castle near the sea where the winters were so sharp and cold that Lady Gisla feared for the health of the little girl who had been delicate from babyhood. Moreover, it was not thought so important to send girls away from home as the boys who must be trained to fight loyally, if need be, for their overlord.

In a moment Blanchette led little Josef, still sobbing, to Lady Gisla, who taking him in her arms hugged and kissed him just as his own mother might have done. "There, there!" she whispered softly to him as she dried his eyes. "Never mind! You must learn to be a little man, and we are

all going to help you!"

And then she kissed him again and comforted him, till presently the little page was smiling through his tears and ran along quite happily when Blanchette and Marie took him off between them to romp with one of the big brown dogs, who were barking in the general excitement caused by the coming of the heralds.

CHAPTER II

The Castle of Noireat

Meantime the cooks and scullions had all hurried back to their work, and as dinner was nearly ready Count Bertram invited the heralds into the castle; to be sure it was only eleven o'clock, but that was the usual hour for the midday meal.

The Count and Lady Gisla both looked very handsome as they led the way up a flight of steps to the door of the great square tower of stone, called the keep, which was the main part of the castle. Count Bertram was dressed in a tunic of dark crimson and over his black hose narrow strips of green cloth were crisscrossed up to his knees where they were tied in knots with fringed ends; his pointed leather shoes were of dark crimson and so was his cap and the short mantle fastened over one shoulder with a silver clasp. Lady

Gisla wore a gown of violet-colored cloth with close bodice and flaring sleeves, and her long skirt was caught up in front by a silken girdle from which hung a number of silver keys; on her head was a pointed cap, and a square of lace fastened to its peak partly covered her hair which fell over her shoulders in loose flowing locks.

Within the keep was one huge room called the hall. Heavy stone pillars upheld the floor of an upper story, and high up in the thick walls were long, narrow windows; there was no glass in these for glass was scarce and imperfect then; but sometimes in winter, when it was very cold, the windows were filled in with pieces of waxed linen instead. At either end of the room was a great fireplace; one was for warmth in winter time, while at the other the castle cooking went on the year around, for there was no other kitchen. And as there were no chimneys either, the smoke from the blazing logs, over which the cooks were busy with dinner, curled up into the hall and found its way out through the windows as best it could, which, of course, wasn't very well.

On the castle walls were no pictures, but here and there

hung large pieces of cloth so skillfully embroidered that they looked almost like pictures, and here and there were fastened the antlers of a stag or a bow and sheaf of arrows. Rushes were strewn over the stone floor which was raised a little at one side of the room and called the dais. Here serving-men were placing long boards over some wooden trestles, thus making a table for the lord and lady. Others were arranging a similar but much longer one down the length of the hall. There were no cloths on either of these tables, for nobody had any; and as for forks, folks expected their fingers to answer. Count Bertram and Lady Gisla had some silver dishes and glass cups; but on the long table for the household between each two persons was set an oblong wooden dish called a trencher, and this must do for a plate for both; their cups were pewter or else part of a cow's horn hollowed out and set in metal.

When all had taken their places on the benches that served for seats the long table was quite filled, for there were many people in the household. Besides the serving-folk, and the pages and squires and other attendants of gentle birth, often some wandering knight or minstrel or

pilgrim or herald added to the company. Several of the pages and squires, however, did not sit down with the others but stood on the dais ready to wait upon Count Bertram and Lady Gisla, for one of the first things taught to them was obedience and service.

Of the pages, Alan and Henri, who were inseparable friends, were favorites of the Count, while of the squires he preferred to be served by a youth named Hugh, who had been at Noireat a number of years and was now almost ready for knighthood. These three now busied themselves to attend their master, while others of their number served Lady Gisla and the little girls who sat beside her.

Henri had already been to the well in the courtyard and filled a silver pitcher and now he brought also a silver basin, and after Count Bertram was seated at the table he poured the water over his hands into the basin and then presented him a small linen towel on which to dry them.

Meantime, Alan had gone to the kitchen end of the great hall. Here the cooks were busy at the big smoky fireplace dishing up food cooked in the copper kettles and saucepans which they pulled to the hearth from the glowing

coals. On a long spit in front of the fire were pieces of roasted meat, and on either side tired little dogs were lying hungrily sniffing the food they dared not touch till their own turn came.

Each dog had a little chain fastened around his body, one end of the chain being hooked to the spit, and for almost an hour they had been obliged to walk back and forth, thus turning the spit and keeping the meat from burning. For that was the way dogs had to help cook in those days.

"How are you, Bowser? How are you, Towser?" (perhaps those were not their real names, but never mind) said Alan, as he gently poked with his foot, first one and then the other of the dogs as he waited for the cook to place some meat on the silver platter he had brought.

Henri, too, now came to the kitchen fireplace. "There is a dish of pigeons for you to bring," said Alan as he went off with his platter.

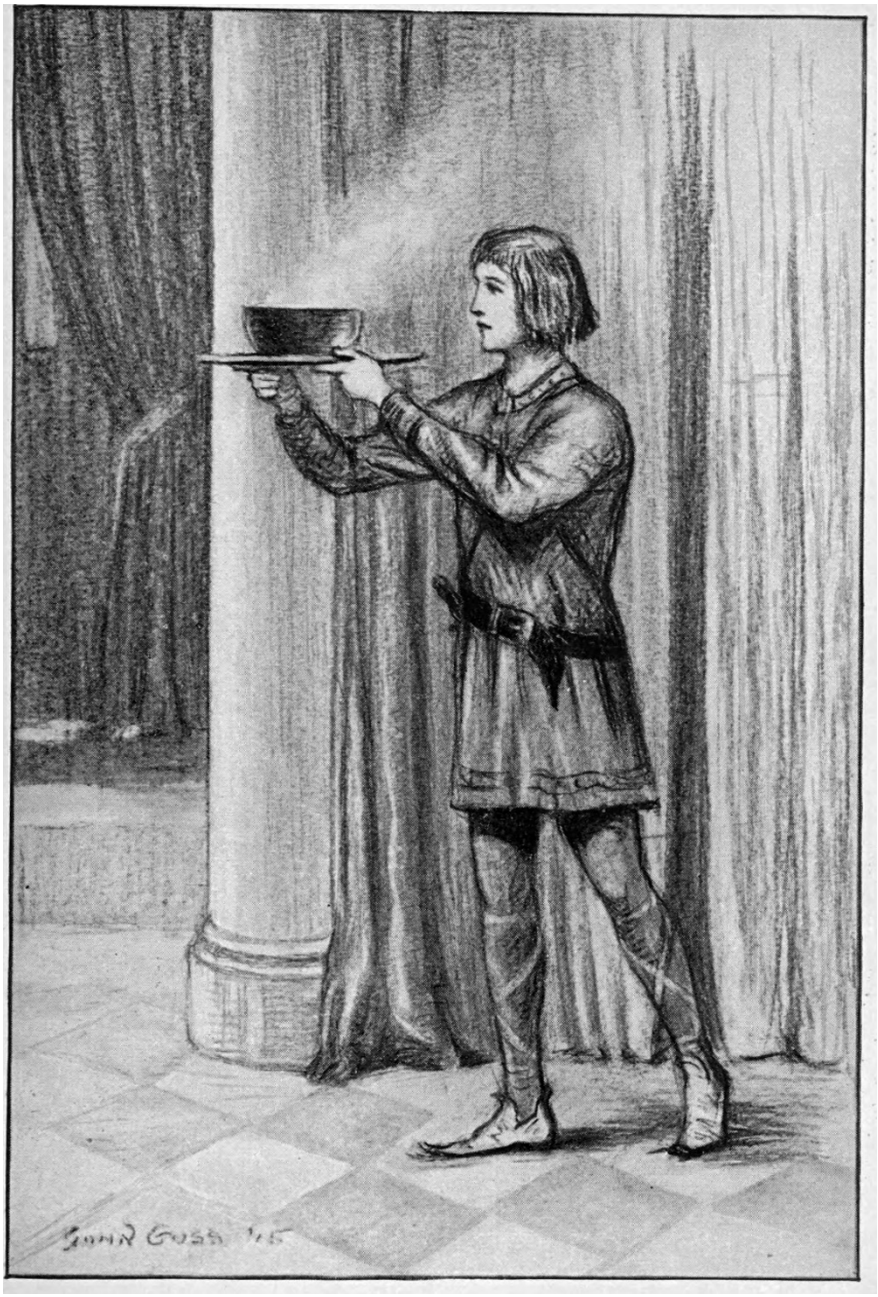
When he set it before Count Bertram, "Where is the carving knife?" asked Hugh, who was standing by ready to carve the meat, which was one of the duties of a squire.

"Oh, dear!" cried Alan, flushing, "I never can remember that knife!" And off he hurried to the kitchen so fast that he nearly ran into Henri and his pigeons. When the knife was brought, Hugh, holding the meat firmly with a wooden skewer, carefully carved it, the two boys watching intently as he did it.

"That's right," said Count Bertram, "see how he does it, lads! Hugh will soon be a knight and go away, and then, by and by, I will expect my new squires, Alan and Henri, to do my carving."

When the meat was served the boys brought dishes of beans, cabbage, turnips and other vegetables, but no potatoes, for the very good reason that none grew in Normandy as yet. Along with these they brought also the cake and custard and sweet things, which people then ate any time they pleased during the meal instead of keeping them for dessert as we would.

When Count Bertram had risen from his seat, the two pages went to the long table in the center of the hall where they found places side by side with a wooden trencher between them.



"Brought dishes of beans, cabbage, turnips,
and other vegetables."

When everybody had finished eating, very likely a number of bones had been flung under the table; and it is quite possible, too, that some of the brown dogs had crept up from the kitchen hearth or the courtyard, and lying on the rumpled-up rushes munched and gnawed to their hearts' content. For people in those days were not such particular housekeepers as we are.

CHAPTER III

Rolf the Ganger

After dinner the two heralds took their leave. Alan and Henri followed them to the gate, and when it was shut they loitered awhile in the small room under the watch-tower where Master Herve, the gate-keeper, lived. He was an old man, and the boys liked to hear the stories he was always ready to tell.

"Well, lads," he said, as they seated themselves on a bench by the door, "'tis lucky for you that you will get to see one more tourney before our noble ruler, Duke William, sets sail for Britain, for 'tis likely times will be dull enough with all the good knights following him across the sea!"

"Master Herve," said Henri, "why is Duke William going to fight in Britain?"

"Why, child," answered Master Herve, "the blood of

Rolf the Ganger runs in his veins, and every true Northman loves a good ship and a good fight!—especially if there is a good prize at the end of it!"

"Tell us about Rolf the Ganger!" put in Alan; for though the boys had heard the story often before, they always liked to listen to tales of their Northmen forefathers.

Master Herve smiled approvingly, and began: "Rolf, you know, was the great-great-great-grandfather of our Duke William, and was born nearly two hundred years ago on an isle off the coast of Norway. When he grew up he was so big and tall that he scorned to ride any of the little horses they have in Norway, and because he always walked instead people called him Rolf the Ganger, which means Rolf the Walker."

"And afterwhile he was outlawed!" said Henri.

"Yes," said Master Herve, "he was a wild blade, and for some deed he did he was made an outlaw by the King of Norway. But that didn't daunt Rolf the Ganger! He just got together a band of men and some dragon ships, for the men of Norway have always been famous rovers and more at home on sea than on land."

"I wish I could see a dragon ship!" exclaimed Alan longingly. "Do you think there will be some at Dives when Duke William sails for Britain next fall? You know when Count Bertram goes to join him we are to go, too, as far as Dives."

"Well," answered Herve, "the ships now are a good deal the same, only larger, and not so gay and fine looking. Rolf's were long and narrow with a high prow of wood carved like a dragon and gilded and painted in brave colors. And each had a sail of red and blue, and at the top of the mast flew a flag with a big black raven worked on it; there were dozens of long oars, too, and the shields of the warriors all glittering with red and blue and gold hung over the sides of the ships. It must have been a gallant sight to see their sails spread and the great gold dragons gliding over the curling green waves!" Here old Herve's eyes kindled as he went on, "The isle where Rolf was born was cold and bleak; so, when he started off he set his sails for the south and by and by he came to the mouth of the river Seine in the French country. Many of the Northmen sea-rovers had come to the French country before Rolf and fought the people and carried off rich booty."

And here old Herve's eyes flashed again; for though today we would call such doings the work of pirates, in the days of our story everybody thought it very fine and brave to get property by fighting other people and taking theirs away.

"So," went on Herve, "when the French folk saw the ships of Rolf the Ganger, they were terribly frightened, and the French King, you remember his name, lads?" asked Herve.

"Yes," laughed the boys, "he was called Charles the Simple!"

"Right!" said Herve, "he was a very silly king, and silliest of all if he thought he could drive out the Northmen if they had once made up their minds to stay. And this they had, for Rolf's men had brought their wives and children with them, and Rolf himself had conquered the French Count of Bayeaux and married his daughter Popa and was quite ready to settle down in our beautiful Norman land, though it wasn't called Normandy yet."

"Master Herve," interrupted Henri, "didn't Rolf's wife have any other name but Popa? You know that is just a little

doll!" (For so the word means in the Norman language.)

"I daresay she did," answered Herve, "but nobody knows what it was. She must have been a pretty little thing, and a great pet to get a nickname like that, and nobody will ever call her anything but Popa, if she was Duke William's great-great-great-grandmother!—Well, as I was saying, Rolf's plan to settle down in the French country, while it suited him exactly, didn't suit Charles the Simple at all; and he got an army together and fought Rolf, but Rolf beat him.

"After this King Charles thought best to try and make friends with the Northmen. So he sent word to Rolf that if he would stop making war on him, and would be his friend and vassal and become a Christian (for the Northmen all worshiped old heathen gods then), he would give him all the land he had over-run, and that Rolf should be the ruler and called Duke of the Northmen, or Normans, as they soon came to be known.

"Rolf decided that he would agree to the King's terms, and in token of his promise knelt down and put his hands between the hands of King Charles and vowed he would be his faithful vassal and friend. But when he was told that at

the end of the ceremony it was the custom for a vassal to kiss the foot of the King, Rolf said nothing."

Here Alan and Henri, who had been listening attentively, went off into bursts of laughter, for they knew what was coming next in the story; and old Herve's eyes twinkled as he went on, "Rolf just beckoned to one of his followers, a big fair-haired Northman, to come and do it for him. And the big Northman stepped up to King Charles and seized his foot with such a jerk that Charles tumbled over backward and that was an end to the ceremony. The French folk were afraid to do anything to the bold strangers, so they just picked up Charles the Simple, and Rolf and his followers went off, laughing as hard as they could, to the country Rolf was to rule and which soon came to be called Normandy.

"Rolf was a good duke," went on Herve, "and made Normandy a fairly peaceful and prosperous country. There has been plenty of quarreling and fighting since then," added the old man, "but our Duke William, who is the fifth ruler since Rolf, has got things very well under control and is all the while making Normandy more prosperous and

powerful."

"But you haven't told us yet why he is going to fight the British!" said Henri.

"Oh, yes," answered Master Herve, "that is because—let me see," said he, thinking hard, "it is because—Oh, I have it now! The British King, Edward, who died a while ago, had no children to inherit the kingdom, so he had promised it to our Duke William. But when King Edward died, Harold, one of the powerful British nobles, got an army together and had himself made King. So our Duke William is having ships built near the mouth of the river Dives, which flows into the sea, and is getting all his soldiers ready, and in the autumn he will sail for Britain and fight for his rights. Nearly all the Norman nobles are going with him and it will be lonesome and quiet enough when our Count Bertram and all the rest are gone!"

Here Master Herve gave a deep sigh, and just at that moment, "Boo!" cried a merry voice, and in danced the two little girls hand in hand.

The old gate-keeper started, and smiled in spite of himself, as Marie, taking his hand, said gayly, "Well, you

needn't put on such a long face, Master Herve! I guess we'll still be here!" and she smiled saucily at the old man who was a great favorite with all the children about the castle.

Alan and Henri jumped up laughing. "Wait, Marie!" called out the latter, for the girls had already scampered off again.

At this they stopped and waited till the boys came up, for all four were near the same age and great playmates. "We're going to play 'turn the trencher,'" said Blanchette. "You go get one, Alan, and be It to start!" she coaxed.

"All right!" said Alan good-naturedly, and he ran off to the kitchen and soon came back with the trencher. By this time little Josef and several more pages had joined the group, and Alan started the game which they played exactly as children play it now; and if you do not know how that is, ask some of them to tell you.

CHAPTER IV

Blanchette and Marie

The next morning Alan, Henri, and the other pages helped to straighten up the hall by picking up from the floor the straw-filled mattresses on which they had slept, and while they were busy with this Lady Gisla took the little girls down to the lowest story of the keep where there was a storehouse for food. Here, with the keys hanging from her girdle, she unlocked bins and closets, giving out to the cooks supplies for the day, while Blanchette and Marie watched all she did.

As they turned to go, "Mother," said Blanchette, peering into a dark passage-way in the wall, "is anybody in the dungeon?"

"I think not now," answered Lady Gisla, as she glanced toward the passage which led to a dreadful cavern-like cell

burrowed under the paving-stones of the court.

For while castle folk were always guarding against someone else attacking them, they did not forget that they themselves were quite as apt to make trouble for other people and that they might sometimes bring home prisoners from their many wars and quarrels. So they always provided a dungeon or two in which to keep them. And everyone was so used to such things that even if the one at Noireat had held some wretched captive, neither the little girls nor Lady Gisla would have thought anything of it.

As they left the storehouse, "Come, children," she said, "we will go to the weaving-room now."

They followed her up the winding stair to the second-story of the keep in which were their sleeping-rooms, and then up still higher to a large loft where a number of the castle women were already hard at work. Some held in their hands spindles and distaffs, little wooden rods on which they were spinning and winding linen and woolen threads; while others, seated at hand looms, were weaving the threads into cloth.

"Oh, Mother," said Blanchette, as she stood in front of

one of the looms from which hung a small square of linen cloth, "see, I have finished my piece, and now mayn't I begin to work it? Henri has drawn a pattern for me!"

"Yes, child," answered Lady Gisla, smiling at her eager face. "Let me see the drawing. You have done your weaving very well," she added, as she examined the bit of cloth which the little girl had spun and woven herself.

Blanchette hurried to a tall chest of drawers at one side of the room and tugging one of them open, pulled out a piece of parchment on which Henri had drawn a little girl holding a flower in her hand. He hadn't drawn it with a lead pencil, either, for nobody had any; he had used instead a pen cut from the quill of a feather and dipped in home-made ink.

As Lady Gisla looked at it, "Yes," she said, "this will do very nicely for you to learn your stitches on, and Henri has a pretty taste in drawing." She then showed Blanchette how to fasten her square of cloth in an embroidery frame, and with a needle and some colored thread helped her to begin copying the figure of the little girl.

Meantime, Marie gave a sigh as she seated herself in

front of another loom where a small piece of cloth like Blanchette's was waiting to be finished. "Oh, dear," she cried, "I wish mine was ready to begin working, too!"

"Well, Marie," said Lady Gisla gently, "you know you both began at the same time, but you have not worked quite so industriously as Blanchette. But it is almost done, and I think if you try you can easily finish it today."

Marie set to weaving with a will, and the little girls were the picture of industry as they bent over their work. They had on blue dresses made much like Lady Gisla's, only of course their skirts were shorter and they wore no girdles and keys. Their hair was arranged in two braids which hung over their shoulders in front. Now and then Lady Gisla looked at them with a smile as they worked so busily they forgot to talk.

All cloth was then woven by hand, and every little girl, even in the castles, was early taught how to spin and weave; and, later on, those of gentle birth learned to embroider. The cloth they wove was needed not only for clothing, but also to hang on the walls of the great stone castles in which so many Normans lived. These were very cold in winter;

and the woolen tapestries, as they were called, made the lofty halls and sleeping rooms far more comfortable than they would otherwise have been. Lady Gisla was finishing an especially handsome piece; she had woven it herself and on it she was working a hunting scene showing a forest where men on horseback and shaggy dogs were chasing a stag with branching antlers.

Presently, there was a knock on the heavy oaken door and a page entered the room. Bending on one knee before Lady Gisla, he said: "My lady, Mother Margot is in the courtyard with a basket of herbs which she says you asked her to bring."

"Why, yes," answered Lady Gisla, "they are medicine herbs. Bid her come in, and bring her here to the weaving-room."

As the page hastened off, "Come, girls," she said, "you may leave your work for a while, and we will see what Mother Margot has brought."

In a few minutes the page again opened the door and ushered in an old woman who made a curtsy as she entered. She wore a black homespun dress and a white kerchief

crossed over her shoulders, and on her head a white cap with a wide fluted border. Over her arm hung a coarse basket made of osiers and in this were a number of bunches of green plants and leaves.

"Good day, Mother Margot," said Lady Gisla kindly. "Have you brought the herbs I wanted?"

"Yes, my lady," answered the old woman, who was one of the peasant folk belonging on Count Bertram's estate. "Here is boneset, and camomile, and bitter-root and tansy," and as she took the green bunches from her basket and laid them on a heavy oaken table nearby, she muttered over the names of each.

Blanchette and Marie had stood by watching with interest as Mother Margot emptied her load, and when she was gone they fell to examining the little bunches of green.

"Oh," said Marie, as she took up one cluster, "what pretty leaves these are! Though the medicine they'll make will probably taste nasty enough!" And she made a wry face.

"Yes," said Blanchette, laughing, "and here are some whole plants, roots and all! And likely they are worse still!"

"Those leaves you think so pretty, Marie, are from the fever-few herb," said Lady Gisla, "and are very good to make medicine for persons ill of fever. And those whole plants, Blanchette, are rosemary and elecampane, and it is the roots that are the best part."

So taking up the herbs one by one, Lady Gisla explained their uses in curing illness and how they must be prepared. Some were to be dried, some boiled and the juice carefully kept, while of still others the leaves and roots must be pounded fine and steeped in various ways.

Blanchette and Marie listened attentively, for they knew that when they grew up they would be expected to know how to attend their families or friends if they fell ill. Doctors were few then and their knowledge of medicine small at best. So most people, and especially those living in the castles perched on lonely crags, had to do the best they could for themselves; and the girls of the family must learn how to prepare and use the healing herbs in the fields and forests about them, and also how to bandage wounds and care for those hurt in battle; for the men did a great deal of fighting about one thing and another.

Lady Gisla was very skillful in all these things and had already taught the little girls a great deal. She now showed them how to sort and arrange the herbs, and it kept them busy till dinner-time.

After dinner, "Lads," said Count Bertram to Alan and Henri, "you, and the rest of the pages, get out your ponies, and Hugh and I will give you a riding lesson."

"Yes, sir count!" answered the boys delightedly, and "Oh, Father," cried Blanchette, "mayn't Marie and I go, too?"

"Yes, child," said Count Bertram, "if your mother is willing."

"The children have been working all morning," said Lady Gisla, "and I think a ride will do them good. And then, of course, they must learn to be good riders as well as the boys."

"To be sure!" answered the count. "Run along, girls, and get your capes and bonnets and the boys will bring your ponies."

Presently the merry little party clattered out over the drawbridge and down the winding path to the fields. Count

Bertram kept his eye on the girls, giving them many directions how to become graceful and fearless riders. Hugh attended to the pages, who must learn not only to ride with ease and fearlessness, but also to spring to their saddles without touching the stirrups and to jump their ponies over streams and walls. They must learn other outdoor things as well; how to run and leap and swim and shoot with bow and arrow, and all kinds of exercises to make them strong and manly.

When the riding lesson was over and they cantered back to Noireat, "See!" said Marie, looking up the steep bridle path, "I believe that is a minstrel going to the castle!"

"It surely is!" said Blanchette, gazing with Marie at the man climbing on foot the path ahead of them. He wore a dark tunic and a curiously fringed mantle of flame color; on his head was a gay cap and feather, and on one leg his hose was sky-blue and the other deep green. Over his shoulder, hanging by a ribbon, was a musical instrument with a few strings and shaped much like a harp.

"Goody!" cried Marie. "We will have some music this evening!"

At this Alan turned to Henri, for the two were riding just behind the little girls, and "Well, Henri," he said banteringly, "that's a good thing for you."

"Why?" asked Henri.

"Because," said Alan, "I was going to beat you this evening at that draw game of checkers we were to play!"

"I guess not!" retorted Henri. "Anyway, if you did, I can beat you any day at backgammon!" And the two boys fell to discussing their favorite games and kept it up till they found themselves once more in the castle courtyard. Here the minstrel, as the wandering poets and singers of the time were called, had already been welcomed; for the songs of the minstrels were among the favorite entertainments of the time.

After supper it was chilly, and the fire of logs was lighted in the fireplace, and though the smoke curled out into the hall and hung through the air in dim wreaths, nobody minded it when the minstrel stood up and striking the strings of his harp sang song after song, most of them telling some brave story of war or adventure.

Everyone listened with rapt attention, and clapped their

hands when he finished. And no wonder people liked to have minstrels come, for the only way they knew about stories was for someone to sing or tell them to them. There were no printed books then; all were carefully written by hand, usually by the monks in the monasteries who often painted and decorated the pages in the most beautiful way, and these books were too few and precious for most people to have. Then they were not stories, anyway, but mostly religious books.

"Mother," whispered Blanchette, as she listened to the minstrel, "do you suppose I can ever learn to play like that?"

"I don't know, dear," answered Lady Gisla, who had taught the children to play a little on musical instruments at the castle. "Perhaps he will stay here a while and give you some lessons."

But when Count Bertram asked him to do so, the minstrel thanked him and "Nay, sir count," he answered, "not now. This is bluebird weather, and I am on the wing!"

He as much as said, though, that when winter came he would like to come back to Noireat. For while the minstrels preferred to wander around through the summer, they were

glad enough to find some castle in which they might spend the winter time. And welcome they were, for with their songs they helped pass many a long cold evening; also they could teach such music as they knew to the girls and boys of the castle.

CHAPTER V

"The Mystery of the Rivers"

As Alan and Henri stood on either side of Count Bertram, ready to wait upon him as he was eating his breakfast, "Lads," he said, "isn't this the day for your lessons with Father Herluin?"

"Yes, sir count," answered Alan, as both boys drew a long face at the prospect.

"Never mind!" said Count Bertram, laughing good-humoredly. "Pay attention and learn what he tells you, and when you are through come to the falcon mew and I will give you a lesson more to your liking."

The boys' faces brightened at this, and when the count had finished they joined the other children and trooped off quite briskly to school in the little chapel which was part of the castle and of which Father Herluin was priest. Noble

families had to provide religious services in their own homes as they generally lived too far away from any church; and the good priest was also, two or three times a week, school-master to the castle children.

When his pupils had seated themselves in the chapel, Father Herluin first gave them a lesson on church matters. Then, taking from a shelf the written and painted prayer-book, which was the castle library, he taught them a little reading. Next came a little less arithmetic and still less of geography; this last studied from a ridiculous map made by hand and showing a very queer world with the strange animals and monsters which map-makers then put in whenever they were in doubt about places. And they were in doubt about many, for everybody thought the earth flat instead of round, and had very little idea of the true shapes of lands and seas.

Sometimes the children learned a trifle about the stars or plants or whatever else Father Herluin happened to know; but it was not much like the lessons boys and girls must learn now.

After two hours the school was over for the day; and as

there were no school-books nor paper nor pencils, of course there was no studying between times.

Blanchette and Marie went back to learn some household matters from Lady Gisla, and the boys raced off to the falcon mew.

Falcons were used in hunting; and however little a boy of that time could read or write, one thing he was taught thoroughly, and that was to be an accomplished huntsman, as this was the favorite sport of those of gentle birth.

There were two kinds of hunting: that called "the mystery of the woods" consisted in chasing wild animals, such as deer or boars, through the forest; and this was much like the sport of today except that no one had guns then and when the dogs had finally run the poor animal to earth it was usually killed by the master of the hunt, who carried a spear or knife for the purpose.

But "the mystery of the rivers," was quite a different affair as it was the chasing of birds through the sky; and, for this, falcons, very strong and swift-winged birds of the hawk family, were specially trained.

This kind of hunting was called "the mystery of the

rivers" because the herons and other birds which the falcons were taught to attack made their nests on the banks of rivers. Every noble youth must know how to train and care for the falcons, and as he must learn also dozens of special words to use in speaking of the birds and their every movement it took really quite a long time to master the art of falconry, or hawking, as it was often called.

"Well, lads," said Count Bertram, who was already in the mew—the room where the falcons were kept—"I hope you are a great deal wiser than when I saw you last!"

"Yes, sir count," said Henri, "we learned ever so much this morning." And then he quickly added, "Have you seen my falcon, sir? I am afraid she is not well, she seems so mopy."

"Which is yours, Henri?" asked Count Bertram, looking at the dozen or more hawklike birds perched about the room. "Oh, that one over there with her head down?" he added. "I don't think there is anything the matter with her. Just try her with the lure."

Henri took a silver whistle from a shelf nearby and fastened a bit of meat to it beneath a bunch of gay feathers

dangling from one end. "Wait a minute," said the count, "till Alan loosens her jesses!" And Alan hastened to unfasten from the perch the little leather thongs attached to her legs.

Henri then blew the whistle and the bird, raising its head, immediately spread its wings and in an instant had lighted on his wrist and was trying to get the bit of meat, while all the other falcons strained at their jesses and tried to reach him, too.

The whistle, or lure, was thus made attractive with feathers and meat while the birds were being trained to come when they heard it blown; for it was by the lure that the huntsman drew the falcon back to him when a hunt was over.

As Henri's bird flew toward him there was a pretty tinkling sound; and, indeed, every time any of the falcons moved about on their perches there was a musical sound, for every one of them had a tiny bell, like a little sleigh-bell, strapped around each of his legs just above the toes; and these bells and the leather jesses they always wore. Several of them wore another very odd thing, a little hood made of

cloth or leather and covering the whole head, beak, eyes, and all. These hoods were put on the fiercer birds to make them tamer and protect their trainer from their beaks; also, when they were taken out to hunt all wore hoods so that nothing might distract their attention till time to begin the chase, when the head covering was plucked off.

"Whose bird is that with the red hood?" asked Count Bertram, as he noticed one of the smaller and younger birds restlessly moving on its perch and trying to shake off its gay head covering.

"Oh, that is Marie's, sir count," answered Alan, "she is very proud of that hood, and Blanchette is making a green one for hers!"

For the girls, too, had their pet falcons, and ladies often followed the sport with the men.

"Well, lads," again asked the count, "do you know your lesson in the falconry language? What do I mean when I say the falcon's 'arms'?"

"His legs, sir," answered Henri.

"And his 'sails'?" continued the count.

"His wings, sir," said Alan.

"What are his 'beams'?" again asked the count, "and what is he doing when he 'mantles,' or 'jouks,' or 'bates'?"

"His 'beams,'" answered the boys in chorus, "are the long feathers of his wings, and he 'mantles' when he stretches back one wing, when he sleeps he 'jouks,' and when he flutters to escape we must say he 'bates.'"

"Very good," said the count, smiling; and then after questioning the lads a little further, he said: "Now you may feed the birds; but don't give them much, as we will fly some of them this afternoon and they must still be hungry enough to be interested in the quarry." For so was called the bird or hare or whatever prey the falcon went in chase of.

Alan at once went to the castle kitchen where he got some pieces of beef and mutton which he placed on a bunch of feathers from the breast of a heron, one of the birds the falcons were taught to pursue. When all was ready Henri and the other pages began to shout at the tops of their voices, and going into the courtyard called about them a number of the count's hunting dogs, which they soon had yelping and bow-wowing at the tops of their voices also. This was done so the falcons might become so

used to it that when they were taken out to hunt they would attack a real heron and not be disturbed or frightened by the shouting and barking that was sure to go on around them.

The count looked on approvingly, and after a few more directions, he said, "After dinner I am going out with Hugh and one or two of my squires for a little sport, and you boys may come along."

The lads' eyes danced, and just as soon as dinner was over they hurried back to the mew to bring the count his bird.

As the little party rode out the castle gate, on Count Bertram's right fist perched the falcon, the jesses on its legs caught in a small hook in the back of his heavy glove and a brown hood over its head. Hugh and one of the other squires carried falcons also, but Alan and Henri being only pages must content themselves with watching the others and learning all they could.

They rode down the cliff road and through the meadows till they came to a little river, fringed by willow and poplar trees.

Presently, "Look!" cried Alan to Henri, in a low voice, as up from a cluster of willows a blue heron rose in flight.

At the same moment Count Bertram, who was riding in front, quickly plucking the hood from his falcon's head, with a shrill cry, "Haw! Haw! Ho now!" loosed it for pursuit. "Haw! Haw! Ho now!" shouted Hugh and the other squires; for this was one of the cries by which the falcons were taught to speed to the attack.

But Count Bertram's bird needed no urging as up, up it soared, mounting the air in great spiral curves.

Meantime, the poor heron, seeing its pursuer, was trying its best to fly away.

As the little party of huntsmen dashed along breathlessly watching the two birds, up, up, still higher soared the falcon, till for an instant it poised, a dark speck in the blue sky, while beneath it the blue heron fled on frightened wings. Then, like lightning, the falcon swooped down, hurling its powerful body full upon the heron, striking it with such force that it dropped to earth stunned by the blow. In another moment the falcon was upon it, and the jingle of little bells told only too plainly how claws and beak were

doing their deadly work.

"Bravo!" cried Count Bertram. "What think you, Hugh? Was not that a pretty flight?"

"Yes, sir count," answered Hugh with enthusiasm, "the falcon went like an arrow to the mark!"

After Count Bertram had flown his bird a few more times the two squires took turns with theirs. Later on, as the afternoon waned, each of the huntsmen took the little silver lure, which dangled from his wrist, and whistled his falcon back, and the three birds were again hooded and each fastened securely to the glove of his master.

When the party returned to the castle, Count Bertram handed his falcon to Alan to be placed in the mew; and as the boy carefully received it the count looked critically to see that he held his elbow crooked at just the right angle, and that his fist was doubled up in precisely the correct way to carry the bird; for all these matters were considered as important to be learned as any lesson in manners.

CHAPTER VI

Little Duke Richard

All morning a fine rain had fallen and the boys and girls of the castle had been busy indoors; the girls learning to sew and embroider, while the boys, with blunt swords, took a fencing lesson from Hugh.

After dinner Blanchette peeped out into the courtyard. "It's still raining!" she called back to Marie and the pages who were gathered around the door. "What shall we do?"

"Let's go over to Master Herve and get him to tell us a story!" proposed Marie.

"All right!" cried the others, and, darting out of the door, they skimmed like a flight of swallows over the wet paving stones to old Herve's tower. As the laughing group burst into the place, "Well, well!" he exclaimed in pretended fright, "I thought the Duke himself was storming the

castle, you made such a hubbub!"

"We will storm your tower, sure enough, Master Herve," cried Marie, "unless you tell us a nice story right away!"

"Dear me," answered Master Herve, "if that is so, I will hurry and begin! What shall I tell you? About little Duke Richard?"

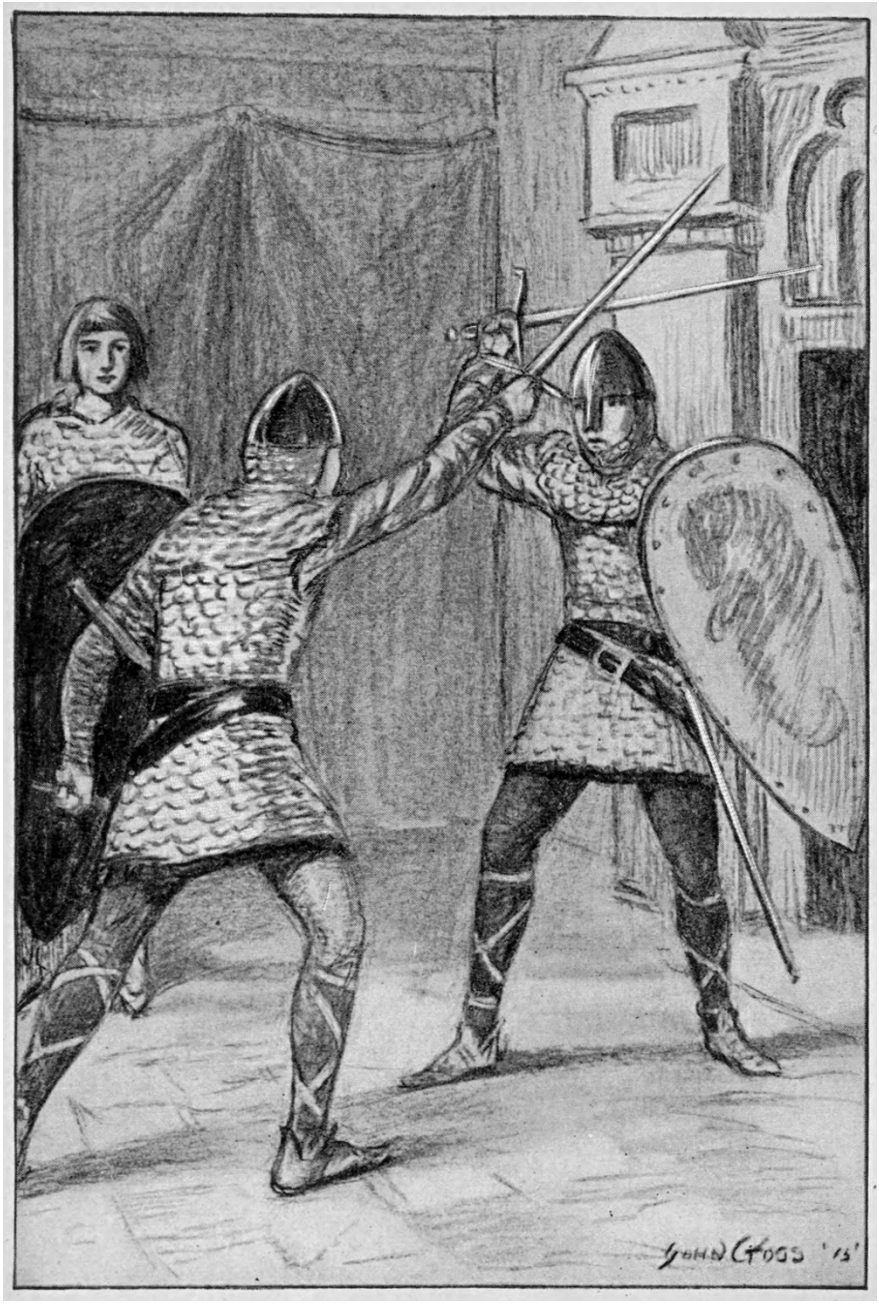
"Yes," shouted a chorus of merry voices, "tell us about little Duke Richard!"

"Well," began Master Herve, "it was a long time ago"—"How long?" asked Henri, who always liked to be exact. "Oh, I don't know," replied Master Herve, "but it must have been a good while, because it was when Richard was a little boy only eight years old, and Richard was the great-great-grandfather of our Duke William, so you see it must have been nearly ninety years ago.

"There was a great deal of quarreling in Normandy then, and Duke William Long-Sword—"

"Who was Duke William Long-Sword?" asked one of the younger pages.

"Why, he was little Richard's father," put in Alan, "and he was called Long-Sword because he always carried a



"The boys . . . took a fencing lesson from Hugh."

wonderful long one with a gold handle!"

"Yes," said old Herve, "you are right, Alan, he was Richard's father, and, as I began to say, when the little lad was only eight years old William Long-Sword was one day killed by some of his enemies."

"Tell about his hair shirt!" said Henri; for the children had heard most of old Herve's stories before, and did not want anything left out.

"To be sure!" answered Herve. "When they came to make Duke William ready for his funeral, they found that underneath his splendid ducal dress he always wore a shirt made of coarse hair cloth next to his skin, and that he kept a little scourge with which he often whipped himself. For he was very pious, and you know that is the way that many people believe they can make peace with God for their sins."

Here the children made long faces at the idea of anyone whipping himself, and Master Herve went on: "The funeral was no sooner over than little Richard, who was the sole heir to the duchy, was dressed in his handsomest red tunic and brought to the cathedral in the city of Rouen to be

crowned Duke of Normandy.

"Richard walked up the aisle, and when he sat in the great chair by the altar his feet didn't come anywhere near the floor. The priest said the mass, and Richard solemnly promised to be a good and true ruler; and then they put on his shoulders the great crimson velvet mantle trimmed with ermine that belongs to the Norman dukes. But Richard was so little that it trailed all around him, and when they tried to crown him the crown was so big and heavy that one of the barons had to hold it over his head. Then they gave him the long sword that had been his father's. When it was over, and Richard stood up to walk down the aisle, the mantle was so long and heavy that one of the nobles picked him up and carried him; another one was about to take the sword."

"But Richard wouldn't let him! He carried it himself!" cried Henri.

"Yes," said old Herve, "though the sword was longer than he was, he would let no one take it."

"It must have been a funny sight," observed Marie, "to see him carried down the long aisle with that big crimson mantle trailing behind him and he clutching the sword

taller than himself!"

The others laughed, but Master Herve did not join them. "Yes, funny it may seem to you youngsters, but it was a sad enough sight to the friends of little Richard to see him orphaned and obliged to be a duke before he was able to govern the country, and with all sorts of troublesome affairs ahead of him and, worst of all, the King of France wishing with all his heart to get his duchy from him!

"Well, Richard was carried back to the palace, and then his vassals, the highest nobles of Normandy, all came and kneeling before him, placed their great strong hands between his baby ones and swore to be loyal subjects."

"Didn't Richard himself have to do the same thing to the King of France?" asked Alan.

"Yes," said old Herve, "he did later on, the first time he went to France, and he didn't go of his own free will, either; but that's what I'm coming to in the story. Of course ever since Rolf the Ganger promised loyalty to Charles the Simple all the Norman dukes have done the same to the kings of France. But though the French people have kept fairly peaceable with us, they have never liked it because

Rolf took Normandy, and our dukes have known well enough that behind their backs they called them 'Dukes of the Pirates,' for so the French nicknamed our brave people. And no sooner was little Richard crowned than the French King Louis thought it would be a fine thing to get possession of the young Duke of the Pirates, and then—well, King Louis had two boys of his own, and of course if anything happened to Richard that crimson velvet mantle and the big crown would do very nicely for one of the little French princes." Here old Herve shrugged his shoulders with a wise look.

"At any rate," he went on, "very soon King Louis came and insisted on taking Richard home with him. He said the boy was his godson, and his vassal besides, and that he had a perfect right to be his guardian. The Norman nobleman thought very differently, but as the King had taken care to bring a large force of soldiers with him they did not dare to refuse. Though when they said good-by to their little duke they made up their minds to get him back again just as soon as they could manage it. One of their number, a young noble, was allowed to go with him, and a faithful friend he

proved. Who of you remembers his name?" quizzed the old man of his eager little listeners.

"We all do! Osmond de Centeville!" cried the children in chorus, indignant that Master Herve should fancy they could forget.

"It was a sad journey for poor little Richard," he continued, "away from his own home to the gloomy castle of Laon where King Louis was then living; and when they reached it Richard found nothing but coldness and unkindness from all. The Queen, Gerberge, was haughty and disagreeable, and the two young princes, Lothaire and Carloman, were cross and hateful to him.

"Several months went on in this way; but all the while Richard's faithful friend, Osmond de Centeville, was keeping careful watch for the very first chance to help his little master to escape.

"By and by, Richard fell ill; and the paler and thinner he grew the happier it made King Louis and Queen Gerberge, who wanted him to die so as to get Normandy for their hateful young Lothaire."

Here Alan and Henri clenched their fists angrily, as if

they would have liked to get at Richard's cruel enemies, while Blanchette sighed sympathetically, and Marie, remembering their lesson on herbs, asked: "Didn't Osmond know any place where he could get some herb medicine? I should think he could have managed some way!"

"Don't you fancy Osmond de Centeville wasn't taking the best kind of care of Richard!" said old Herve with a chuckle. "I dare say he got plenty of medicine for him, and gave it to him himself up there in the tower room where he kept him away from the castle folks. And he went right down into the castle kitchen, too, and cooked everything that Richard ate, because he was afraid the King's cooks had been ordered to poison little Richard! Well, one night everybody was so sure that the Duke of the Pirates was going to die, that they thought there was no need of keeping as close watch on him as they had been doing, and King Louis and Queen Gerberge decided to give a great banquet because they were so happy at the idea of soon getting Normandy for Lothaire.

"So, while everybody was busy eating, Osmond managed to get a big armful of straw from somewhere, and with

this he crept quietly up the winding stair to the tower room where Richard was lying very white and weak.

"'Hush!' he whispered, as the little duke started up in surprise. 'Can you keep as still as a mouse for a little while, and not mind if you are nearly smothered? And can you pretend that you are not a duke at all, but nothing but a bundle of straw?'

"'Yes, yes!' answered Richard eagerly, his eyes growing bright with excitement as Osmond explained his plan, 'I can be a stick of wood, anything, Osmond, if you will only take me away from here!'

"Then Osmond rolled Richard up in his little purple mantle and stuffed him into the middle of that bundle of straw, and, seizing it in his strong arms, he crept out of the room, and felt his way carefully down the winding stairs, till presently he came to the big smoky kitchen which he had to pass through in order to get out doors. The cooks were all so busy running to and fro that very few of them noticed Osmond at all, and those who did were quite satisfied when he said, with a fine careless air, 'I forgot to bed down and feed my war horse and I'm just going out to the stable to do

it.'

"And Osmond went to the stable, sure enough," went on Master Herve with a laugh, "but it was neither to make a bed out of the little duke nor to feed him to the big Normandy horse which he saddled and bridled faster than he had ever done in all his life. Then, placing the precious bundle of straw across the saddle bow, carefully—oh, so carefully—he led the horse to the castle gate. The keeper had had so much wine at the banquet that his head had dropped on his breast and he was sound asleep. And carefully—oh, so carefully—Osmond slipped back the great bars, one by one, flung open the gate, sprang into the saddle, and away with the wind!"

Here there was a loud clapping of hands and a shrill cheer from Herve's little audience.

"Oh," cried Henri enviously, "wouldn't I like to have been Osmond!"

"Maybe you would," said old Herve, "but I don't believe anybody would like to have been the Duke of the Pirates that night, for the poor little fellow was nearly smothered! When Osmond had galloped a safe distance from the

castle, he stopped and loosened the straw as much as he could from around Richard's face, for the little lad was fairly gasping. But he was full of pluck and without fear—you know the name he earned in after life?" asked Herve, who was fond of quizzing the children.

"Yes," they answered, "of course we do, 'Richard the Fearless'!"

"So," went on Herve, "after a short rest, on they galloped fast and faster, clatter, clatter, clatter, every minute drawing nearer the Norman border. Oh, but that was a wild ride that brought the little Duke of the Pirates back to his own! All night they rode, and far into the next day till the good black war horse was spent and breathless. Then Osmond somehow managed to get a fresh one, and thud, thud, away they went again. At daybreak the second day they came to the river Epte dividing France and Normandy, and on the cliffs at the far side rose the towers of Crecy castle. There was no bridge, but that was no matter. Panting and foam-flecked, straight into the river plunged the gallant horse with his precious burden. Oh, how tired he was with that long galloping, but how bravely he fought his

way across the current and safe to the farther side! And then, just as he had won back to his own Normandy, it seemed for a moment that all was lost for the little duke. For the watchers of the castle walls, little dreaming who were the riders of that brave horse, and thinking them enemies from France, were just fitting their arrows to their bows to shoot, when at a quick signal from Osmond they paused, and then—well, when they found out that their own true duke was come back to them, you can guess whether or not they gave him a rousing welcome!" and old Herve's voice rose in enthusiastic fervor.

"But with all his bravery," added Herve, in a tender tone, "the poor little man was scarce breathing when they lifted him out of the straw and loosened his purple mantle; for the long ride had almost ended his life. But you can guess, too, whether they nursed him carefully. And you may be sure the lady of Crecy castle saw that he got the right herb medicine," here Master Herve looked at Marie with a twinkle in his eye. "At any rate, it wasn't long till the little duke was as fine and sturdy a boy as heart could wish, and King Louis didn't get him back again, either!"

"No," said Alan, "when he came back and tried to, the Norman army was waiting for him, and he decided he would have to look somewhere else for a duchy for Lothaire!"

"Yes, yes, youngsters," said old Herve, "I guess you know all my stories nearly as well as I do. But I am tired now, so go off and play. Next time you come maybe I'll have a new story for you."

CHAPTER VII

The Tournament

It was the day of the tournament and everyone in the castle was up at dawn. Breakfast was soon over, and then, while the rest were getting ready, Hugh brought Count Bertram his armor and helped him to put it on. First came the hauberk, a tunic of leather over which were sewed hundreds of small iron rings, so close together that a spear point could not pierce them. Hugh slipped this over the count's shoulders and then on his head he placed the helmet; a close-fitting pointed cap also of leather sewn with iron rings.

Though the helmet did not entirely cover Count Bertram's face, it came over his ears and laced under his chin and a stiff piece of leather hung down over his forehead and nose, giving him such an odd look that Hugh smiled as he

fastened it on.

"Are my lance and shield ready?" asked Count Bertram.

"Yes, sir count," answered Hugh. "There they are," and he pointed to a long lance leaning against the wall and close by it a large kite-shaped shield of wood on which was painted a red two-legged dragon.

Here the little page, Josef, came running in, and making a stiff bow he sank on one knee and bashfully holding out a scarlet embroidered ribbon, he said, "Sir Count Bertram, here is the– the– the token Lady Gisla made for you!"

"Good!" said Count Bertram, smiling, "that was a hard word to remember, wasn't it, Josef?" And the little lad blushed and nodded his head as Hugh, taking the ribbon, tied it in one of the rings on Count Bertram's helmet.

For at tournaments each knight usually wore some token given him by his lady love. Often it was a ribbon, a glove or a flower, and if he won the prize the knight always declared that he had striven for it in honor of his lady.

By the time Count Bertram was ready so were all the rest; and Lady Gisla herself came into the hall looking lovely in a green gown embroidered in silver. She wore a jeweled

girdle and necklace and on her head a wonderful tall cap from the back of which floated a veil of fine lace.

Blanchette and Marie, who were to go along, fairly danced with excitement as they put on their frocks of blue silk and little caps and riding capes of scarlet cloth.

"Oh, Mother, aren't we ready to start?" cried Blanchette, running to the door of the great hall.

"Alan! Alan!" called Marie impatiently. "Where are our ponies?"

"Do not be in such a hurry, children," said Lady Gisla, "we will soon be off. The pages and squires are putting the trappings on the horses now; for you know they must be dressed in their best, just as we are."

"Oh, how fine they look!" exclaimed Marie, as she and Blanchette ran down to the courtyard.

The horses, indeed, looked very gay, with saddles and bridles of richly worked leather and bright colored rosettes and tassels dangling from their ears and the various straps about their bodies. Over the saddles for the ladies of the party were flung pieces of scarlet cloth embroidered in colors.

Presently all was ready and off they started. And what a merry ride it was, that five miles to the castle of Brecey! By and by, across a field of red poppies, they saw tall towers rising from a steep hill.

"See!" cried Blanchette to Alan who was next to her, "that must be Brecey castle, for silk banners are on the tower!"

"Yes," said Alan, "but I do not believe we will go up there yet. You know the herald said the tournament would be held in the meadow nearby."

Just then as they rounded another bend in the road, "Oh," said Marie, "there is the place now!" And, sure enough, they could see the meadow where a large number of gayly dressed people had already gathered.

On reaching the place, Count Bertram and his party were warmly welcomed by the lord and lady of Brecey, who at once sent a page to conduct Lady Gisla and her attendants to the raised wooden seats that had been built at one side of the meadow. In the middle of these was a throne-like chair covered with bright tapestry, and there sat a beautiful lady richly dressed and wearing a wreath of

flowers in her hair.

Blanchette and Marie, who had clung shyly to Lady Gisla as they followed the page, now gazed at the lady in rapt admiration. "Oh, mother," whispered Blanchette, "is she a queen?"

"Yes, dear," said Lady Gisla with a smile, "not a real queen, but the Queen of the Tournament, and she will give the prize to the winner."

When they took their places on the seats a number of ladies were all around them, and bright banners fluttered everywhere.

"See, children," said Lady Gisla, pointing to a large oval space in front of the seats and enclosed by a double railing of wood, "that is called the 'lists,' and is where the knights will fight one another. The squires and pages will stand outside, between the railings, so that if anyone in the lists is hurt or needs anything they will be ready to help."

"Oh, Lady Gisla!" cried Marie, whose bright eyes had been eagerly searching the groups of horsemen gathered behind a rope at each end of the lists. "There is Count Bertram at the far end!"

"Yes!" cried Blanchette. "And Alan and Henri are fixing his spurs and doing something to his saddle!"

"They are probably seeing that none of the straps have become unfastened," said Lady Gisla, watching with interest as all was being made ready.

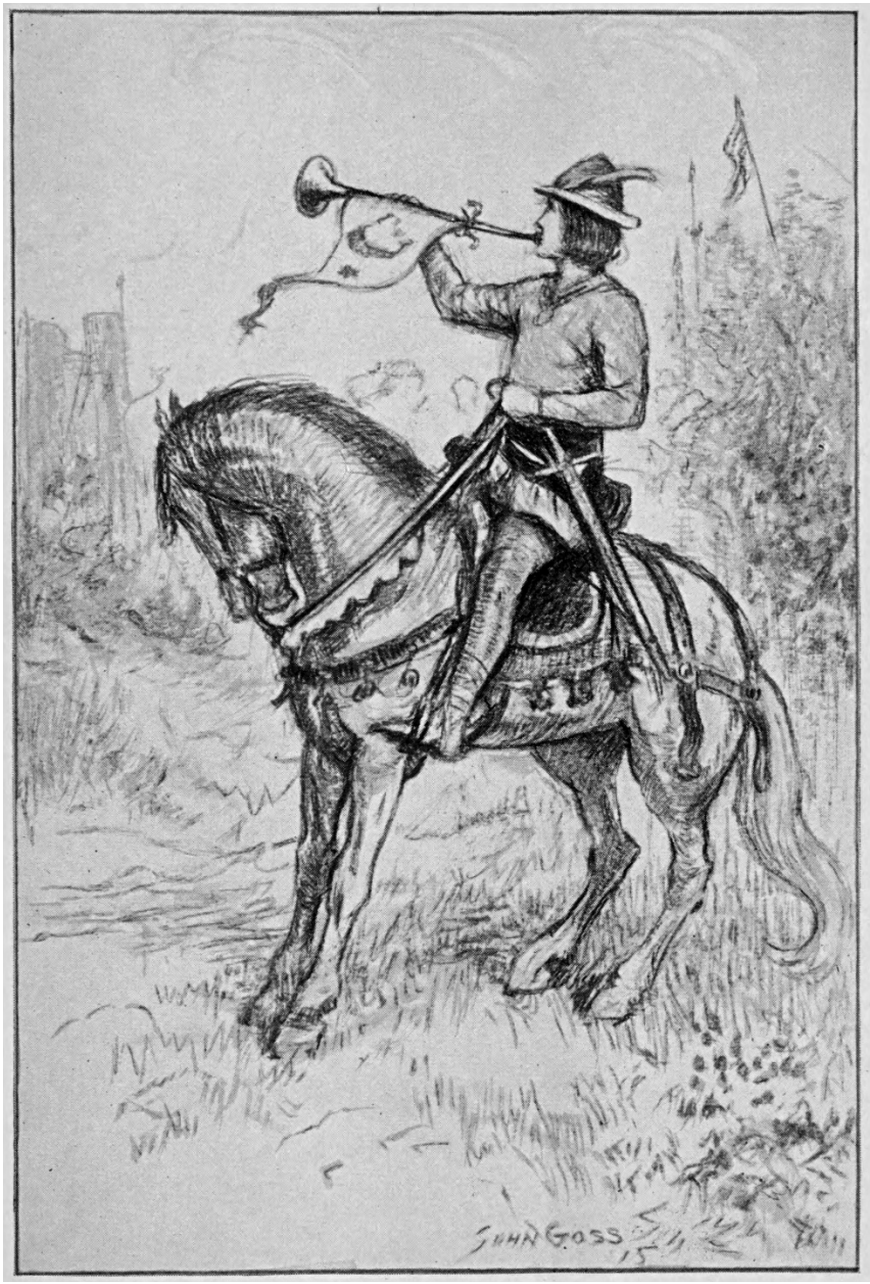
In a little while a herald rode around the lists blowing short sharp blasts on a trumpet. When everybody pricked up their ears to listen, he stood up in his stirrups and in a loud voice called out the rules of the tournament and what the prizes were to be.

"What does he mean by saying the lances of the knights must all have 'coronals' on them?" asked Blanchette.

"I am not quite sure," answered Lady Gisla, for tournaments and their rules were still rather too new in Normandy to be very well known, "but I think coronals are the pieces of wood that are put on the tips of the lances to blunt them so the fight will not be so dangerous."

And Lady Gisla sighed, for sports in those days were very rough and in the mock fights people were often as badly hurt as in real ones.

But here a shout went up at either end of the lists as,



"Blowing short sharp blasts on a trumpet."

at a signal from the Baron of Brecey, the ropes were drawn aside and the knights, spurring their horses, rushed at each other with leveled lances and the tournament began.

Blanchette and Marie, each with a long "Oh!" leaned forward in breathless interest, and Lady Gisla, with anxious gaze, fixed her eyes on Count Bertram, who was trying to overthrow a tall knight from whose helmet dangled the embroidered glove of his lady.

"Oh, dear!" cried Blanchette, "see, he has almost pushed Father from his saddle!"

But in another moment Count Bertram, dexterously turning his horse, by a powerful thrust of his lance sent the tall knight tumbling to the ground; and instantly his squires and pages rushed into the lists and bore off their master to a place of safety. For by this time there was a general prancing of horses and clashing of lances as each knight was trying to overthrow someone else.

Before long more than one had been borne from the field severely hurt; for in spite of the coronals on the lances there were plenty of ways to get hard knocks in a tournament, especially those earlier ones. But then, people

expected such things, and no one except their nearest friends paid much attention to the wounded.

Through it all Lady Gisla and the little girls had been watching Count Bertram with eager interest; and though sometimes in the thick of the struggle they lost sight of him, when the herald blew the trumpet, which was the signal to stop fighting, to their great delight they saw that he still sat his horse erect and unharmed. And what was their pride and joy to hear the herald, as he rode slowly around the lists, proclaim that Count Bertram, of the castle of Noireat, had won the first prize of the gilded spurs, as he had overthrown four other knights.

The other ladies seated around them turned envious eyes on Lady Gisla, who was smiling her pleasure, while Blanchette and Marie were clapping their hands with delight.

"Watch, children," said Lady Gisla, "and see the Queen of the Tournament bestow the prize."

Again the little girls bent forward eagerly and looked as Count Bertram, slowly riding past the benches on which the ladies were seated, paused in front of the throne of the

queen. Alan and Henri, who were walking on either side of him, at once took his bridle and helped him dismount. Then, bowing low, he knelt before the Queen of the Tournament, as, placing the spurs in his hands, she said, "Count Bertram, I bestow this prize upon you, and may you live long and happily and always do honor to your lady!"

Count Bertram, after thanking her with all knightly courtesy, rose to his feet, and the winner of the second prize took his place before the queen.

The next thing, the Baron of Brecey invited the company to make their way across the meadow and up the narrow path to his castle where a great feast was spread.

After the feast some musicians came in and played on curious old stringed instruments while the grown people danced; the boys and girls, who were not expected to join, gathered in little groups at the sides of the hall and looked on.

Late in the afternoon the party from Noireat took their leave, Count Bertram wearing his new golden spurs, and everybody in the little procession fairly bursting with pride because he had won them.

CHAPTER VIII

Old Herve Tells Another Story

Though the tournament had been several days before, the children were still talking about it to Master Herve. At last, when they had all told everything they could remember, Henri said to the old man, "Now, Master Herve, you must tell us a story; it's your turn!"

"Well, well," said old Herve, "what shall it be?"

"Tell us something about Duke William!" exclaimed Marie. "You have told us about other dukes, but I would like to know something more about him."

"Our Duke William is a wonderful man," said Herve, "but great and strong and powerful as he is now, I can remember the time, forty years ago, when he was just a tiny baby, and folks said that when he first reached out his little hand he clutched hold of a straw from the floor where he

lay and held it so tightly that the wise women who saw him declared it was a sign he would hold fast in after life to whatever dominion he might win.

"But it didn't look much then, nor for a long while after, as if he would ever have much dominion to hold."

"Why not?" asked Blanchette.

"Because none of the Norman nobles were his friends. They all hated the helpless baby; for though his father was Duke Robert the Magnificent, and the true descendant of Rolf the Ganger, his mother was not noble but the daughter of a tanner of leather which, you know, is a trade looked down on in Normandy. She was a very beautiful girl, and Duke Robert had first seen her one day when she was washing clothes in the little stream that flows near the castle of Falaise where he was then living."

"Why was he called 'the Magnificent'?" asked Alan.

"Well," said Herve, "that was because he was very rich and spent a great deal of money, though often he spent it very foolishly. He was very fond of little William, and proud of his handsome face and bright ways. But when William was only seven years old Duke Robert made up his mind to

go on a pilgrimage."

"Why do people go on pilgrimages, Master Herve?" interrupted one of the pages.

"They go because they want to pray at some holy place to have their sins forgiven," answered Herve.

"Did you ever go?" asked another of the children.

"No," replied Master Herve, "but my father did once. He went to Saint Michael's Mount, a very holy island near Normandy. It was when I was a little chap not half so big as Josef there," and Herve nodded to little Josef sitting between Blanchette and Marie. "It was the year 1000, and for some reason or another folks got it into their heads that the world was coming to an end. So they thought a good deal about their sins and the next world, and all who could started off on pilgrimages."

"Did the world come to an end?" asked little Josef, with wide eyes.

"No, no, child!" laughed Master Herve.

"This is the same old world that it was sixty-six years ago. Nothing happened, but people had got so in the habit of making pilgrimages that pilgrims have been plenty ever

since. And many of them are noble, too, like Duke Robert the Magnificent."

"Did he walk all the way?" inquired Blanchette. "And did he carry a staff and wear a brown robe and a broad-brimmed hat and a rope around his waist, like the pilgrims who come here so often to eat and stay all night?"

"Do you suppose he wore a hair shirt, Master Herve, like Duke William Long-Sword?" asked Henri.

"Indeed he didn't," replied old Herve with another laugh; "Duke Robert wasn't that kind! He put on his best clothes and went off on horseback and took along quantities of good things to eat and ever so many people to wait on him; and when he got tired riding he had six black men to carry him in a kind of fancy bed. I dare say he did get tired, though," added Herve, "for it wasn't to any of the shrines in Normandy that he went; no, Duke Robert had made up his mind to go way off to Jerusalem.

"Before he started he gathered the Norman nobles together and insisted that they promise to be loyal to little William; he wished them to consider him their overlord while he was away. The nobles were very proud and

haughty, and most of them didn't at all like the idea of promising loyalty to the little boy. But at last they consented, though some of them were very angry about it and said a great many disagreeable things behind Duke Robert's back.

"Duke Robert, however, placed little William in the care of his cousin, Alan of Brittany, and then set out on his pilgrimage.

"Everything about his party was very splendid, and as he came near the Holy Land he had his horse shod with silver shoes and ordered them nailed on so loosely that every once in a while one would tumble off in the road for anybody to pick up who happened along. Of course this was a very silly thing to do, but Duke Robert seemed to like to do queer extravagant things.

"It was a long, long journey; but at last he reached Jerusalem and prayed at all the holy places, and then he started home again. But he never came back to Normandy, for he died on the way.

"The journey had taken three years, so William was ten years old when the news reached Normandy that his father

was dead. He was a very friendless little boy indeed; and before long his guardian, Alan of Brittany, was murdered. Everybody was fighting everybody else and there was no safety anywhere. To be sure, things weren't quite so bad from Wednesday evenings till Monday mornings."

"Why was that?" asked one of the children.

"Why, that was because there was so much lawlessness and bloodshed that the church proclaimed what was called the 'Truce of God,' which meant that people must not rob or kill each other on certain days of the week. But between Mondays and Wednesdays," went on the old man with a sigh, "they seemed to make up for lost time. Of course there's still a good deal of quarreling and fighting here and there in Normandy, but it's nothing to what it was when Duke William was a boy!"

"What did he do?" asked Alan.

"Well, to tell the truth," answered the old man, "I don't know how in the world the lad ever managed to pull along and hold his own against all he had to contend with; but he did it somehow. I guess just because he's a born ruler. When he was fifteen he demanded to be made a knight."

"Oh, Master Herve," exclaimed Henri, "did you know Hugh is to be made a knight and go with Count Bertram to Britain?"

"Yes," said Herve, "Hugh will be twenty-one and has served his time as page and squire. But Duke William was only fifteen, remember, yet a brave knight he was; and he had to be alert and fearless, for his enemies were all about him. One time he had a very narrow escape. He was at his castle of Valognes, and sound asleep in the middle of the night, when suddenly there came a quick knocking at his door; it was his fool, Goelet."

"His fool?" echoed one of the younger pages, inquiringly.

"Yes," said Marie, "I remember last year when the Baron of Gisors came to visit Count Bertram, how he brought along a funny little man they called his fool. He was queerly dressed, and had a cap all covered with bells like a falcon wears!"

"And it jingled all the while," broke in Blanchette, "and he carried a short stick that he called a bauble; it had a little head with donkey ears carved at one end! And he capered

around and said anything he pleased to the baron, and everybody laughed at him!"

"Yes," said Herve, "many nobles and kings keep such a fool, or jester, whose business it is to amuse them. But when William's fool knocked on his door with his bauble that night, it wasn't any joke. 'Master!' he cried, 'Quick, get up! I have just heard of a plot your enemies have made against you, and they are coming now to take you!'

"William jumped out of bed, hurried on his clothes, rushed down the winding stair to the stable, jumped on the back of his horse and galloped out into the dark, off toward his strong castle of Falaise.

"All night he galloped, helter-skelter, over fields and ditches, any way that was the shortest cut to Falaise.

"Duke William never forgot that wild ride for his life; and, long after, he had the helter-skelter path he had taken made into a fine road which is called 'the Duke's Road.'

"But though William was safe for a time at Falaise, his enemies were still plotting against him; and soon his cousin, Guy of Burgundy, began to claim that he ought to be duke instead of William.

"Then William gathered together all his friends he could and got the King of France to help him. Guy of Burgundy collected all the Normans who were enemies of William and a great battle was fought at a place called Val-es-Dunes. In the end William conquered, and after that almost all the nobles went over to his side.

"Yes, indeed, our Duke William is a wonderful man," repeated old Herve, "and the greatest ruler Normandy has ever had."

"Who will rule Normandy while he is gone to Britain?" asked Alan.

"Why," said Master Herve, "I hear it said the Duchess Matilda will. Duke William has such a high opinion of his wife, the duchess, that he is not afraid to trust Normandy to her care."

"Mother says Duchess Matilda is a wonderful woman," said Blanchette, "and that nobody can embroider so well as she can!"

"Yes," answered Herve, "she is a great lady. Duke William had a good deal of trouble to get her, but he was so in love with her that he won out in the end."

"Why did he have trouble to get her?" asked Marie.

"Well," said old Herve, "I guess she was willing enough, and so was her father the rich and powerful Count of Flanders, but it seems some people said she and William were relations and the laws of the church forbid relations to marry each other. I don't believe they are more than fourth or fifth cousins, if that; but at any rate some of William's enemies told a different story to the Pope, the head of the church, so for four years the lovers were kept apart. Then one day Duke William hurried up to his castle of Eu, on the border of Flanders and Normandy, met the Lady Matilda, and they were quickly married by a parish priest and then came to William's palace in the city of Rouen.

And if they had no splendid processions at their wedding they had plenty afterward, for all the way to Rouen the people cheered them and gave great parties for them and greeted them right royally. And everybody said there wasn't a handsomer couple in all Normandy.

"The Pope was greatly displeased about it, but at last he forgave them, only making each promise to build a church as penance for getting married without his permission."

"And did they build them?" asked Blanchette.

"Yes, indeed, child!" answered Herve. "Duke William and Duchess Matilda always keep their word. They began the churches right away in the city of Caen, and they are so fine and grand that it has taken these twenty years since to finish them. They built them right willingly though, for all Normandy knows that the duke and duchess love each other and their marriage is very happy.

"But run along now, children! I have told you enough for one day!"

CHAPTER IX

Hugh Becomes a Knight

The summer was wearing away and the time drawing near for Count Bertram to go to Dives to join the expedition against Britain.

Meantime Hugh had reached his twenty-first birthday and was soon to become a knight. He had served faithfully his seven years as page and seven more as squire, a long and careful training; and the final ceremony of receiving knighthood was so important that it took two days to go through it, and the lords and ladies from several neighboring castles had been invited to come and help him celebrate.

In the ceremony of knighting there was much that had a symbolic meaning; that is, that was meant to remind the youth of other and higher things. Thus, when Hugh began

his preparations, first of all two of the other squires took him to a special bath; and when he put off his ordinary clothes they laid them aside, as he was supposed in like way to put off his old life and enter the new with both a clean heart and clean body.

Alan and Henri were allowed to bring his new garments to him; and as still another squire took them from the chest in the castle hall where they had been kept ready, the two lads looked at them with interest, for there were three different tunics, one white, one red, and one black.

As they watched Hugh's friends help him put on the white tunic first, "Why does he put on a white one?" asked Alan.

"That is to symbolize the whiteness and purity of the life he must lead as a knight," answered the squire. Then over the white tunic they put the red one, "This," the boys were told, "is to symbolize the red blood he must be willing to shed for Christ and the defense of the church. And the black one which goes on last of all, over the red, is to signify the mystery of death which every man must bravely face."

When Hugh was thus dressed, Father Herluin came and

led him to the chapel of the castle where he must stay until the next morning. He must touch neither food nor drink, nor must he sleep when night came. He was expected to spend the hours in thinking over the new life he was about to enter, and in praying God to forgive his past sins and to give him strength to keep truly and honorably the solemn vows of knighthood which he would take the next day.

And while Hugh watched and prayed, all the others were busy preparing for the morrow when the guests were to come; of course these would bring along a number of attendants, and a great feast was to follow the knighting. The long boards for the tables were scoured and so were the wooden trenchers and pewter cups for the humbler guests, while the silver flagons and dishes for the noble folks were polished till they shone. Fresh rushes were strewn on the floor, and plenty of logs brought in for the great fireplace where the cooking would go on.

"Oh, mother," said Blanchette, "isn't your new tapestry finished so we can hang it up?"

"Not quite, dear," answered Lady Gisla, who still had a little more to do on the hunting scene she had spent so

much time embroidering.

"Oh, but it is so near done and so pretty, please let us put it up for tomorrow!" begged Blanchette.

"Very well," said Lady Gisla, and she gave orders to have the tapestry hung on the wall over the dais, where it looked very handsome.

Indeed, everyone worked so busily and all were so tired when night came that they slept soundly, quite forgetting the young squire who kept his lonely vigil in the chapel.

Hugh tried his best to keep awake and fix his thoughts on higher things; but sometimes his head would nod in spite of himself, and then he would have to rouse himself with an effort and try to forget that he was hungry and thirsty, and to remember that a knight must bear all hardships unflinchingly and must never shrink from any honorable task.

At last the long night wore away and the castle folk began to wake up. Count Bertram and Lady Gisla put on their best clothes and made ready to welcome their guests, who soon began to arrive.

And while the bustle of welcome was going on in the courtyard and within the castle, at the kitchen end of the

great hall the cooks were scurrying about in great haste. "Rouse up, Towser! Hurry up, Bowser!" they would cry out to the patient dogs turning the spits by the big fireplace. "Faster, faster! Don't you see that venison is burning?"

And then the poor beasts would turn back their ears and trot round and round, while the venison and woodcocks and hares and whatnot on the long spits sputtered and roasted and dripped savory juices over the glowing coals. "Quick, bring me some honey and spices for these marchpanes," called one of the cooks to a boy scullion, who ran as fast as his legs would carry him to the honey-pot and spice bags so that the sweetmeats might not be delayed. "Here! Fill this flagon with cider and bring another cheese from the store-room!" commanded another; and so the work went busily on till all was ready.

By this time all the guests had come, and the pages had begun to usher them to the chapel. Heading the procession went Count Bertram, who, on greeting Hugh at the chapel door, hung around his neck the sword which was to be his. When all were seated, Hugh walked slowly up the aisle and unbuckling the sword laid it reverently upon the altar.

Then, with bowed head, he knelt at the feet of Father Herluin, while the good priest, after praying that the sword might never be drawn for an unworthy cause, blessed both it and Hugh and said the service of the church.

After this the young man was taken possession of for a few minutes by Lady Gisla and the noble ladies, her guests, for it was their duty to put on him the armor he was to wear as a knight. First of all they buckled on his spurs; and then, as Alan and Henri handed them each piece, they arrayed him in his hauberk, girt on his sword belt and set his helmet upon his head. Last of all, taking his sword from the altar Lady Gisla placed it in the scabbard at the young man's side.

When the ladies had finished their task, Hugh knelt before Count Bertram and solemnly promised to keep faithfully the vows of knighthood which Count Bertram repeated to him. There were a great many of these, the chief being that he must fear, reverence, and serve God religiously, that he must be a loyal defender of his native land and of its ruler, that he must uphold the rights of the weak, must be gentle and courteous to all women and succor them if in distress, and that he must always speak the truth and make

any sacrifice to keep his faith and honor untarnished.

When Hugh had taken the vows, and while he still knelt, Count Bertram drew his own sword from its scabbard and with the flat of it lightly struck him three times on the shoulder, at the same time pronouncing the words, "In the name of God and Saint Michael I dub thee knight!"

When Hugh rose to his feet his face beamed with joy to think that his long years of service were ended and he was at last a knight.

There was one thing more, however, that must be done to finish the ceremony. For just as he had put on the three tunics to symbolize different things, so now he must mount his warhorse to signify that he was ready to ride forth to do brave and gallant deeds.

Hugh's young friends had already decked the horse in his finest trappings and led him to the chapel door, where Alan and Henri stood holding his bridle on either side.

As the company came out of the chapel the young knight mounted and rode several times around the courtyard, the horse prancing and stepping proudly and seeming to feel that he, too, had become of more importance since



"'In the name of God and Saint Michael I dub thee a knight.'"

he was no longer to be ridden by a mere squire, but would henceforth be the war-horse of a noble knight.

When Hugh finally halted in front of the keep, and sprang to the ground, everybody crowded around him with smiles and good wishes for the new life he had entered, and then Count Bertram led the way to the castle hall and the knighting ended with a merry feast.

CHAPTER X

On the Way to Dives

It was late in August, and on almost every road in Normandy one might have seen soldiers making their way to the sea-coast town of Dives to join the forces of Duke William for the invasion of Britain.

At the castle of Noireat all was ready for Count Bertram's going. Several days before, a number of knights, who were his vassals, had come with their followers to go with him, and the castle had been overflowing with people. At last, when the morning came to start, there was a great running to and fro; squires and pages bustled about harnessing the horses, putting on their rosettes and plumes, and then they helped their masters buckle on their armor and spurs. Count Bertram's had been freshly polished, and Lady Gisla had made for him a new banner of blue silk on which was

worked a red two-legged dragon like that painted on his shield.

As the little party said good-by, "Oh, Father," cried Blanchette, clinging to him with tearful eyes, "don't get hurt! Promise you will come back safe and sound!"

And Count Bertram patted her head and kissing her and Lady Gisla declared that he would come home just as soon as they had helped Duke William conquer Britain.

Then all mounted their horses, Count Bertram and Hugh and the other knights riding in front, and after them the squires, who carried such baggage as was needful, while last of all came Alan and Henri, who were to go along as far as Dives, ready always to wait upon the others or do errands at their bidding.

Master Herve, with trembling hands, opened the castle gate, and off they rode, their armor gleaming and their banners fluttering in the summer sunlight.

As the old man watched them go he shook his head sadly, and "Well, well," he muttered to himself, "old Herve has seen the day when he didn't have to stay behind and sit on his bench from morning till night! Many's the time I've

followed Count Bertram's father to the field!" And he blinked his eyes hard as he shut the great gate.

As for Lady Gisla and the little girls, they climbed to the top of the very highest tower in the castle and there they watched the party of riders as they wound down the cliff and out upon the road, gazing until they could see no more.

Meantime Count Bertram and the others rode along on their way to the town of Falaise where they were to pass the night. Alan and Henri, who had never been far from home, looked about with bright eyes. Here and there by the wayside were the little huts of peasant folks who had to plow and sow the fields and do all the hard work to raise food for their overlords, but who never could own any land themselves or even move away from the wretched places where they lived. The huts were rudely built of clay or wood, and in their doorways little children in bare feet and coarse homespun dresses stood staring at the party riding by. In the fields their brothers, a little older, were working with bent backs beside their fathers, and inside the huts their sisters were helping the mothers weave the coarse cloth for the family clothes, or else were stirring the pots of cabbage

soup which was the most any of them had to eat.

"Dear me!" said Alan, "I'm glad I don't have to live like those people!"

"Yes," agreed Henri, "it must be terribly dreary. I guess Father Herluin is right when he says we ought to be glad to learn our lessons and know something, for if we were peasant children we wouldn't have a chance to find out anything! And they have to work all the time just as hard as they can, and never have nice things to eat or wear or any fun like we do, poor things!"

"Look at those washer-women!" said Alan, glancing with a smile toward a group of women kneeling at the bank of a little stream they were about to cross. "When Count Bertram and the others came along to ford the water the women stared so hard at them that some of the washing is floating off!"

And, sure enough, bobbing up and down with the current, sailed some pieces of linen from the pile of clothes which the women were washing in the stream, pounding them with stones and sousing them up and down just as they do to this day in Normandy.

When the two boys looked back after crossing the ford, the women were wading out with long sticks and pulling back the runaway garments.

Sometimes they passed orchards of apples and pears, and "Oh!" cried Alan, as he sniffed the ripe fruit which the peasants were gathering, "don't it smell good! I wouldn't so much mind being one of those peasants!"

"Yes, you would!" answered Henri, "for you wouldn't dare eat all the apples and pears you wanted! You would have to make most of them into cider for your overlord!"

Now and then, perched on some steep hill, the towers of a tall castle would rise against the sky; and perhaps at the foot of the hill would nestle a little village with gray houses like the village of Noireat.

At mid-day they all stopped in a grassy woodland and rested the horses and ate some of the food they carried with them.

They rode all afternoon, the road growing steeper and more broken till, toward sunset, it wound down into a picturesque ravine. On either side rose huge rocky crags, and "Look!" cried Henri, gazing up at a lordly castle which

crowned one of these. "I wonder what place that is?"

"That is Falaise castle," said one of the squires, who was riding just ahead of Henri and heard his question.

The lad looked with eager interest at the great strong walls and lofty tower looming black against the sunset sky. "Falaise!" he repeated. "Why, then it must be where Duke William was born, and where he rode so fast that night his fool, Goelet, woke him up and warned him to fly!"

"To be sure," said the squire, smiling at Henri's eagerness, "it's the very place. I know this part of the country, for some of my kinsmen live near here. That castle has belonged to the dukes of Normandy for I don't know how many years, but ever and ever so long. And down in the ravine is the town of Falaise; we'll come to it presently. The dukes have always been fond of Falaise, and often come there, though of course they have to live most of the time in the city of Rouen where their palace is."

As the lads listened they were all the while riding along, and soon they came to the old town which, as the squire had said, lay for the most part in the ravine. There was a strong wall around it, and when they entered the gate they

found themselves in a narrow, crooked street with houses close together on either side. Most of them were built of wood with great timbers showing on the outside, and all had peaked roofs and many gables. Here and there were dark little shops where cloth weavers and leather and metal workers displayed their wares. Everything, of course, was made by hand, for there were no machines for doing things in those days.

Farther along the crooked street they passed the market house, which was open at all sides, only a heavy timber roof upheld by square wooden pillars. Within were many stalls where people sold meat and vegetables, cheese and apples and cider, for Normandy has always been a great place for apples.

As they rode past "I hope they have bought plenty here for the inn where we are to stay tonight," said Henri, "for I am dreadfully hungry!"

"So am I!" replied Alan, for the all day's ride had sharpened their appetites. In a few minutes they came to the inn, a good-sized wooden house built around a courtyard, which they entered through a broad gateway, and soon the land-

lord was greeting them all, and his servants were leading the knights' horses to stalls while the squires and pages took care of their own.

When they went in for supper the count and his friends were served in a room by themselves, while the others took their luck at the long table spread in the main part of the inn. The air was thick with smoke from a great fireplace where meat was roasting on a spit and the landlord's wife and her maids were making omelettes in long-handled frying pans.

Alan and Henri looked curiously at the other travelers around them as they took their places with a wooden trencher between them. Presently a boy near their own age brought them some meat.

"How do you do?" said Alan, who always liked to make friends with people.

The boy, who had a bright pleasant face, with a friendly look replied to Alan's greeting and then went off to serve someone else. But after supper he came over to the bench where the two pages were sitting, and began to talk to them and to ask them where they came from. When they had

answered his questions, they began to ask some themselves.

"What is your name? Have you always lived in Falaise?" inquired Alan. "And what do the boys and girls in town do? Do you go hunting, or to tournaments, or learn to ride or fight? Though I don't quite see how you can in town!"

"My name is Gilles," answered the boy, "and I have always lived here. This is my father's inn, and I help with the work. I can do lots of things, too! I run errands and help wait on the table and I can take care of the horses, and most anything!" he added with an air of pride.

"But what do you do for amusement?" persisted Alan.

"Oh," said Gilles, "we play games, ball and hide and seek, and spin tops and sometimes a puppet show comes to town and we go to that."

"Yes," said Henri, "we do those things at home. I wonder if your puppet shows are like the ones that come to our castle? Last winter a fine one came! The man had a box fixed up like a little stage and a lot of little dolls dressed like different people, and he moved them around with his fingers and pretended to talk for them."

"Yes," put in Alan, "and a couple of them were dressed

like knights on horseback and had a regular fight!"

"I saw that one!" said Gilles, with a wise air. "And ever so many others come to Falaise."

"Did you ever go to a tournament?" asked Henri.

"No," answered Gilles vaguely, "I don't know what that is. But I've been lots of times to the Guibray fair!" he added, his eyes brightening.

It was now the other boys' turn to ask, "What is the Guibray fair?"

"Oh," said Gilles, "it's a big fair that Duke William started in Guibray, a little place up on the hill close to Falaise. There is a fine church there and a shrine with a Madonna that works miracles, and such hundreds and hundreds of pilgrims go there to pray that Duke William thought it would be a fine thing for the Guibray folks to have a fair; so he gave them permission to have one every summer in August, because that's when most of the pilgrims come. It's too bad you didn't get here sooner, for it's been over only about two weeks!"

"What do they do there?" asked Alan.

"Well," answered Gilles, "they have swings, and games,

and minstrels and jugglers, and shooting with bows and arrows, and then there are all kinds of things to buy, and more horses and cows than you ever saw!" finished the boy, with round eyes.

Alan and Henri looked rather envious as they heard of the wonders of the Guibray fair. And, strangely enough, though this started nearly a thousand years ago, to this day it is still held every August, just as Gilles described it.

As the boys were talking, a little girl went through the room carrying a doll and a gray kitten. "Is that your sister?" asked Henri of Gilles.

"Yes," answered the lad, "and I have another older one and two brothers."

"What does your sister do? Does she help around the house, too?" asked Henri, for the boys were inquisitive and interested in what kind of lives were led by the boys and girls in town.

"Yes," answered Gilles, "and she is learning to spin and weave, and my older sister can make omelettes and roast meat as well as mother. She don't like to very well, though; she wants to learn to embroider and make things to hang

on the wall like some of the rich people in town have. You just ought to see the grand houses some of the rich folks here have! They have chairs that are carved, and wonderful worked cloth hanging on the walls, and some have tiles on their floors, and two of them have kind of holes built in the wall by the fireplace for the smoke to go out! I think they are called chimneys; Duke William's castle has one of them!"

Alan and Henri looked rather blank as they heard of the holes for smoke, which seemed to them quite a fine idea; though we would have laughed at the chimneys Gilles told of, which were really very poor affairs and led the smoke, such of it as went into them, out at the side, not the top of the house.

The two pages, however, said nothing about having none at Noireat, and Alan declared with a lordly air, "Well, I guess Count Bertram has a chair all carved with dragons, and Lady Gisla can embroider tapestries as good as anybody!"

"Where do you go to church?" asked Gilles.

"Why, in the chapel of the castle," answered Henri.

"Well," said Gilles, determined to find something better than the castle had, "I don't believe it's so big as the church of Saint Gervaise here in Falaise! And our church has glass in the windows!"

Here the boys' talk was interrupted by the loud ringing of a bell.

"What's that?" asked Alan.

"That's the bell of Saint Gervaise church now!" said Gilles. "It's ringing for curfew!"

"What is curfew?" asked Henri.

"Why," said Gilles in surprise, "don't you know what curfew is? I thought everybody knew that! We have to cover up our fire with ashes and put out our candles when that bell rings. Duke William ordered it, and Father says it's to make people careful that their houses don't burn down at night when everybody's asleep, and that it's to make folks go to bed early, too, and keep out of mischief."

"Well, I guess it's meant more for you town people," said Alan. "There are more of you to get into mischief! And your wooden houses would burn down quicker than stone castles, too." But Gilles had already run to help his father

heap ashes over the glowing logs still smoldering in the fireplace, and all the travelers in the room began to find places on the floor or benches where they might pass the night. Alan and Henri and the squires of Count Bertram's party stretched themselves out wherever they could, and soon everybody was asleep.

CHAPTER XI

Waiting for the Wind

The two pages washed their faces next morning at the well in the courtyard, and after an early breakfast mounted their ponies and rode off with Count Bertram and the others.

All day they rode, and at nightfall came to a pretty little stream. It was the river Dives, and close by was a village where the party passed the night in an inn much like that of Falaise, only smaller and smokier.

The next day they followed the stream till late in the afternoon, when at last it spread out through flat meadow lands and by and by emptied into the sea near the old town of Dives where Duke William was waiting for his forces to gather.

"Oh, look!" cried Henri, who was gazing eagerly ahead.

"Do you suppose that long white line is the sea?"

"Yes!" said Alan, with equal eagerness. "And yonder must be the town of Dives."

And then, as they came still nearer, "Oh, see the ships! And all the tents and flags and horses!"

Everybody urged on their horses, and soon they had reached the gathering place and were looking about with wonder at the throng of soldiers, and the stir and bustle everywhere going on. Every inn and house in the town of Dives was full, and of the hosts who had come to join Duke William, far the greater number were camped in the tents pitched in the grassy meadows between the town and the sea.

Everywhere flags and pennons were fluttering, and so many war horses were grazing in the meadows that Henri, laughing, said to Alan, "I guess if Gilles could see all those he wouldn't think so much of that Guibray fair!"

"No!" cried Alan. "And wouldn't his eyes get round if he could get a glimpse of those ships!" And Alan's own eyes grew very round indeed as he gazed at the bright colored sails crowding the mouth of the river and gleaming in the

distance along the edge of the sea.

Count Bertram and his friends soon arranged for some tents, and the party went into camp like the others. Alan and Henri ran errands and helped all they could; and though they were tired out when dark fell, they were so excited they could hardly sleep when not long after sunset all the camp-fires were covered up and quiet fell over the town and meadow.

The fires were all promptly covered, for Duke William himself was near by in a great timbered house which he had caused to be built months before near the river bank, as he needed a comfortable place in which to stay while he attended to the building of his fleet.

The next morning the two pages went to look at Duke William's house (which is still standing), and found it very large and attractive.

"I wonder if that is Duke William's device?" said Henri, pointing to a carved stone lion holding his paw on a shield and looking down at them from the gateway.

"Yes," said someone standing near, "that is, part of it. You know the duke's device is three lions, the same as on

the flag of Normandy; and if you stay here a little while, you will probably see Duke William himself. He generally comes out about this time."

The boys ventured inside the open gateway and into the courtyard; the house, built around this, had a peaked roof and many gables and dormer windows, and around the second story ran a wooden balcony with a flight of steps leading to the courtyard.

Presently a door opened from one of the rooms facing the balcony, and a man stepped out and came down the stairway and through the courtyard.

He was followed by several knights and pages, and when one of the latter passed near Alan, "Is that Duke William?" he hurriedly whispered.

"Yes," answered the page, as he scampered on after the others.

Alan and Henri followed, too, all the while looking hard at the duke whenever they got a chance. He was a tall, handsome man, strong and powerfully built; he had a high forehead, and his hair and small mustache were both closely cropped; but, though little over forty years old, his

face showed stern, careworn lines, for Duke William's life had been full of struggles and he had been obliged to fight his way from babyhood up.

"He looks like a duke, don't you think so, Alan?" asked Henri.

"Yes, indeed!" said Alan. "And he is splendidly dressed, too, only I thought he would have on the crimson velvet mantle and big crown that Master Herve said dukes wear."

"Well," said Henri wisely, "I don't suppose he wants to wear those things while he is attending to his army out here. I think he looks much better in what he has on."

The boys kept following the ducal party at a respectful distance, and watched with interest as Duke William went down to the water's edge and began looking over the boats.

"They look a good deal like the dragon ships Herve told us Rolf the Ganger came in," said Alan, "only they aren't so gayly painted as he said those were."

"No," said Henri, "and I guess they are some bigger than his. But they have the red and blue sails, and long rows of oars, and are all curved up high at the ends and carved just like Herve said. I don't see any dragons, but there are some

with heads carved on them!"

"I see two dragons!" cried Alan, as with keen eyes he searched the high prows of the hundreds of long narrow ships crowding the river.

As the boys watched, great quantities of salted meat and other provisions were stored on those of the ships that were set apart to carry supplies; and baggage and tents and weapons of all kinds were loaded on others. For Duke William expected to set sail within a week at most.

But though all the soldiers gathered and all was ready, still the ships floated quietly at the mouth of the river Dives; for there was no wind to swell the sails and carry them toward Britain. The long oars alone were not enough to take the heavily loaded vessels without the aid of sails, and no one then had even dreamed of such a thing as a steam-boat.

Duke William and all the fighting men grew more and more impatient as windless day after day passed by till almost two weeks were gone. But though everybody else anxiously watched and waited for the wind, Alan and Henri could not help but be secretly glad of the delay. For



"The ships floated quietly at the
mouth of the river Dives."

as they were not old enough to go along, they knew that just as soon as the fleet sailed they would have to go back to Noireat, which would be very lonely and quiet. Count Bertram had arranged for them to return home with some young squires from one of the neighboring castles.

CHAPTER XII

The Duchess Matilda's Gift

"Dear me!" said Alan one day, while still the ships waited for the wind, "won't it seem tame to go back to Noireat after being here so long?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Henri, with a sigh. "We surely will miss seeing all these knights and soldiers every day, and all the horses and ships! And then at night, the fire in the castle won't be half so much fun as the camp-fires here, even if they are put out early. And the stories the men have to tell about the wars they have been in beat old Herve's!"

"No," said Alan, "I don't think they are better than Master Herve's, but they are different. And then the minstrels here, what good songs they sing! I didn't expect though to find any of them in camp! I didn't know they ever went to war!"

"Oh, yes!" said Henri, "I heard one of the knights say that the minstrels, when they wanted to, could fight as well as anybody. But Duke William's minstrel, Talifer, is going along just to sing his war songs so as to cheer on the men. And the knight said that Talifer is so brave and that he sings so well that he will probably ride right in front of everybody!"

"He certainly sings well!" agreed Alan. "You know the other day when we passed Duke William's house, what a beautiful song we heard Talifer singing!"

Here the talk of the boys was cut short as Count Bertram called them to do some errand and they quickly sprang up to obey him.

The next morning Henri awakened with a sigh; for there was a gusty sound without and the flap of the tent had blown open.

"Do you hear that?" he asked, nudging Alan who slept beside him.

"Yes," said Alan, dolefully rubbing his eyes, "it's that old wind!"

Soon it was blowing strongly, and though not quite in

the direction wanted, Duke William decided to go along the Norman coast to a point a little nearer Britain; so off the ships sailed to the seaport town of Saint Valery.

Alan and Henri were very disconsolate as they watched the last sail fade away at the rim of the sky.

"Oh, don't you wish we were on one of those ships!" cried Alan longingly.

"Indeed I do!" answered Henri. "It seems lone-some already! It wouldn't be half so much fun staying here with the soldiers all gone, and I'd just as soon go back home!"

"Yes," said Alan, "but we can't right away, for one of the squires of the party we are to go with told me a while ago that his brother, Jean, is sick and they don't want to leave him alone here, so we are all to wait a few days till he gets better."

"Well," said Henri, "I don't see where we will stay, for the camps are all broken up."

"Oh," said Alan, "I forgot to say the squire has arranged for us all to go over to Duke William's house. There are a couple of small rooms the care-taker will let us have, and his wife will get our meals."

"Who will pay for us?" asked Henri.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Alan, "but I suppose Count Bertram will fix it all right when he comes back."

So the little party moved over to Duke William's house, where the sick squire, Jean, was made comfortable and soon began to improve under the nursing of the care-taker's wife.

As Henri had said, everything seemed very quiet and deserted after the sailing of the fleet. But though at first the boys hardly knew what to do with themselves, they soon found plenty of entertainment in wandering about the old town and along the edge of the sea, which was a never-ending wonder to them.

Thus several days passed; and then one morning word came to Dives that the fleet was again becalmed at Saint Valery, waiting vainly for favoring winds. At this news one of the young squires exclaimed, "Let us ride over to Saint Valery! I don't believe it is so very far away, and I think by hard riding we could reach it in a day. Let us go over and see what they are doing there!"

"All right!" cried the others eagerly, and "May we go, too?" Henri made haste to ask.

"Yes," said the squire, "we'll all go! Jean is better, and the care-takers will look after him till we get back."

So, getting their horses and ponies ready as quickly as possible, off they started for Saint Valery.

It proved to be a three days' ride instead of one, but youth and good spirits, and a little money they managed to muster, carried them through, and it was a tired but happy little party that reached Saint Valery at nightfall the third day. Wrapping their riding cloaks about them, they lay down on the ground and slept soundly till morning.

When they awakened, they found much the same scene as had been at Dives. Tents and soldiers, knights and war-horses and ships, and great numbers of the people of Saint Valery coming and going among the throng.

The two pages had some trouble finding Count Bertram and Hugh among so many, but at last they did.

"Ho!" said Count Bertram, staring at them in surprise, "where did you young rascals drop from? I thought you were home by this time!"

He smiled when the boys hurriedly explained to him how they had come. "Well, well," he said, "I am glad

enough to see you and only wish I could take you along! Meantime you can make yourselves useful here."

And he and Hugh between them soon found a number of things for them to do.

So ten days more passed. Then at last the east wind came.

Oh, what rejoicing there was then among all those warriors! and what a hurrying and scurrying to get back in the ships everything that had been taken ashore during the long wait! Horses neighed and whinnied and pranced as they were being led aboard, silken banners and pennons were set flying from every mast, men in armor, men with cross-bows, glittering spears and lances and shining battle-axes, all were crowded on the long ships, as the sun shone and sparkled and the people on shore ran to and fro bringing this and that thing to the water's edge.

Then all at once someone noticed a strange ship on the horizon. Its curving, gayly colored sails gleamed bright and billowy in the brilliant morning light as faster and faster it sped into the harbor of Saint Valery. And then, nearing the fleet, proudly it came to shore just as everything was ready

and Duke William was about to embark on the ship he had chosen for his own.

As the people gazed at the beautiful new vessel, so much finer than any there, a great shout of admiration went up. "The Mora!" they cried, reading the name painted in bright colors on the side of the ship. And then on the flag, waving from the top of the mast, they saw embroidered the three lions of Normandy, and "The duke's ship!" everybody shouted.

But Duke William himself was staring at it in utter bewilderment. He stared at its beautiful shape, at its lion flag, and, most of all, he stared at the carved and gilded figure-head at its high prow. For this was the image of no other than his own little son William, his name-sake and favorite child. The golden boy grasped in one hand a bow and arrow, and with the other held to his lips an ivory trumpet which he seemed in the act of blowing.

As Duke William stood, the picture of amazement, a richly clad lady was seen near the mast of the ship, and in another moment his lips parted in a joyful smile as "The Duchess Matilda! Hurrah, hurrah!" burst from a thousand

throats about him.

It was indeed the Duchess Matilda, who as a surprise for the duke, had ordered the beautiful new ship built for his special use, and she had come with it because she wanted to have the pleasure of presenting it to him herself.

As for Duke William, he was overjoyed, and declared the gallant way in which the Mora had sailed into harbor was a good omen for his undertaking. At once he ordered all his own things taken from the ship he had meant to use and placed on the fine new one.

When once more all was ready, and Duke William had taken leave of Duchess Matilda, and everyone had said good-by to their friends, the anchors were drawn up, the sails set for Britain, music played, people cheered and shouted, and away went the fleet and the fearless army which was to help Duke William earn the name of "the Conqueror" and win for him the crown of Britain.

Alan and Henri, standing at the edge of the water, shaded their eyes with their hands and looked and looked as the countless swelling sails fluttered out to sea. And as the last gleam from the Mora faded from sight, they fancied

that from the ivory horn of the golden boy upon its prow there echoed back a brave "Good-by! Good-by!"

THE END.

Our Little Frankish Cousin of Long Ago

Evaleen Stein

Illustrated by Helena von Landau
and Charles Meister


Rainolf

Preface

The Frankish ruler, Charlemagne, was one of the greatest monarchs that ever lived. Great not merely because he was a victorious warrior and the kingdom he ruled was enormous, but rather because living as he did in a time when many of his people were lawless and ignorant, he saw clearly the worth of law and wisdom. He did all in his power to govern justly and to teach his people in all that best knowledge without which no nation can become truly civilized.

The world has never forgotten his great deeds, and deep in its heart it still cherishes him as one of its most honored heroes.

Many are the songs and legends that cluster about his name, and someday I hope you will read these, for I am sure you will enjoy them. Meantime, perhaps you may be

interested in learning something of the home life of this hero, so let me introduce Our Little Frankish Cousin of Long Ago, for he spent quite a while as page in the royal palace and so ought to be able to give you some idea of what folks did there. At least he can show you what Frankish boys did—and, I do hope you will like him!

Evaleen Stein.

Pronunciation of Proper Names

Aachen (ä′ken)
Aix-la-Chapelle (āks-la-sha-pel′)
Alcuin (äl′kwin)
Ay′mon
Bag′dad
Blaye (blā)
Bordeaux (bör-dō′)
Bur′gun-dy
Caliph (kä′lif)
Charlemagne (chär′le-mān)
Des′sen-berg
Durandal (dū-rän-däl′)
Einhard (īn′hard)
E′mir
Haroun-al-Raschid (hä-rūn′-al-räsh′id)
Ir′min-sul
Mal′a-gis
Marsilius (mär-si′li-us)
Ol′i-vant
Pa-der-born′
Pyrenees (pir′en-ēz)
Rain′olf
Roncesvalles (rön-thes-väl′yas)

CHAPTER I

Rainolf and the Palace Pages

One summer afternoon, ever and ever and ever so long ago, along a crooked street in the old town of Aachen a boy was walking slowly. He held in his hands a half unrolled scroll of parchment covered with queer squares and circles and quantities of stars, and at these he was peering with an intent curiosity. Indeed, he was so absorbed in trying to make out the figures on the parchment that he forgot to notice where he was going; and presently tripping over a large stone projecting from the narrow ill-paved street, down he tumbled, sprawling plump into the midst of a family of little pigs that had been following their mother just ahead of him.

Instantly there was a tremendous squealing as the frightened little beasts scurried off in all directions, and mingling

with their squeals rose a chorus of merry shouts of laughter from a group of boys coming from the opposite direction.

"Ho! Ho! Rainolf!" they cried. "What were you trying to do? Catch a little pig for the palace cooks?"

Meantime Rainolf, having scrambled to his feet, began ruefully to brush the dust from his tunic of white linen and his legs wrapped in strips of the same material cross-gartered with knitted bands of blue wool. One of the boys good-naturedly picked up his round blue cap, while another handed him the roll of parchment which had been the cause of his trouble. As the boy caught a glimpse of the tracings on the scroll, "Rainolf," he said, "I'll wager you have been to see Master Leobard the astrologer!"

"Yes," replied Rainolf, "he was a friend of my father, and mother said for me to go to see him when I came to Aachen. I hunted him up today, and he was very kind and made my horoscope for a present."

Here the boys gathered around Rainolf again as he unrolled his parchment, and they all looked it over trying to puzzle out its meaning. Now, a horoscope was a chart showing the position of the stars in the sky at the hour of a

baby's birth; and from these the astrologer who made it, and who was supposed to know much about the stars and a good deal of magic besides, declared he could foretell the child's future. People who could afford it in those days liked to have these horoscopes made for their children; but if one did not happen to have it done when a baby it answered just as well later on to furnish the astrologer with the right dates. This was the way Master Leobard had made the one for Rainolf, who had been born twelve years before, in a castle some distance from Aachen whither he had lately been sent by his widowed mother so that he might be educated in the court of the great King Charlemagne who ruled the land.

As now the boys looked at the parchment, "Well," said one of them, "it's no use for us to try to make it out. What did Master Leobard say? Is your fortune good?"

"Yes, Aymon," answered Rainolf, "I think it's fairly good —though he did say I would get some hard knocks now and then."

"So," laughed one of the boys, "I suppose you tumbled down just now because your stars said you had to!"

Rainolf smiled as he added, "At any rate, if I do get some knocks, he said I would be a good fighter and always conquer my enemies." And he drew himself up proudly.

"You are a good fighter now," said Aymon, his close friend, as he looked admiringly at Rainolf's straight figure and fearless face with its blue eyes and frame of flaxen hair.

"But," went on Rainolf, "he said there was something else I would like much better than fighting and that I would make a success of it, and that I would see something of the world." Just here the horoscope was cut short, as "Look out!" cried one of the boys, and they all hastened to flatten themselves against the wall of an old brown house in front of which they happened to be standing. For a cart was coming down the street, which was so narrow that anybody walking there had to get out of the way or else squeeze up against some of the brown-beamed wooden houses or dark little shops on either side.

Meantime the cart came trundling by. It was heavy and rudely built, its two wheels made from solid blocks of wood which had been hewn with an ax till they were tolerably round. The cart was drawn by a big white ox wearing a

clumsy wooden collar; and his patient eyes scarcely blinked nor did he turn his head as the heavy wheels bumped and creaked over the uneven stones of the street. Beside the cart walked a bare-headed peasant with red hair and beard and wearing a tunic of coarse gray home-spun, his legs wrapped in bands of linen crisscrossed around them and on his feet shoes of heavy leather.

"Good-day," said Rainolf as the man passed. But the peasant only turned his head and stared.

"Where are you going?" pursued another boy undaunted by his silence.

At this, "To the King's palace," muttered the peasant as he prodded the ox with a long goad he held in his hand.

The ox started, the cart gave a jerk, and "Squawk! Squawk!" came from a couple of geese within, as with feet tied together they helplessly flopped against some bags of meal piled in front of them.

"Oh," said Aymon, standing on tiptoe trying to look into the cart, "never mind, Rainolf, that you didn't catch those little pigs! All these things are going to the palace kitchen!"

"Yes," put in another boy, pointing down the crooked

street, "and there come a lot more!"

Sure enough, there were more ox-carts, and in between them even some flocks of sheep and a number of cattle. All these provisions the peasant folk had raised on the lands of the King near Aachen, and they were bringing them in, as they did once in so often, for the use of the large household at the palace. By and by, when these supplies were all eaten, the King and all the palace people would probably move off for a while to some other part of the kingdom where he had more farms to fill the royal larder.

As now the last cart went creaking along the street, "Where are you boys going?" asked Rainolf of the others, who, like himself, were all pages from the palace.

"Oh," said Aymon, "nowhere in particular. The King's chamberlain sent us to old Grimwald, the armorer, to see if he had finished some new boar-spears for the big hunt next week. The palace armorer has more than he can do, so Grimwald is helping him. But the spears were not done."

Meantime they all loitered along the street, now and then looking in the shops on either side. These were small and dark, more like little cubby holes than our idea of

shops. There was no glass in their narrow windows, only heavy wooden shutters to be closed and barred at night. The shopkeepers sat on benches inside, most of them hard at work making their wares. There was the shoe-dealer sewing up shoes of thick leather cut in one piece soles and all, or, if one preferred, he had sandals of rawhide with leather thongs to tie them on. There was the cloth-seller, whose wife had spun and woven the woollen stuffs and the rolls of linen and narrow colored bands in which the Frankish men wrapped and cross-gartered their legs; for no one had thought of trousers or stockings. Then there was the silk-dealer, whose wares had come from the town of Lyons, and goldsmiths beating out trinkets of gold and silver for the noble ladies.

Past these was a many-gabled inn; for as Aachen was the King's capital, numbers of people came there on different errands. Across from the inn was a grassy square and a low brown house where on market days one might buy cheeses and chunks of meat and coarsely ground meal and a few kinds of vegetables and for sweetmeats cakes made of meal and honey, for nobody had heard of sugar.

Near the market-house a juggler was standing on his head, but only a few beggars and children were watching him; and as the boys went along they merely glanced at him with a scornful "Pooh! Does he suppose we can't stand on our heads, too?" For jugglers were plenty and this one not so clever as most.

Beyond the square was the shop of Grimwald, the armorer, whose swords and helmets and spears were the best in Aachen. Grimwald was busy making a suit of armor by sewing hundreds of small iron rings on a tunic of leather, and beside him an apprentice was sharpening the boar-spears as he turned a great grindstone. Standing close to this was an elfish figure in a bright yellow tunic, a little man, not more than four feet high, with a peaked face and strange deep eyes, now shrewd and keen, now twinkling and kindly.

"Ho!" cried one of the boys, looking into the shop, "there is the King's jester!"

"Malagis," he called to the dwarf, "what are you doing in there?"

At this Malagis came out, limping a little because of one

crooked foot; though it was astonishing how he could caper when he wanted to. "Oh," he said, "I was just standing by the grindstone a minute getting my wits sharpened. It would be good for all of you, too," he added, sweeping the group with a carved ivory staff he held, "only it would take so frightfully long!"

"One thing," said Aymon laughing, "you don't need to sharpen your tongue, Malagis!"

Here the dwarf prodded him with his staff, just as the peasants prodded their oxen, and began capering along beside the boys.

Soon they passed the row of shops and came to dwelling houses, some with upper stories and peaked roofs, some low and rambling. On nearly all heavy shutters stood open showing within sometimes richly dressed ladies and their maids spinning and weaving or embroidering, and sometimes women in homespun bending over pots and pans in which things were cooking at big fireplaces while puffs of smoke curled out through the windows till you would have been quite sure all those houses were afire! But the boys knew better and paid no attention, for nobody had

chimneys, and smoke was expected to get out as best it could.

Presently, "I'll tell you what let's do!" cried Rainolf. "Let's go back to the palace swimming pool and see if there is a chance for a swim!"

"All right!" echoed the rest, and off they scampered past the last straggling houses till they came to the edge of Aachen, and looming ahead rose the great palace of the mighty King Charlemagne. After the plain wooden houses of the old town, it would have made you blink to see how very large and fine was this palace with its stone walls and tall towers and its many porticoes and doorways and cornices all of beautifully carved marble. In the midst of it was a wide courtyard with grass and flowers and numbers of marble statues.

Not far from the palace, in a pleasant meadow-land, was a large pool lined with blocks of stone and divided into two parts, in one of which was warm and in the other cold water; for it was fed from springs nearby, and some of these always ran warm. Indeed, the chief reason why King Charlemagne had built one of his finest palaces here was

that he might bathe often in these warm medicinal springs. He had had the swimming pool made large enough, however, for others of his household to enjoy it as well; though the boys would not have presumed to go in if the King himself were there. But when they came up only a few soldiers and other humbler folk were swimming about, so all they had to do was to throw off their tunics and jump in, and soon they were splashing around like a school of porpoises.

Presently Malagis, who had not hurried, came along by the pool and seeing Rainolf's parchment, which had fallen from his tunic and was about to tumble into the water, picked it up and placed a stone on it for safety, muttering as he did so, "There! One of those silly boys has been getting his horoscope! They're always in such a hurry to know their fortunes all at once—as if they wouldn't find out soon enough anyhow! I could have told him myself, if I was a mind to, much better than old Master Leobard!" And Malagis poked the parchment contemptously with his foot; for he was reputed something of a magician himself.

CHAPTER II

A Bit of History

Now, while the boys are in swimming, suppose we stop a minute and answer a few questions. If you children would like to know when this story begins, you will have to subtract something over eleven hundred years from this year and that will leave you just three figures; which means that it was enormously long ago. For if you have subtracted right you will find that the story begins in the year 800. And if you want to know where the old town of Aachen was, you will have to turn in your geographies to the map of Europe and look in the western part of Prussia; and there you will find that Aachen, which is very near to France, has also a French name, Aix-la-Chapelle, which means Aachen of the chapel, or church, because of the wonderful one which King Charlemagne built there.

But if anybody had told Rainolf or Aymon or the rest of those boys in swimming that the town was ever called Aix-la-Chapelle and that it was in Prussia, they would have stared and laughed; for the simple reason that there wasn't any Prussia then. Neither was there any Germany or France as they are bounded in your maps, nor Belgium nor Holland.

"Dear me!" you say, "why what in the world was there?"

Well, there was just the same big country with its hills and valleys and mountains and rivers, only it wasn't all settled and divided up and named as it is now. It was all ruled by King Charlemagne, and, to be sure, some of it to the east of Aachen was vaguely called Germany, but nobody could have told exactly how far Germany went. While west and north and south of Aachen, where is now Belgium and Holland and France, was mostly called Gaul. In this great region many different kinds of people lived. Those in the southern part of Gaul were quite civilized, because once upon a time they had been conquered by the Romans who had taught them many things. Those up in the northern part of the kingdom were many of them still wild and

savage; while those in the middle part were, as might have been expected betwixt and between; that is, civilized in many ways and in others very rude and ignorant.

A few hundred years before our story begins, when the whole country was peopled by wandering tribes generally fighting each other, one tribe, called the Franks, being stronger than the rest, managed to get possession of a large part of the land and a Frankish chief named Clovis became King. Clovis conquered many of the other tribes and added to his kingdom; and though he had been a heathen to start with, he ended by being baptized and becoming a Christian.

But Clovis seemed to be the only great chief of his family; for after he died his sons and grandsons and great-great-grandsons were all so stupid and good-for-nothing that the Frankish people did not know what to do with them. They did not like to take their crowns away from them, so they let them still be called Kings, but shut them up in their palaces or sometimes even carted them off to farmhouses in the country. And while each "Sluggard King," for so they were nick-named, thus dawdled away his life, the kingdom was really managed by a man called the Mayor of the

Palace.

By and by there was a Mayor of the Palace named Pepin who was a very clever man and decided to make a change. He thought that as all the descendants of Clovis were too silly to rule and other people had to do all their work for them, it was high time to stop pretending they were Kings. By this time all the Frankish people had grown very tired of the foolish old royal family and quite agreed with Pepin. They said that as he had been such a good Mayor of the Palace he should be King instead of Childeric, who was the last of the family of Clovis and who was then shut up in a farmhouse where he did nothing but eat and drink and doze.

So the big Frankish warriors lifted Pepin up on their shields and showed him to everybody as their new King; and a very good one he made.

But it was Pepin's baby boy Charles who was destined to be the lasting glory of the Franks. When he grew up and inherited the kingdom, he soon earned the title of Charles the Great, or Charlemagne, which is the same thing. He extended his dominions till his kingdom spread over all that

is now France and Germany and most of Italy and much more besides and was one of the largest in the world; and not only was he a great warrior, but he was one of the very greatest and wisest rulers the world has ever seen. Indeed, he was so remarkable and so powerful that it is no wonder that for hundreds of years after his time people declared that he was at least ten feet tall, that in battle he could hew down dozens of his enemies at a single stroke, and that he was so wise that he knew instantly everything that went on in the farthest parts of his kingdom.

Yes, about Charlemagne and the Twelve Paladins, who were his bravest warriors, more wonderful stories have been told and more beautiful songs sung than about any other King that ever lived, excepting only King Arthur of Britain and the Knights of the Round Table; and, of course, you have heard of them.

Now, Charlemagne was indeed very wise; and among other things he saw that the Franks had much to learn in many ways. And this brings us back to the King's palace; for he knew one thing particularly his people had to be taught, and that was how to build beautiful houses such as

he had seen in his wars in Italy and other far countries. So when he wanted to build the palace at his favorite Aachen he brought home with him not only Italian workmen to teach the Franks, but also quantities of fine marble columns and handsome mosaics and beautiful carvings.

And that was why the great palace there was one of the finest of the many belonging to Charlemagne. And that was why, too, the big swimming pool was so well made; for the King had seen baths like it at Rome.

But really it is time Rainolf and all those other boys came out of it, for they have been swimming all the while we have been talking about the Frankish people! And, besides, Charlemagne himself has not yet come into the story, and surely you must want to see what such a wonderful King is like.

So splash! out come the boys and run off to put on their clothes, and—if you look sharp—you will see the mighty Charlemagne come into the very next chapter; though he will come quietly and not as if he were entering a captured city. When he did that people used to be terribly frightened; for marching before him would be such multitudes of

soldiers with iron spears and coats of iron mail and iron leggings, and so many bold knights on horseback, wearing iron armor and iron helmets and iron breastplates and iron gauntlets and carrying iron battle-axes, and then the mighty Charlemagne himself clad in iron from head to toe, riding an iron gray horse, holding in one hand an enormous iron lance, and looking so—but let us wait till he comes into the story.

CHAPTER III

The Palace School

The next morning rather early, as usual, Rainolf and the other boys tumbled out of their beds in the wing of the palace where they slept, and as soon as they were dressed they ran out into the courtyard and began jumping over each other, for all the world like leap-frog! So that must have been it. By and by, "I'm hungry!" cried Aymon.

"So am I!" said Rainolf. "Let's find something to eat!"

And they all trooped off to the great palace kitchen where the cooks gave them some bread and cold meat and cheese, which they stood around and ate wherever they were not too much in the way. For breakfast was not made much of by anybody, nor set out except for the more important people of the palace. And it was never much like our breakfasts. There was always a great deal of meat for food,

and for drink there was mead and wine. It had not occurred to people in those days that it might be agreeable to eat different kinds of things at different meals. And, besides, even if they had thought of it, they couldn't make their breakfasts very different from their dinners, because none of the Franks had ever heard of such things as rolled oats or puffed rice or coffee or griddle-cakes and maple syrup, poor things!

Nevertheless, when the boys had finished munching down their meat and bread they began, just as you do, to think about school.

"Rainolf!" said Aymon, "if you spell the rest of us down again today or get more good marks in grammar, I'll fight you!" But as he laughed good-naturedly as he made this threat, Rainolf laughed too. "Never mind," he answered, "maybe you won't have to! I think today's lesson will be a good deal harder than yesterday."

By this time they all decided that they had better be starting: so they made their way, not to the old town of Aachen, but across the courtyard to another part of the palace. Entering a handsome doorway and passing through

a long corridor they came to a large room with a ceiling supported by many pillars and a floor of beautiful mosaics which the king had brought from Italy along with the rich tapestries which hung on the walls. At one side of the room was a raised platform, or dais, on which stood two throne-like chairs; while down the length of the floor below were a number of carved wooden benches.

When Rainolf and the rest of the pages entered they found a group of other boys and a few little girls already there. These were mostly children of the common soldiers and humbler folks about the palace. And, besides these, were quite a number of grown people, too, many of them noble ladies and gentlemen. The latter were dressed in linen tunics with sword-belts, and leg wrappings cross-gartered in bright colors, and all had long mustaches and shaven chins and hair nearly reaching their shoulders. The ladies wore silken tunics edged with embroidery, and trailing skirts, and on their heads embroidered scarfs arranged in folds covering their hair and with the long ends hanging down or else wrapped closely about their white throats.

Presently there was a hush, and everybody stood back

and bowed very low as a group of people was seen coming toward the open door. Look sharp now, for here comes Charlemagne!

Rainolf fairly held his breath and stared with all his eyes as the stately figure drew near; for he had been in the palace only a short time and had seen but little of the King whose many affairs of state and various wars kept him often away from Aachen. Rainolf had heard so much of the great deeds of Charlemagne, how six Kings called themselves his vassals, and how his fame was known and talked of all the way from Bagdad to Britain, that to the boy he seemed quite like the hero of some wonder tale—as indeed he was!

As now the great King entered the schoolroom he smiled pleasantly at the people there, and as he crossed over to take his place in one of the throne-like chairs on the dais, one might see that he was about fifty-five years old, and though not ten feet tall he was very near a good seven, and bore himself with royal dignity.

Circling his noble dome-like head was a gold and jeweled crown and beneath it hung rather long locks of iron gray hair, while over his breast flowed a long gray beard. His

large blue eyes were bright and sparkling and his face wore a kindly but determined expression.

His dress was very simple; for the King loved the old Frankish costume of his people and only on very grand occasions would he consent to wear the splendid jeweled robes which belonged to his station. On this day he wore, as usual, a plain tunic of white linen with a silken hem of blue and girt with a sword-belt of interlaced gold and silver from which hung a sword with hilt and scabbard of the same precious metals. A square sea-blue mantle was fastened over one shoulder with a golden clasp and on his feet were leather shoes laced with gold cords over white leg-wrappings cross-gartered well above the knees with narrow bands of purple silk.

Beside Charlemagne, on the other tall chair, sat his Queen Luitgarde, while several of the princesses, his daughters, took their places nearby; his sons would have been there, too, but they happened to be off fighting in a distant part of the kingdom. The noble ladies and gentlemen seated themselves on the benches nearest the dais, while Malagis perched on its edge looking very wise. Last of

all, the palace pages and other children sat down on the farther benches.

Presently a young man entered, and, bowing before Charlemagne, laid on his knees a large parchment book.

"That's Master Einhard, the King's scribe. I guess you haven't seen him before; he's been sick since you came," whispered Aymon to Rainolf, as the young man seated himself on the edge of the dais near Malagis and took from the bosom of his tunic a tablet of parchment and a goose-quill pen ready to write down anything the King might wish.

"The King thinks a great deal of him," went on Aymon, "and he does of Master Alcuin, too. Look, there he comes now!"

Everyone looked toward the tall man entering the room. He wore a monk's hood and robe, and in the cord that bound the latter at the waist were stuck some goose-quill pens and the hollow tip of a cow's horn filled with ink. This monk, who was the teacher, bowed respectfully to the King and Queen, took his place in the middle of the floor and school began.

Now if you think that the great Charlemagne and

Queen Luitgarde and all the other ladies and gentlemen had come simply to visit this palace school, you are very much mistaken! No, indeed! They were all there to study just as hard as Rainolf and Aymon and all the other boys and girls.

For you must know that before the time of Charlemagne the Frankish people had no schools, and most of them knew just about as little of books and such things as reading, writing, and arithmetic and spelling and geography as they could possibly get along with; and that was very little indeed. But the wise King had done his best to change all this. All through the country there were many monasteries, and in these he had established schools so that the monks (who were about the only people then who could read or write) might teach the children of both rich and poor. And even in his own palace Charlemagne had for nearly twenty years kept up a school taught by the best scholars in the world, and in it he himself and the princes and princesses and many other grown folks of his household were not ashamed to sit with the children and study as hard as any of you boys and girls do now. But shh! for, as I told you, the school had

begun.

Everybody was still as a mouse; only Charlemagne spoke. "Master Alcuin," he said, "I would have you explain some points of grammar which I do not understand," and he looked with a perplexed air at the parchment book on his knees.

The monk stepped to the King's side and in a low tone cleared up the passage which puzzled him. Soon Charlemagne closed the book and said again, "Master Alcuin, pray tell us something of the courses of the stars at this season." For Charlemagne was always deeply interested in the sky and used often to watch the stars for hours at night from the top of one of the highest palace towers.

Master Alcuin, as he was bidden, gave a little talk on astronomy; then going to an oaken table nearby and taking a number of little books, almost like primers, written by hand on parchment, he gave them to the children to study.

"Aymon," whispered Rainolf softly to his friend who sat next to him, "did you say Master Alcuin made these books himself?"

"Yes," whispered Aymon, "he wrote them all out for us

to use in the school."

The books were not so easy to learn from, either, even if they were primers; for all were in Latin. That was because the Frankish people had been fighting so long trying to make a nation of themselves that they had neither time nor learning to write books in their own language, which was still unfinished, and nobody was quite sure about its spelling or grammar. But the Greek and Latin people had been wise and civilized long before, while the Franks were still wild barbarians, and had written many wonderful books which had been carefully copied by monks and handed down in writing as there were no printing presses yet. It was from some of these that Master Alcuin had written the Latin books for the palace school.

As the children were puzzling over their lessons, presently he began asking them questions. And then Malagis, as he sometimes did when no one was looking, darted from his seat on the dais and hovered about slyly poking with his ivory wand any boy or girl who looked sleepy or wasn't paying attention; for a jester always did pretty much as he pleased and nobody dared complain.

I have no idea just what Master Alcuin's questions were about, but very likely it was grammar and spelling and arithmetic. At any rate, Rainolf was able to give more right answers than anybody else, and Aymon, sitting beside him, began to nudge him warningly. But Rainolf only nudged back and went on answering as many more as he could; for he had always been anxious to learn, and before coming to Aachen had studied hard at a little monastery school near his home castle.

While the boys and girls were having their lesson the grown folks were all busy with their own books. But soon the King, who was always interested in how things went on in his school, noticed Rainolf and quietly listened as the boy, with bright eyes and eager face, modestly answered Master Alcuin's questions. And after a while, when the school was dismissed for the day, before Charlemagne passed out he looked toward the boys' bench and beckoned to Rainolf.

Rainolf was so surprised and abashed that he blushed and stared and stood as if rooted to the spot.

"Go on, booby!" whispered Aymon anxiously, giving

him a hurried push.

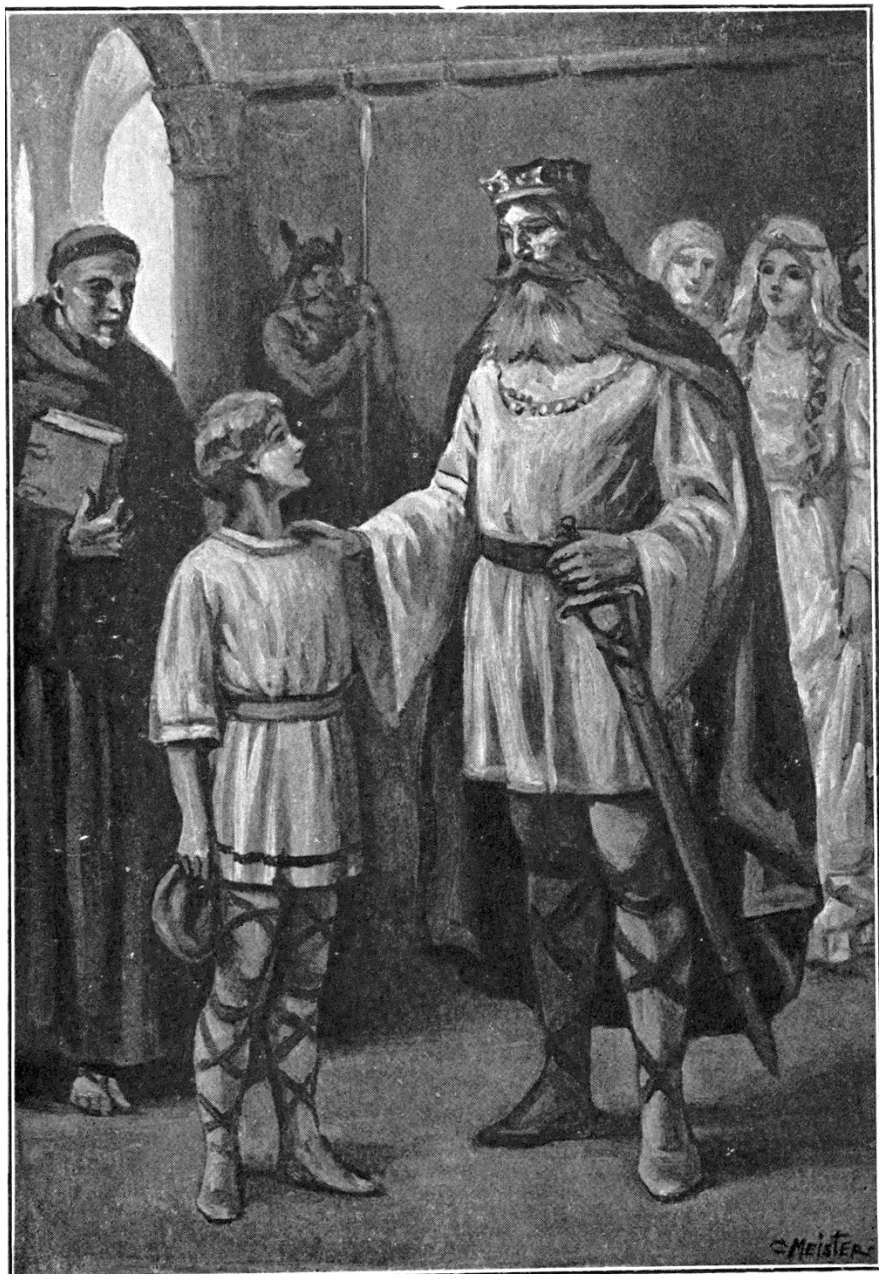
At this Rainolf suddenly plunged forward, and gathering his wits together managed to bow respectfully as he stood before the King, though he was trembling with excitement and his knees fairly knocked together.

"Lad," said the King, smiling at his embarrassment, "I liked the way you answered Master Alcuin's questions. I wish all my subjects would try as hard to learn something!"

And the great King sighed; for above all things he longed to civilize his people and teach them the world's best knowledge. Then, suddenly extending his hand to the boy; "Child," he said, "you shall be one of my own pages. You remind me of Master Einhard when he was a boy in this same school. Where did you come from?"

"Sir," said Rainolf faintly, at last finding his tongue, "my home is Castle Aubri, on the Meuse river. My father was Count Gerard. He was killed in your last war with the Saxons. Mother sent me here a week ago so I might go to the palace school."

"That was right," said Charlemagne. "You have brave blood in your veins, boy. I remember your father well; he



"You shall be one of my pages"

was a gallant soldier and a loyal subject. When we go to the banquet hall come up and stand near me. You shall be my cup-bearer instead of Charloun, who is a stupid lad." And the king left the room with Master Alcuin and the others.

CHAPTER IV

Dinner

When the King passed on, Rainolf stood quite bewildered at his sudden advancement; though he could not help but wonder how it would suit Charloun, a fat dull-faced boy who had been made cup-bearer because his father was a powerful noble.

And he did not have to wait long to see. For Charloun had noticed the King talking to Rainolf and as now the latter was alone for a moment, he marched up to him demanding angrily, "What did the King say to you?"

Rainolf drew himself up haughtily as he answered, "I don't know that it's any of your business, Charloun! Though," he added, "perhaps it is a little, seeing that he told me I am to be cup-bearer instead of you."

At this Charloun's dull face flushed with rage and he

half doubled up his fist to strike Rainolf. But Rainolf, who was watching him, looked him straight in the eye, and "Be careful!" he warned. "This is no place to fight! But if you want to come out doors and do it, I am ready whenever you are."

Charloun, who was at heart a coward, dropped his fat fist and began to think he was not so anxious for a fight after all. And, the truth was, he was really relieved to be rid of the office of cup-bearer as several times Charlemagne had asked him questions about his lessons which he was quite unable to answer. So, muttering to himself, he stalked off; and Rainolf watching him smiled, for he knew Charloun was much more interested in the fact that it was nearly dinner-time than in his lost honors.

Meantime in the great banquet hall near the schoolroom long tables were set, the one for the royal family being placed on a dais at the upper end of the room. There were no cloths on these tables which were all made of polished boards laid over trestles, but on the royal one and those for the many noble ladies and gentlemen of the household were fine silver plates and gold and silver cups and flagons.

There were neither forks nor spoons, however, only knives, which were needed to cut the meat of which there was always a great supply, and this and the other things people were expected to eat with their fingers. At the lower end of the hall were tables for the humbler palace folks, who had only wooden plates and great earthenware platters for their meat.

Rainolf had come into the hall while things were being made ready, and as he stood quietly watching them he thought how different was the great palace, with its handsome rooms and all the gold and silver dishes from his own home. His father's castle, like those of most of the Frankish nobles through the country, was just a big wooden house built around a square courtyard and protected outside by a palisade of roughly hewn logs and a moat beyond that. To be sure, there were many things going on within the wooden walls of the big rambling house. His father had had his own armorer; there was a stable for his war horses; there was a small mill where they ground the grain raised by the peasants on the castle lands; there were rooms where his mother and her maids spun and wove and embroidered;

though as Rainolf looked at the wonderful tapestries hanging on the palace walls he could not but admit they were more beautiful than those his mother had so carefully made for their home and which he had always before thought the finest in all the world. And then the dishes at home were just great wooden bowls with only a few silver and copper flagons—but never mind, for dinner was ready and all the palace folks were taking their places.

Rainolf, as he had been bidden, came and stood near the chair of Charlemagne. Though it seemed strange to him to be so close to the great King, yet he was not so awkward in his new place as he had been used to waiting on his father in the same way.

Meantime, Aymon and the other pages busied themselves bringing in food for the royal table and those of the nobles. The boys only carried the dishes, for the carving and serving of them was an honor belonging to the highborn young men.

"Boy," whispered one of these, a tall handsome youth standing near Rainolf, "take that golden flagon and fill the King's cup with wine."

Rainolf hastened to do as he was told, and lifting in both hands the beautiful golden cup richly chased with figures of saints and circled with precious stones, he sank on one knee, as his father had taught him, and held it up to the King, who received it graciously, barely tasted it, and set it down by his plate. And Rainolf found that being cup-bearer for Charlemagne was not very hard work, as he took only three sips of wine all through the dinner. Wine was then the common drink, but the King despised drunkenness and always set the example of taking but little.

Neither was the dinner elaborate, for Charlemagne liked simple things, and, best of all, the roasted pheasants and hares which presently two hunters came bringing in piping hot and still on the long iron spits on which they had been cooked at the kitchen fireplace. These were carved and placed on the King's plate by the young Frankish noble who served also Queen Luitgarde and a tall man in rich priestly robes who sat at the King's left. This was the Archbishop of the Aachen cathedral, and near him was the teacher Master Alcuin; for Charlemagne always delighted to honor religion and learning.

At the royal table also sat young Master Einhard who smiled kindly at Rainolf, who colored and smiled back; for the two seemed drawn to one another, and, indeed, were to become close friends in spite of the difference in their ages. Next to Master Einhard the dwarf Malagis perched on his own special chair, and now and then catching Rainolf's eye he would give him so droll a wink that the boy could hardly keep his face straight; and he did not dare to laugh for all through dinner everybody kept very still because at one side of the hall a brown-robed monk was standing holding in his hands a parchment book from which he read aloud in Latin.

The book was a beautifully painted copy of "The City of God," written by the good Saint Augustine. Rainolf was not yet far enough along in his studies to understand it very well, and very likely most of the other people in the room were in the same case; but he noticed that Charlemagne listened attentively and seemed greatly to enjoy it, for he understood Latin and liked always to be read to while he ate.

Presently, however, the reading and dinner both came

to an end; the latter finishing with large baskets of apples and cherries which were passed around to everyone.

When the King left the hall he was to go, as usual, straight upstairs to his sleeping-room where he took off his clothes and went to bed for a couple of hours. Charlemagne counted much on this after-dinner nap, for his life was busy and full of care and he was but a poor sleeper at night. So hush, everybody!

CHAPTER V

Malagis and the Boys

"Rainolf," said Aymon as the two boys went out into the courtyard after they had had their dinner, "while the King is sleeping, let's get the other boys and go over to the forest and see if there is anything in our rabbit snares."

"All right!" said Rainolf, and soon the group of pages left the palace and crossing a few open meadows came to the edge of the great wild forest that stretched on and on, nobody knew how far.

Here the boys scattered for a while hunting the traps which several of them had placed there. But the little forest creatures had all been too wary for them and none had been caught. So by and by, answering Rainolf's halloo, they all came out and, as the air was heavy and warm under the dense boughs, were glad to throw themselves on the grass

beneath a great oak tree which stood near a bubbling spring. This spring was thought to have miraculous power, but many people who visited it were afraid of witches and fairies whom they thought lived in the forest beyond; so as charms against these they often brought little silver trinkets, a number of which dangled from the boughs of the oak. The spot was a favorite lounging place for the boys, and this time they found someone ahead of them.

"Look!" said Aymon, "There's Malagis! I wonder if he thinks he can straighten his crooked foot by hanging it in the spring?"

"Tut! Tut!" said Malagis, who had heard them, "I'm not so silly! I'm just poking up these bubbles with my toes to see if there are really fairies playing ball with them as some people say."

"You had better be careful," said Aymon seriously, "They might not like your impudence."

"Pshaw!" retorted Malagis, taking care however to remove his foot, "I'm not afraid of fairies—or witches either!" he added loftily. "I guess I know a few spoils myself."

Here the boys looked at him respectfully and with some

awe; for while he liked to chaff with them and allowed them to be very familiar with him, nevertheless everybody declared Malagis was a master of magic arts.

"Well," said one of the boys, after a pause, "maybe the King will let you work your spells, because you're his dwarf; but I heard one of the officers of the palace say the other day that Charlemagne had made a new law forbidding anybody to practice witchcraft."

At this Malagis looked very wise, but merely said, "That doesn't hurt me any. I'm not a witch! Though there are plenty of them in yonder forest!" and he nodded his head toward the dark trees behind them.

The boys shivered a little and drew closer together; for most people then believed in witches and fairies and dragons, too, for that matter. More than once it had been whispered that fire-breathing dragons were to be found in some of the rocky caverns hidden among the trees.

"Malagis," said Rainolf, as he peered into its shadows, "how far does the forest reach?"

"Oh," answered the dwarf vaguely, "ever and ever and ever so far! Leagues and league and leagues; I dare say it's

part of the big forest where Charlemagne overthrew the Irminsul."

"What was that?" asked one of the other boys.

"Why," said Malagis, "it was the special idol of the Saxon folks. You know they are the wild heathen tribes up north of here that tie their hair up in top-knots and carry great wooden clubs, and that Charlemagne has been fighting for years and years trying to conquer and make Christians of."

"Well, the thing they called the Irminsul was a big wooden pillar set up in a certain place in the forest and on top of it was an image of a man wearing a helmet and carrying a shield with a bear and lion carved on it. There were great treasures of gold and jewels at the foot of the pillar, offerings from the Saxons; for the Irminsul was their most sacred idol."

"And did you say Charlemagne threw it over?" put in Aymon.

"Indeed he did!" answered Malagis. "He marched up there with his army and hunted through the forest till he found where it was. Of course the Saxons rushed out all

ready to fight, but then they felt sure the idol would do something terrible to the King and save them the trouble. So they stood around waiting for it to happen.

"But that didn't bother Charlemagne a bit. He defied them. And then instead of the Irminsul doing anything, he simply walked up to it and knocked it over and smash! down it tumbled and broke all to pieces! After that he burned up the wooden pillar and took the treasures and divided them among his bravest captains."

"What did the Saxons say to that?" asked Rainolf.

"Well," said Malagis, "at first they were stunned; but they still had hopes of revenge. For it seems the King's army had had to march a long way without any water, and the Saxons saw the Franks were half dead from thirst and thought they would all die entirely in a few minutes and that that was the way the Irminsul meant to punish them.

"But, bless your heart," went on Malagis chuckling, "just then along came a big black cloud and when it got right over Charlemagne's army what did it do but burst and pour down buckets and buckets full of water, so they had all they could drink and more, too! When the Saxons saw that,

they were as meek as could be and all said they would submit to the King and be Christians. And there were so many that it kept Archbishop Turpin and all the priests who were along with Charlemagne busy for three days baptizing them. Of course more of the heathen ones keep cropping up now and then for the King to fight, but he has them very well under control now."

"The King is surely a great warrior!" said Rainolf.

"Yes," said Malagis, "but he's greater still at making good laws and seeing that people mind them. He's great on learning, too. That's why, years ago, he sent all the way to Britain for Master Alcuin to come over and start the palace school; he wanted his children and everybody's children to learn something. You boys are lucky to have Master Alcuin teach you awhile, for he is a famous scholar."

"Why, won't he teach us all the time?" asked Rainolf.

"No," said Aymon, "didn't I tell you that three years ago the King gave him the Abbey at Tours and he has started another big school there?"

"Yes," said Malagis, "he is just here now because the King wanted to consult him about something."

"Who will teach us when he goes back?" again asked Rainolf.

"Probably that big sandy-haired monk who sat today near Master Einhard," said Malagis, "Did you notice him?"

"No," said Rainolf, who had been rather bewildered by the number of grown people in the school.

"Well," said Malagis, who was in a talkative mood, "it's funny how he got here. One day, about two years ago, I was going along the street in Aachen, and when I came to the market-place there on a bench stood that monk and another one like him, both Scotch, though they had come here from Ireland. They were both crying out at the top of their lungs, 'Knowledge to sell! Knowledge to sell! Who'll buy?' for all the world like a couple of fish-mongers.

"I thought it so odd, that when I got back to the palace I told Charlemagne and he sent for them to come to him. He asked them if it was true they were trying to hawk knowledge as if it were a brace of pigeons, and they said yes, it was; that they had first-rate knowledge to sell to the highest bidder. The King was pleased with them, and amused, too, I think. Anyway, he engaged them for teachers, and they

proved to be fine. One of them is off now starting more schools."

"Does Master Einhard teach?" asked Rainolf, who wanted to know who everybody was.

"No," said Malagis, "he has about all he can do as the King's scribe; though he is a mighty good minnesinger besides and often sings in the evenings. He was taught in the palace school with the King's children and always stood so high in his studies that Charlemagne noticed him and has shown him great favor."

"You were lucky, boy," continued the dwarf, eying Rainolf shrewdly, "to attract the King's attention today. It's the good scholars that always get his help. Do you know what he did not long ago?"

"No," said Rainolf wonderingly.

"I will tell you," said Malagis, clasping his hands around his knees on which he rested his peaked chin. "He was on his way home from the town of Paderborn and stopped for dinner at the monastery of Saint Martin, and after dinner went in to look at the monastery school. About half the children there came from noble families and lived in castles,

and the rest were just poor children from the village of Saint Martin. The King began asking questions, and it seems all the noble children had been spending their time playing and paying no attention to the monks; so just about all the answers he got came from the poor children who were used to minding and did what they were told and studied their books.

"Charlemagne was very angry. He quickly sorted out all the poor children and put them at his right hand and praised them and spoke kindly to them. And then he turned around and if he didn't give those noble children the worst lecture they ever got!"

Here Malagis pursed up his lips and smiled as he went on, "He told them they would be terribly fooled if they thought because their fathers were noblemen they could have honors whether they knew anything or not. He said he would show his favor to the people who were learning things, no matter how poor they were, and if those noble children expected to get anything from him they would have to start in and do some studying."

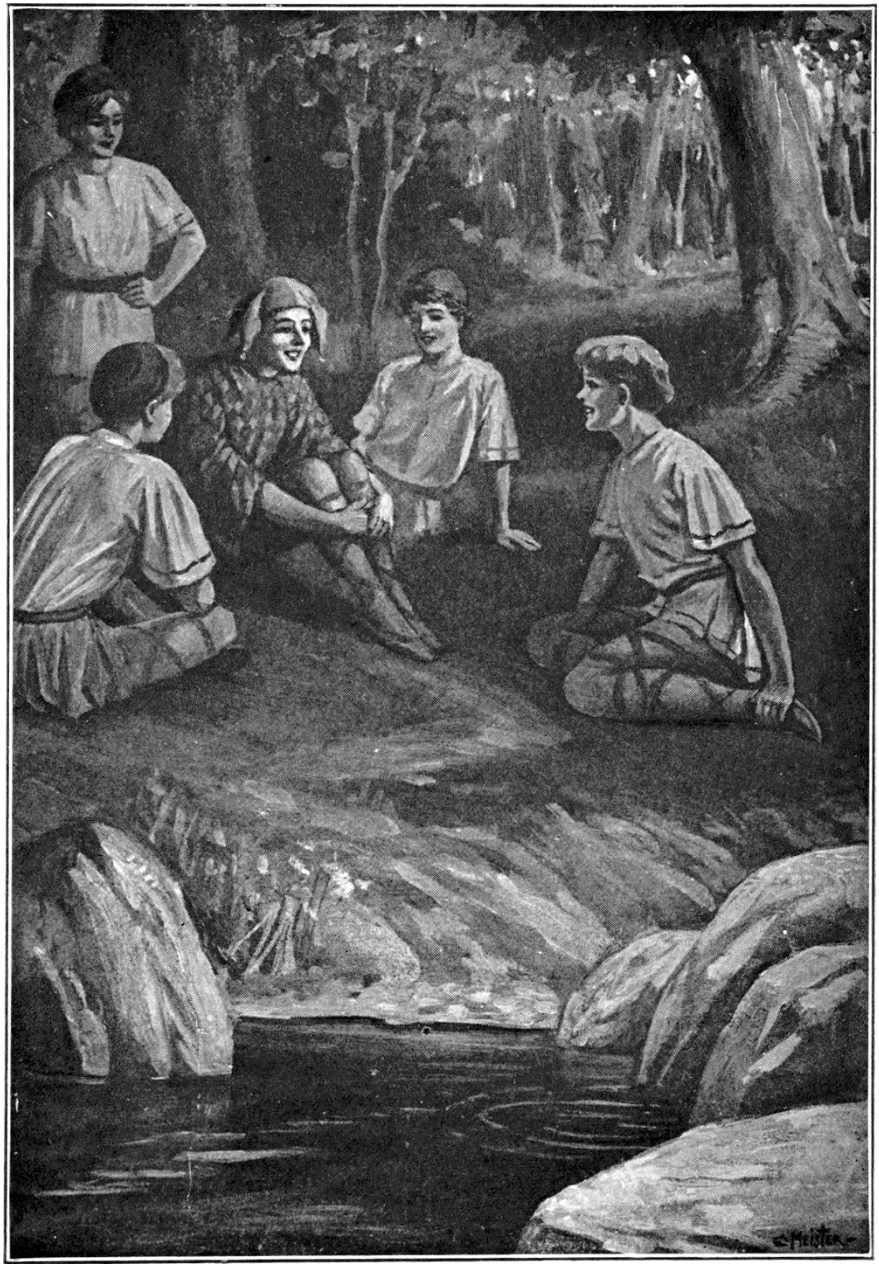
Here some of the boys who had not been getting on

much at the palace school, began to look very uncomfortable, and one of them hastened to change the subject. "Malagis," he said, pointing to one of the high towers of the palace not far away, "is that really a brazen eagle there on top of the tower? It is so high up I can't see it very well."

"And," said another boy, "is it true that sometimes it turns by magic, and that then the King knows that he is needed in whatever part of his kingdom the eagle seems to look toward?"

"Yes," answered Malagis gravely, "it is quite true. I helped to place that eagle myself!" and he wagged his head proudly. "You just keep watch of it," here Malagis crumpled his claw-like hands into a sort of funnel through which his keen eyes peered at the eagle as he went on slowly, "it's beginning now to turn—just the least—little tiny bit—to the south!"

"What does that mean?" asked the boys eagerly. "What is south of here?" For none of them knew much geography; nor did anybody else, for that matter. You would have laughed to see their maps and wondered how anyone found his way about at all.



Malagis pursed up his lips and smiled

"Hm," said Malagis sagely, "there is a great deal south of us. There is Burgundy and Africa and Spain and a great deal of Asia and the kingdom of Prester John," which most people thought was a wonderful place, somewhere to the southeast, where there were red and blue lions and many marvelous things. So Malagis supposed he was telling the truth, as also about Asia; but then he came back to facts when he added, "Yes, and there's Italy and Rome where the Pope lives. I wouldn't wonder if the eagle is going to mean Italy."

Here a little group of Aachen folk came bringing a blind man to the spring so that he might bathe his eyes in its miraculous waters. And the boys and Malagis slowly strolled off toward the palace.

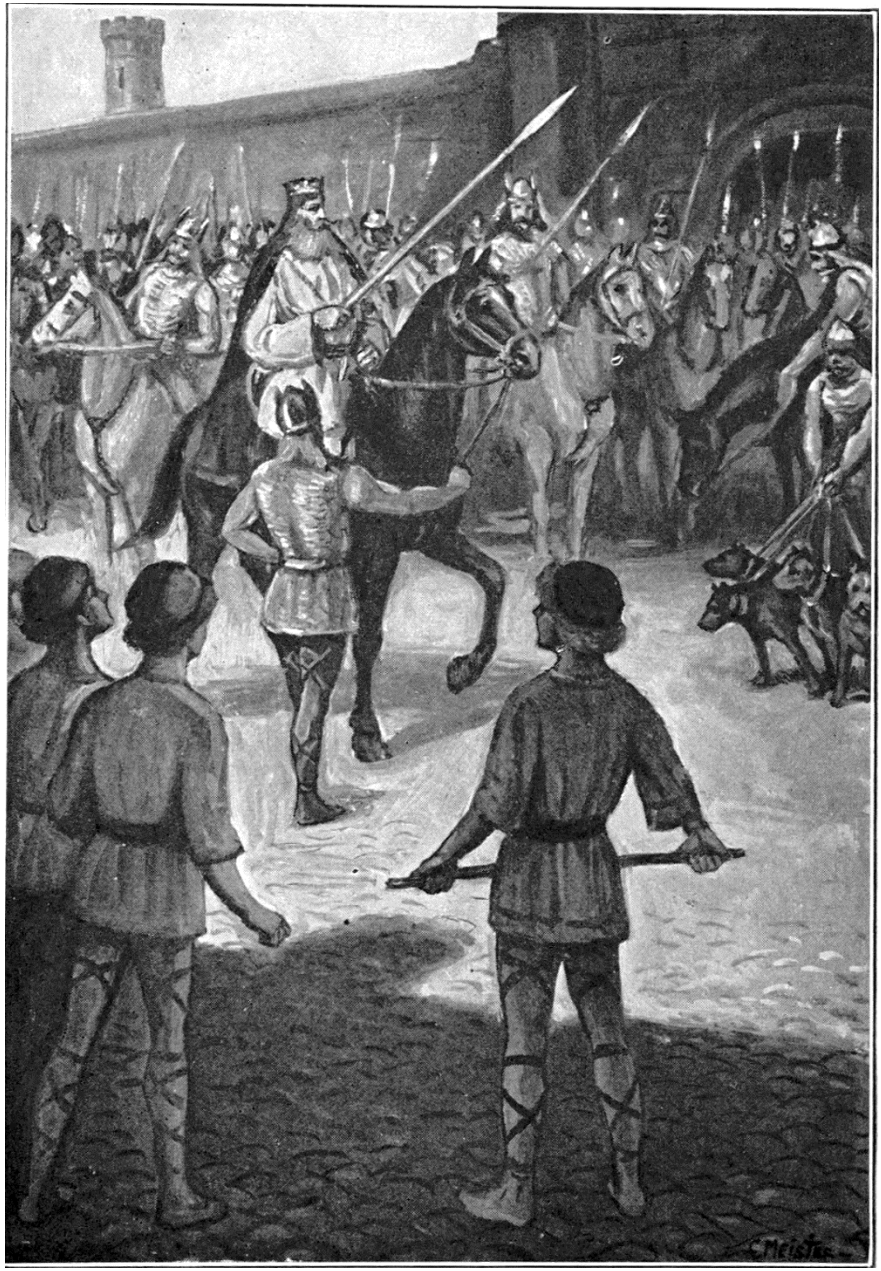
CHAPTER VI

A Boar Hunt and a Music Lesson

It was the day of the great boar hunt for which spears and knives had been sharpening for at least a week. Everybody had been up since dawn and the palace courtyard rang with the neighing of horses and the baying of hounds.

Presently the king appeared, his blue eyes sparkling and eager; for hunting was his favorite sport. Indeed, the great wild forest full of wild beasts to be chased was, next to the warm springs, the chief reason why he had built his finest palace at the edge of Aachen.

Soon Charlemagne had mounted a splendid black horse which had been pawing the ground impatiently as a young Frankish noble clung to the bronze chains which served for bridle and which he now handed over to the King as the latter arranged himself on the handsomely carved leather



It was the day of the great boar hunt

saddle. He was dressed as usual, save that stick through his sword-belt shone a long knife with a jeweled handle, while slung over one shoulder was a silver chain from which hung his hunting horn. It was made from the horn of an ox, the broad end being finished with a band of silver on which were chased hounds running at full speed.

The young Frank next handed the King a long, polished boar-spear, and at this signal all the other huntsmen sprang to their saddles, seized their spears from the attendants, the packs of hounds were turned loose, and Clatter! Clatter! Clatter! Thud! Thud! Thud! Bow-wow! Wow-wow-wow! Brrh-rrh! off they rushed toward the great forest.

On, on they pelted, across the meadows, toward the tall trees; and once within their shadows little they cared whether witch or fairy crossed their path. For the one thought of all those headlong huntsmen was for their bellowing hounds to start up some one of the fierce wild boars from his forest lair, so that they might chase him as with quivering bristles and red burning eyes he flew before them.

As Rainolf and the other boys, who had been in the courtyard watching the hunt start, heard the last echoes die

away in the forest they all sighed enviously, and "Oh," said Rainolf, "don't I wish they'd have let us go along!"

All the rest felt quite the same way about it; for they had been taught to ride and could shoot very well with their bows and arrows, though, of course, they could not handle spears as yet. As they turned around with long faces, they were only half consoled when Aymon said, "Well, one comfort, Master Alcuin says we are to have a half holiday and need only take our singing lesson over in the cathedral."

So in a little while they all went over to the great cathedral which the King had caused to be built near the palace. It was very beautiful, being patterned after one Charlemagne had seen in Italy; and, as for the palace, he had brought wonderful Italian marbles and mosaics for it. Inside, in the place for the choir, was a carved wooden rack which held a very large parchment book. Its open pages were covered with bars of music made big enough so a number of singers could stand in front of it and yet be able to see the notes; for books were too scarce for everybody to have one.

When the boys entered the cathedral a row of men were

already ranged in front of the choir book, among them Master Einhard, who smiled at Rainolf and made room for him beside himself as the other boys took their places behind, peering at the book as best they could. Facing them all stood the black-eyed teacher whom Charlemagne had brought from Italy to show the Frankish singers how properly to chant the church service and also to instruct the children in music.

As now the Italian beat time with one hand and sang "do-re-mi-fa," he frowned at the untrained voices of the Franks; that is, all but Master Einhard and Rainolf. These two had very sweet voices which blended well together; and as Rainolf stood beside Master Einhard he felt that he would rather sing beautifully than to do almost anything else, and he wondered if this was what Master Leobard meant when he said there would be something he would care more for than being a warrior. "Yes," he said to himself, "if I could only sing and make up songs of my own like Master Einhard does! And I will some day!" For, as Rainolf sang, a power began to waken within him.

Meantime, the Italian teacher fairly wrung his hands as

the other singers went on do-re-mi-fa-ing without the least idea how badly they were doing it. And soon another sound arose which was almost as bad as their singing. It was the cathedral organ, which a young Frank was playing while another strapping youth puffed and panted as he worked a large bellows by which he forced the air into its few brass pipes. The keys were wide and heavy, and the young Frank in front of them struck each one a resounding blow with his fist, as that was the only way anybody could play on them.

Nevertheless, this organ, which was the first any of the Frankish people had seen, was considered very wonderful indeed, and had been sent all the way from Constantinople as a present from the Greek emperor. And only the Sunday before, a noble Frankish lady had actually fainted from sheer joy at hearing so marvelous a musical instrument! So, you see, you really had better not laugh at it nor at the young Frank cheerfully pounding away with both fists.

The choir singers and the boys listened to the organ with great respect, as they had been taught, and supposed of course it must be very grand. Still, most of them felt relieved when the music lesson was over and they went out

into the quiet morning air.

In the cathedral porch was a stone seat; and here as the boys passed along they saw Malagis curled up beside an old man wrapped in a long mantle and holding on his knees a musical instrument which looked something like a fiddle.

"I wonder where Malagis picked up that minnesinger?" whispered Rainolf to Aymon.

But here the dwarf greeted the boys with a laugh. "Hey!" he cried. "We have been listening to your squawking—all but Rainolf there—he sings fairly well, but as for the rest of you I thought some angry cats had climbed in at the windows and were fighting it out inside! But my friend here says he knows that Italian teacher of yours and that he is so fine that no matter how badly you bellow now, by and by you will all sing like a parcel of bluebirds. So cheer up!"

The old man, who had a gentle face, smiled at the speech of Malagis, and "Come, friend minstrel," said the dwarf, "sing us another song, like you sang to me a while ago, and show the youngsters what singing is!"

The boys crowded eagerly around, for everybody delighted in these wandering minstrels, or minnesingers as

they were often called, and whose songs usually told some story, thus taking the place of story books which nobody had then.

The singer was from the southern part of Gaul, where they were better trained than in the ruder parts of the kingdom, and they all listened with pleasure as he touched the strings of his instrument and sang several song-stories in a voice still sweet and mellow, though he was no longer young.

Presently, after he had paused to rest awhile, "Won't you sing us another, sir minstrel?" begged Rainolf.

"I am a little tired, lad," answered the minstrel, "for before I fell in with your friend Malagis here, I had been practicing my song about Roland and the battle of Roncesvalles, which is my most difficult piece."

"Well," said Malagis, pursing his lips and shaking his head, "you had better leave that out of your list, my friend, if you want to sing in the palace before King Charlemagne, as I believe you said you did."

"Why," said the minstrel with a disappointed look, "it is my best song, and I thought he would like it. It is a favorite

subject with the minnesingers where I come from. The Pass of Roncesvalles is not so very far from my home."

"That may be," said Malagis firmly, "but you don't know the King. He has never gotten over the loss of his nephew Roland and all the brave Paladins with him, and has never been quite the same since that battle. So I advise you to choose some other subject for him."

"But, sir minstrel," put in one of the boys, "won't you tell us the story? We won't ask you to sing it if you are tired, but just tell it. Of course we've heard of Roland and the Pass of Roncesvalles, but we'd like to hear what you have to say about it."

But the story will make a chapter all to itself.

CHAPTER VII

The Minnesinger Tells of Roland

"I dare say," began the minstrel, "you know it all happened more than twenty years ago. King Charlemagne with a great army had gone down to Spain to fight the Saracens there, who were heathens ruled by the Emir Marsilius. With Charlemagne were his twelve Paladins, the noblest and bravest knights of the realm; and among them the bravest of all was young Roland, the King's nephew."

"Did you see Roland, sir?" asked Rainolf eagerly. "Malagis remembers him and says he was the handsomest knight he ever saw, and that he had more adventures than anybody else and had even spent a while in fairyland!" To which Malagis gravely nodded his head.

"Why, yes," said the minstrel, with a rather bewildered look, "I didn't know about his being in fairyland, but maybe

he had, for everybody said he had had a wonderful life. I saw the whole army as it went by on the way to Spain; for my home is near the Pyrenees Mountains which divide Spain from Gaul. It was a great sight, the King in his iron armor riding a prancing war-horse and carrying a huge lance, and following him thousands of soldiers with spears and shields and banners and trumpets. The twelve Paladins rode together, Roland side by side with Oliver, his brother-in-arms."

"Malagis said they had been best friends ever since they were little boys!" said Aymon.

"True," said the minstrel, "and a noble pair they were. Hanging from Roland's shoulder by a golden chain I saw the gleam of his ivory horn Olivant. I suppose you know about that?" and the minstrel paused inquiringly.

"O yes!" cried several of the boys. "It was the magic horn that had belonged to the King's grandfather, Charles the Hammer. It was made of the tooth of a sea-horse and all set thick with precious stones. After Charles the Hammer died nobody, not even King Charlemagne, could make the horn blow till Roland tried it one day and then it blew so loud

that they heard it all the way from Aachen to Paris! So the King gave it to Roland."

"Good!" said the minstrel, while Malagis nodded approvingly. "And I suppose it's no use to tell you about his sword Durandal, either?"

"Yes," said the boys, "we know the King gave that to Roland too, and it was one Trojan Hector wore. It was the sharpest sword in the world."

"Was it any finer than King Charlemagne's sword?" asked Rainolf. "Isn't Joyeuse very wonderful?"

"Joyeuse is indeed a wonderful sword," answered Malagis. "Folks say that forged in it is the tip of the spear that pierced our Saviour's side. I don't know whether that is so or not, but it is a very terrible weapon. Though, for that matter," he added, "any weapon would be terrible enough in the hands of King Charlemagne. But," he said turning to the minstrel, "go on with your tale. It agrees very well with what I have always told these youngsters here."

"So," went on the minstrel, "Charlemagne crossed the Pyrenees and marched into Spain. After some very hard fighting he captured a number of Saracen cities, and in one

of them, Cordova, he decided to rest awhile. While he was there messengers came from the Emir saying their master was anxious for peace, and that if the Franks would go back to Gaul, Marsilius would soon come to Aachen and swear homage to Charlemagne and be baptized as a Christian. He offered rich presents as pledges of his good faith if the King would send a favorable answer.

"When Charlemagne asked the Paladins what they thought about it, all but Roland and Oliver advised him to make peace."

"You haven't said anything about Ganelon, the traitor, sir!" said Rainolf.

"Give me time, lad!" replied the minstrel. "I was just coming to him. I suppose you know he was the one the King sent back with the messengers to say he would make peace and to receive the pledges from Marsilius; though, of course, Charlemagne had no idea how false-hearted Ganelon was."

"And Ganelon hated Roland, too, didn't he?" interrupted one of the boys.

"Yes," said the minstrel, "he was a miserable traitor; and

when he went to the Emir and Marsilius offered him a sum of gold if he would help plan how to destroy Charlemagne's army, he eagerly agreed. Though he knew Marsilius could never conquer the whole army, he showed him how he might trap a part of it in which would be Roland and most of the bravest knights.

"Then he went back to Cordova with the rich presents from the Emir and told the King everything was all right and Marsilius would do as he promised.

"So Charlemagne started back to Gaul. He did not expect any trouble, but, as every wise commander does on leaving a country where enemies might be lurking, he placed a strong guard at the back of his army. In this rear guard were the good Archbishop Turpin, who was as good a fighter as a bishop, the Paladins, and twenty thousand fighting men, all led by Roland.

"After several days' marching, King Charlemagne leading the main army climbed over the rocky peaks of the Pyrenees and entered Gaul; only the rear guard was still making its way through the mountain valleys and steep narrow passes."

"Then they heard the Saracens' trumpets!" broke in one of the boys; for they all knew the story and always grew excited in the telling.

"Yes," said the minstrel, "all at once they heard a terrible blast of trumpets, and Oliver sprang from his horse and climbed to the top of a tall pine tree to try to see where the enemy was. He looked in all directions, and then he came down and said that never had he seen so great a host of Saracens! Their bright spears were gleaming on all sides; for, as Ganelon had planned, they had followed the rear guard and trapped them in the narrowest pass of the Pyrenees where it would be hardest for the Franks to defend themselves."

"We know!" cried Aymon. "It was the Pass of Roncesvalles!"—which means in our language the Valley of Thorns, and remember this; for everybody nowadays is expected to know about Roland and the Valley of Thorns just as much as those boys listening to the old minstrel over eleven hundred years ago.

"In a moment," went on the minstrel, "they heard the trumpets sounding nearer; and then Oliver, who had seen

that the Saracens outnumbered the rear guard at least ten to one, begged Roland to blow his wonderful horn Olivant so that King Charlemagne might hear and come back to help them."

"But Roland was too brave!" exclaimed Rainolf.

"True," said the minstrel, "he was too brave and proud, and scorned to blow his horn for help against the heathens. Three times Oliver begged him, but each time he refused. Then the good Archbishop Turpin raised his hands and blessed all the men; for none of them hoped to escape alive. When he had finished, he drew his own sword with the rest and soon the Saracens rushed upon them and the fight began. Long and terrible was the battle, and bravely did the Frankish heroes defend themselves; but at length, one by one, all had fallen before the spears of the Saracens, save only Roland and Oliver and the good Archbishop, and they, too, were mortally wounded.

"Then at last Roland raised Olivant to his lips and with his dying breath blew a long blast; not hoping for help, for it was now too late, but because the Archbishop wished that Charlemagne might come and bear their bodies away

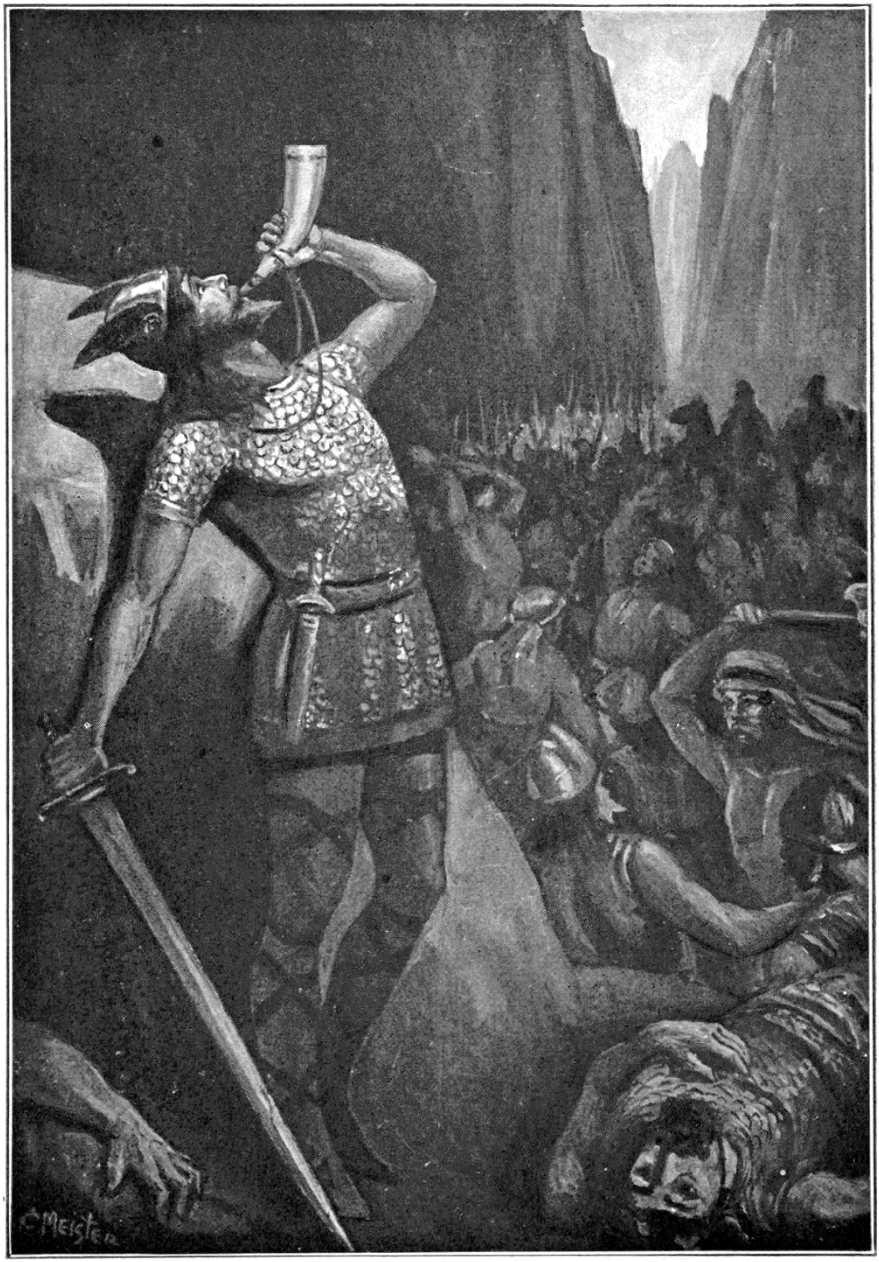
from the wolves and wild beasts.

"The blast echoed through the mountains, loud and clear and piercing, till far away in Gaul King Charlemagne heard it and knew that something terrible had happened, and quickly he turned about and hastened back over the Pyrenees. He ordered all his trumpeters to keep sounding their trumpets so that when they drew near Roland would know they were coming.

"But the King's army had far to march, and long before it reached the Pass of Roncesvalles all lay dead there save Roland. Then he staggered to his feet, and taking in his hand his wonderful sword Durandal, with a last effort he struck its blade against a mighty rock."

"Why did he do that?" asked Rainolf.

"Because," answered the minstrel, "he thought he would rather destroy Durandal than have it fall into the hands of the heathen. But instead of Durandal breaking, it was the great rock that split, for nothing could turn the edge of that magic blade. Four times Roland struck with Durandal, but each time bright and shining he drew it from a fresh cleft in the stone—and I have seen those clefts myself," declared



"With his dying breath he blew a long blast"

the minstrel, "so I know it is true! Then Roland lay down on the grass and placing Durandal and Olivant under his body, he held up his right hand to God, and so died the hero."

Everybody was very still for a few minutes. Then presently one of the boys said, "Malagis says that King Charlemagne cried when he came back and found Roland and all the brave Paladins and everybody dead."

"Indeed he did!" said Malagis. "One of the soldiers who was with the army told me the King cried bitterly. And no wonder! It was a terrible blow to lose all his bravest knights, and he was immensely fond of Roland."

"Where did they bury Roland?" asked the minstrel. "I never quite knew."

"At the Abbey of Blaye," answered Malagis. "Charlemagne had Roland and Oliver and the Archbishop laid there in beautiful white marble tombs."

"Please," inquired Rainolf, "what became of Durandal and Olivant?"

"Well," said Malagis slowly, "the King took the horn Olivant and filled it with gold and sent it to the church at

Bordeaux where it may be seen in front of the altar."

"And Durandal?" again asked Rainolf.

But Malagis, who did not know about the end of Durandal (nor does anybody else), pretended not to hear; and jumping down from the stone seat, "Upon my word!" he cried. "Why, it is past dinner time! Come on, sir minstrel, and try the palace fare. The King will give you welcome when the hunt is over."

So they all went over to the palace; and late in the day the hunters rode back with two great boars. These had fought viciously when brought to bay, and killed three hounds with their sharp tusks and badly wounded one of the huntsmen; so the hunt was considered to have been a great success. King Charlemagne was in high spirits, and after supper everybody went into the palace hall where they listened to the minstrel as he sang his song-stories. The King praised him much, for heeding the advice of Malagis, he was wise enough to leave out the one about Roland.

CHAPTER VIII

Presents for the King

One afternoon late in the summer all the children of Aachen were racing and chasing through its crooked streets and looking eagerly down the long road beyond that stretched away to the south. Even the grown folks were coming to their doors and standing as if they expected to see something.

Soon Rainolf and the palace pages came hurrying along, and as they passed a black-beamed house where an old man was blinking at the window, "Master Leobard," said Rainolf, "do you know when they are coming?"

"No, lad," answered the old astrologer, "but the stars say the King is to receive a present soon, so I dare say it will be along by and by." And muttering to himself he went back to tending a fire in a queer earthen stove where in some

curious vessels he was trying, as did many people then, to make gold out of something else and, of course, not succeeding.

"Master Leobard says the stars told him," laughed one of the boys, "but maybe the runner that came to the palace last night had fresher news."

"Where did that runner come from?" asked another.

"I think from the nearest town south of here," said Aymon. "You know he came to tell the King some people are on the way here bringing him something, I didn't hear what."

"I guess he told all the town folks, too," said Rainolf, "from the way they are on the lookout!"

By this time they had come to the edge of Aachen. "Let's go down the road a piece," said Aymon. "Surely they will have to come this way."

So on they loitered past little thatched huts here and there in the fields, where the peasant folk lived. Presently, "I'm thirsty!" said one of the boys; "let's go over to that hut and get a drink."

When they reached it and looked in at the door a gust

of smoke blew in their faces from an open fire on the bare earthen floor. Over this was an iron pot full of thin soup which a woman was stirring with one hand as she held in her arms a shock-headed baby dressed in homespun. At one side of the room were two or three wooden troughs filled with straw which were the family beds. In the middle of the floor a block of wood made from the stump of a tree did for table and came handy also when they needed to cut bread, which was always so coarse and hard that when they wanted any the father usually had to chop off pieces with his ax.

When the boys asked the woman for a drink, she handed them a gourd and pointed toward a tree in a nearby field; and scampering over there they found a spring of good water. When they returned the gourd, "Aren't you going over to the road?" asked Aymon.

But she only stared at him without answering. For the Frankish peasants knew but little beyond ploughing the fields with their rude ploughs and toiling for a bare living. And the hut was not poorer than most of the others dotting the country.

But the boys had already hurried off, for "Look!" cried Rainolf, pointing down the road, "there they come!"

Sure enough, a number of people were coming toward them. Some were riding spirited Arabian horses and some walking, all had black eyes and hair, quite different from the Franks, and all had on large turbans and flowing robes such as people wear in the Far East. Some were leading pack-horses with bulging saddlebags, but in the midst of them came the most amazing thing of all! It was a huge animal with a wrinkly gray skin, wide flapping ears, little shrewd black eyes, and thick legs with toes like the scallops of an enormous pinking-iron — but hear the boys:

"Do look at that *outlandish* beast!"

"What on earth do you suppose it is?"

"Is that a *tail* hanging where its mouth belongs? Look! Look! how it keeps curling it up and poking it around!"

"My, but that's a grand red seat on its back!"

"Wouldn't you think that man with the queer clothes would tumble out? See how it rocks when the beast walks!"

"Do you think the man is guiding it with that long wand, or do you suppose he is a magician?"

"Pshaw!" you say. "Why, it was just a circus procession, and didn't those silly boys know an *elephant* when they saw it?"

Well, you are quite mistaken; for it was no circus procession even if there was an elephant in it. Indeed, none of the Franks had ever heard of such a thing as a circus; while as for elephants, most of them would have been far less surprised if a dragon had come flying out of the forest, for they knew much more about dragons—or thought they did.

No, the people coming along the road were messengers from Haroun-al-Raschid, the great Caliph of Bagdad, ever and ever so far away in Asia. (If you have read your Arabian Nights stories you know all about the great Caliph; and, if you don't know, you had best hurry up and find out.) Now, Haroun-al-Raschid and the mighty Charlemagne, though they had never met, were very good friends and admired each other greatly. Sometime before, the King had sent messengers bearing handsome presents and good wishes to the Caliph. It had taken over three years to reach Bagdad, for it was then a long and dangerous journey; while they were there the Caliph, who wished after a while to send

gifts in return, asked them what they thought the King would like, and they said they knew one thing Charlemagne wanted dreadfully and that was an elephant.

So, by and by, when Haroun-al-Raschid sent his own messengers to bear presents and his good wishes to the King, he remembered about the elephant and took care to send an extra big fine one. And at last, after a long, long journey, here it was tramping along the road almost to Aachen!

Of course the boys all ran along behind as the procession wound through the town, the strangers looking curiously about, the Arab horses daintily picking their way over the rough stones, and the elephant lumbering steadily along and all the while peering around with his sharp little eyes.

And how the town folks said, "Oh!" and "Ah!" and "What *do* you think that queer animal is?" till they reached the palace where the strangers dismounted in the court-yard. They unpacked the bulging saddle-bags which were full of presents, and with these in their arms they were taken to the great hall of the palace where Charlemagne received them with kindness and honor. And soon he

himself came out to see the wonderful elephant, which seemed to delight him more than anything else.

The boys stayed around as close as they dared, and, when presently, the elephant was led off to a special stall in the royal stables, they followed.

"What a magnificent embroidered cloth that is hanging over his back!" said Rainolf.

"Yes," said another boy, "those pearls and jewels sewed on it must have cost a lot!"

"How do you suppose he eats, with that queer tail on his mouth?" said Aymon. "Let's watch what they feed him."

And they had great fun seeing everything that was done for him and getting acquainted with the Bagdad elephant, who was to live in Aachen for nine years and be the chief pride of Charlemagne in all the royal processions of the time. He was even to go to war with him and carry the King's own baggage on his broad back.

Meantime, while the boys were off in the stables, the other rich presents sent by the Caliph were being displayed and discussed by everybody.

"Have you seen the wonderful clock?" said one to

another.

"No, what is a clock?"

"It is something that tells the time of day!"

"Is it anything like our sun-dials or hour-glasses?"

"Not a bit! It is a kind of machine that runs by water. It is shaped like a tower with twelve windows, and they say that each hour the windows open and bronze horsemen ride out and then ride in again!"

"How wonderful!"

"Yes, and there are splendid silks and gold embroideries, too, for the Queen and Princesses!"

"And such beautiful chess-men for the King to play with! They are men riding on animals like the one that came today and are all carved from ivory!"

"Oh, yes, and a wonderful silk tent, too! Big enough for dozens of men, but so fine I believe you could squeeze it up and carry it in your fist!"

So the tongues wagged, and, you may be sure, neither Rainolf nor any of the other boys missed seeing a single thing.

CHAPTER IX

Rainolf in the Writing-Room

There was one part of the palace in which Rainolf especially delighted, and this was the great writing-room. Here, always, were to be found a number of monks from the monastery by the cathedral who spent their time making the most beautiful books. It was chiefly the Bible and the works of the older Greek and Latin authors which they carefully copied out by hand so more people might read them. And all the while they were learning more and more how to decorate and make them beautiful with gold and color.

The King admired these beautiful painted books above all things, and in every way encouraged the monks to make them finer and finer. And they grew so skillful all over his kingdom that the painted, or illuminated books, as they

were called, which were made during the reign of Charlemagne are still treasured and admired by everybody.

Rainolf used to spend an hour or two every day in this writing-room, for one of the monks, Brother Coplas, was teaching him to write, and he hoped someday to learn to paint also, for he longed to make a beautiful book all himself. And down in his heart he looked forward to the day when one of the books he made would be filled with his own songs. For all the while Master Einhard was helping him with his music and even encouraging him to make up little songs to sing.

Rainolf was thinking of this as he was busy at work in the writing-room a few days after the coming of the Caliph's messengers, when the door opened and in came the King. With him were two of the Bagdad strangers whom he had brought to see the writing-room, of which he was very proud. The visitors looked with interest at the queer high desks where the monks were working, at the rolls of parchment and the paints and gold and colored inks and goose-quill pens.

"Father Willibrod," said the King to the head of the

writing-room, "will you not show us some of the finished pages?"

Father Willibrod hastened to open a great drawer in a desk nearby and displayed a number of large pages so beautifully written and surrounded by such brilliant and glowing borders of birds and flowers with here and there pictures on backgrounds of sparkling gold all so lovely that the strangers exclaimed with admiration and the King smiled with pleasure.

"Show us some of the covers, too, Father Willibrod," he said.

And in another drawer they saw covers already finished ready for the painted pages.

For the finest books these covers were of wrought silver set with precious stones, and some of beautifully carved ivory. Others were of velvet, which had been embroidered by the ladies of the palace; while for the commoner books deer-skin would be used.

As the party was leaving the room, the King passed near the desk where Brother Coplas and Rainolf sat side by side. He paused a moment looking at the boy's work and

"Good!" he said, "You are improving, lad," and then he sighed as he added, "I wish I had had such training when my hand was supple as yours!"

As he passed out Brother Coplas whispered to Rainolf, "The King would give anything to be able to write and paint books!"

"Why, he can write, can't he?" asked Rainolf in surprise.

"To be sure," said Brother Coplas. "But he wants to be able to do it evenly and regularly as we do in our books. One of his body servants told me he keeps a pen and tablet of parchment under his pillow every night, and often when he can't sleep he will get up and have a lamp lighted and will practice for a long time trying to write beautifully."

And this was not so easy, either; for writing then was more like printing, each letter being made separately, which, of course, was much slower than our way of joining them together; a simple little trick which no one as yet had thought of.

Before long Rainolf had finished his page, and as his fingers were tired he got up and strolled around the room, for he loved to look at what they were all doing.

"Oh, but that is beautiful!" he exclaimed as he stopped by a desk where a monk was writing a chapter from the Bible in letters of gold on a page of parchment he had stained a rich purple.

"Master Alcuin says they have nothing finer in Tours," said another brother, who had paused to admire the page, "and in his monastery they do famous work."

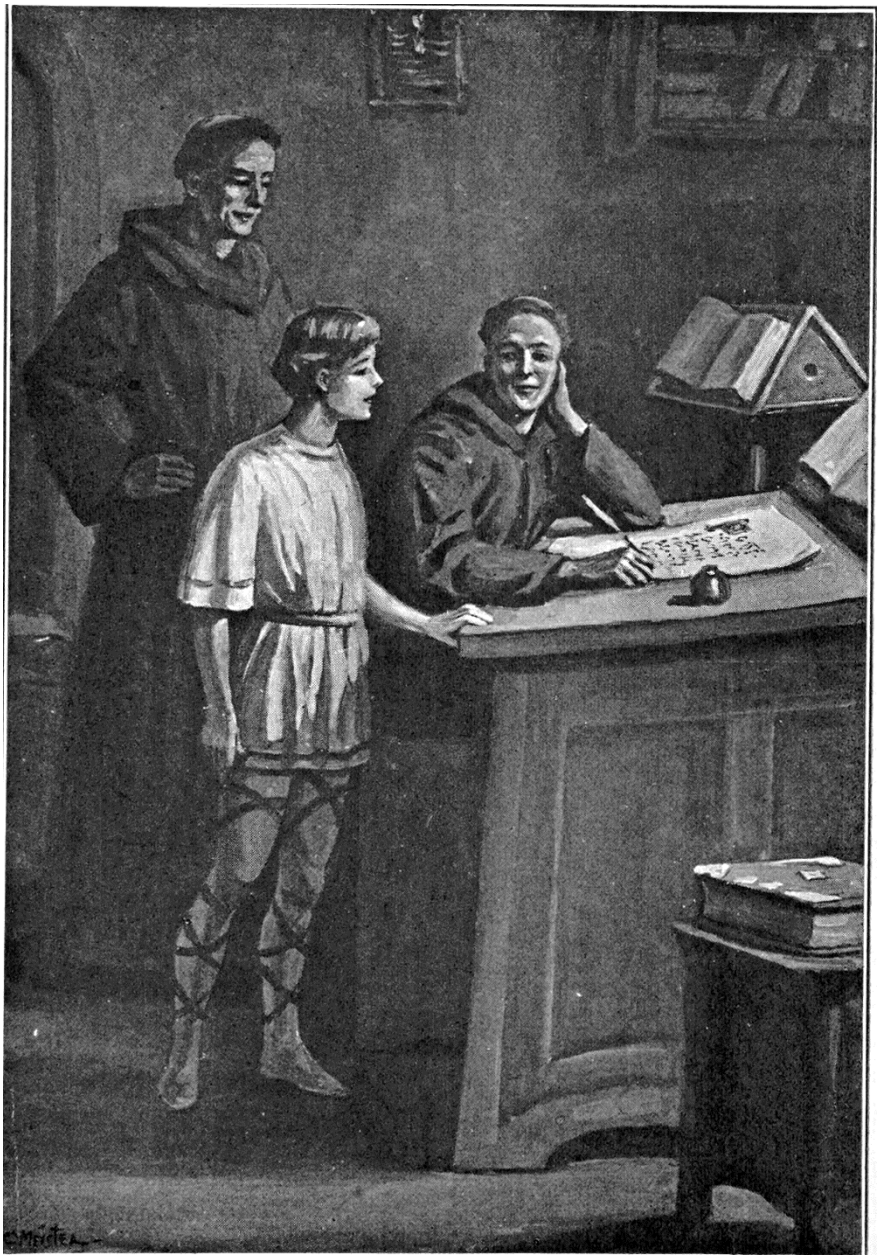
"Yes," said Rainolf, "Brother Coplas told me Master Alcuin is having a wonderful Bible made there for the King."

"Why," he said, as he came to another desk, "I didn't know you were here, Master Einhard! What is this you are writing? It isn't Latin!"

"No," answered Master Einhard, who was carefully copying on neat pages something written on a number of loose scraps. "It is some work I am doing for the King, and I am writing it in our own language; for these are songs of some of the Frankish minnesingers. You know how the King likes songs."

"I know he likes yours!" said Rainolf warmly.

"Perhaps," said Master Einhard modestly. "But he likes



A monk was writing a chapter from
the Bible in letters of gold

other peoples', too. Sometimes, when minnesingers come on long winter evenings, he will have the fireplace filled with blazing logs and will wrap himself up in a big mantle of otter skins and sit up half the night listening to them. Some of these men come from the wilder parts of the kingdom up north, and they know old heathen song-stories that have been handed down nobody knows how long. The King is wonderfully interested in these, and whenever any of those people come he gets me to write down the words of the stories they sing, and as, of course, I have to write very fast, it needs to be copied plainly. I have written out ever so many, and the King is getting quite a collection." Here he pointed with pride to a pile of pages in a recess of his desk.

As Rainolf passed on, Master Einhard again bent over his work; for he could not possibly know that twenty years later, when King Charlemagne was dead and gone, his stupid son Louis would one day find those carefully written pages and, not dreaming of their value, would carelessly toss them in the fire!

Heigho! it is a great pity to be stupid!

Meantime, as Rainolf left the writing-room and went into the courtyard he almost ran into Malagis, who was standing on the toes of his good foot and whirling around like a weather-cock.

"Hey, youngster!" he said, "I was just taking some exercise. By the way, I have news for you. Didn't your horoscope say you were to see something of the world?"

"Yes," said Rainolf, puzzled.

"Well, I guess all of our stars must say the same thing, for we are all likely to go traveling."

"How?" asked Rainolf.

"Listen!" answered Malagis, pointing, with a wise air, to the highest palace tower. "Didn't I tell you youngsters a while ago that that big bronze eagle was turning a tiny bit to the south? And didn't I say it meant the King would be needed in that direction, most likely in Italy?"

"Yes, you did," answered Rainolf respectfully.

"Well," said Malagis, with a triumphant gleam in his strange bright eyes, "look at it now!"

As Rainolf gazed, with an awed expression, sure enough, the great bronze bird had veered more and more till it

seemed to be looking straight to the south.

"Now, sir," said Malagis, "I happen to know that the King has received word that Pope Leo is in trouble in Rome and wants the most powerful king in Christendom—of course that's Charlemagne—to come and help him. And the King is going, and, as usual, when he can possibly manage it, he will take nearly everybody along. So there! What did I tell you!"

And Malagis again began his whirling, while Rainolf stared at the eagle with his head full of eager dreams.

CHAPTER X

Christmas Day of the Year 800

It was quite true, as Malagis had said, Charlemagne was going to Italy early in the autumn and was to take most of his household with him. The household, however, was used to moving about with the King from palace to palace, and even when at war he often took his family and the school along. So everybody knew just how to arrange things.

But as this story must end with this very chapter, I cannot begin to tell you about all these preparations; of the army which, of course, must be got ready, of the ox-carts and ox-carts full of baggage, of the horses for the men to ride, the ponies for the pages and the covered wagons with embroidered scarlet curtains and cushions for the ladies, of the quantities of food, and the thousand and one things that must go along when a lot of people set out to travel.

Neither can I stop to tell how they started off and all the interesting and wonderful things which Rainolf and the palace pages saw as they rode along with the great cavalcade. At the town of Mainz they crossed the River Rhine on a wooden bridge with stone piers, which the King had caused to be built a few years before, and everybody thought it most remarkable! And no wonder, for it was the only real bridge in all the Frankish kingdom; at other places they had only boats to cross rivers.

On, on, they went, always southward; and, by and by, up, up, they clambered over the towering white peaks of the Alps Mountains, round precipices that made Rainolf and his companions fairly hold their breath, and then at last down, down, into the lovely land of Italy with its blue skies and olive and orange trees and its cities with such beautiful castles and palaces and churches that again the boys caught their breath, but this time with wonder and admiration. And you would have gasped, too, if you had been a Frankish boy used only to Aachen and the wild forests around it, and if you had always thought the King's palace and the cathedral the two finest buildings in all the world!

Indeed, Rainolf and the rest of the pages found out a great many things on that journey; and when they drew near to the ancient city of Rome they began to realize what it was to be in a country that had been civilized hundreds of years before. But we cannot stop to hear all the things they did, nor of how at length Pope Leo with his bishops and cardinals came to meet King Charlemagne and together they entered imperial Rome, all the great cavalcade following close behind.

Rainolf and Aymon and the other boys were quite silent as they rode through the streets of the famous city. They had seen so much and exclaimed so much on the way, that they had used up all the wonder adjectives they knew, and Rainolf scarcely answered when Malagis, who rode a little piebald pony beside him, poked him with his wand with "Well, boy, Aachen will look a bit tame when we go back, hey?"

Malagis had been in Rome once before with the King, and he now began to point out this and that wonderful place, till they reached the beautiful marble palace where the King was to stay with his family and many of his nobles

and closest attendants, among these Malagis and Rainolf his cup-bearer. Aymon and the other boys and the rest of the household were lodged in palaces nearby.

It is too bad we have not time to talk about the splendid feasts for the King, for they lasted for seven days, and at all of them Rainolf stood behind his chair, and it is not likely he missed anything that went on. Then, after the feasting, King Charlemagne set himself to see to the matters which had brought him to Rome; and the end of it was he delivered Pope Leo from the enemies who had been plotting against him.

By this time it was very near Christmas, and this is the great day we have been hurrying up to reach; for it was to be a tremendously important one in the life of Charlemagne, and, indeed, in the history of the world, and we cannot possibly finish this story without telling about it.

Very early in the morning everybody in Rome crowded toward the great church of Saint Peter for the Christmas service. All who could, squeezed in, and hundreds and hundreds, who couldn't, stood in the large square outside. A place within had been reserved for the King's household,

or Rainolf, who came with Master Einhard and a number of other Franks, would never have had a spot to stand.

As they made their way through the throng, they noticed that the faces of the Roman people all showed a curious air of expectancy. There seemed to be a feeling everywhere that something unusual was going to happen. Rainolf felt it, and wondered, as he looked around the church which was the most splendid sight imaginable. Gold and jewels and mosaics glittered everywhere, and between the lofty marble columns of the long aisles hung curtains of the richest purple velvet which were brought out only on the grandest occasions.

These partly shut out the light gleaming dimly through the windows of clouded glass, but hundreds of tall wax tapers shone brightly and at the eastern end of the church, high over the altar, a dazzle of golden light hung from golden chains.

"Oh, Master Einhard," whispered Rainolf, "what is that beautiful thing?"

"That is called the 'Pharos,'" said Master Einhard. "It is a candelabrum of pure gold, and they say it holds three

thousand candles. I was here once before but I never saw it lighted, for it is only for great celebrations. Isn't it splendid! And look at the beautiful triumphal arch over it! I think that is new for today."

Here Rainolf breathed another long "Oh!" and so did Master Einhard; for just then some of the crowd in front of them moved a little so they could see between. And there, directly under the blazing Pharos and the triumphal arch, shone the wonderful shrine of the Apostle Peter in whose honor the church had been named. The shrine was covered with plates of gold and silver and studded with jewels; mosaics in all the colors of the rainbow glittered around it, and on the steps in front of it was a majestic kneeling figure.

For a moment Rainolf stared in silence; then turning to Master Einhard with a bewildered look, "Is it—can it be King Charlemagne?"

"Yes," replied Master Einhard in a low voice, "it could be no other."

It was indeed the King; though no wonder Rainolf was puzzled, for instead of wearing the familiar Frankish dress, he was clad as a Roman noble of the highest rank. A wide

mantle of pure white wool bordered with royal purple covered him with its many folds and was held at one shoulder by a jeweled golden clasp. On his feet were sandals laced with golden cords.

It was a splendid picture; and as the King continued to kneel with bowed head, all eyes were fixed upon him, still with that curious look of expectancy. In a moment a hush fell everywhere, for Pope Leo and his attendant priests had entered. All wore magnificent robes stiff with gold embroidery and precious stones, and after them came choirboys in lace and velvet, swinging clouds of sweet incense from beautifully jeweled censers, and the solemn mass began.

At a pause in the service, "Master Einhard," whispered Rainolf softly, "what is it? I feel as if something great is going to happen." Indeed, this feeling, which had been in the air all the morning, seemed to grow stronger with everybody.

"I do not know," whispered Master Einhard slowly, "but—I believe—King Charlemagne will leave this church something different—"

But again the sound of chanting rose and fell; and then,

by and by, the last notes, one by one, died away, the clouds of fragrant incense dissolved faintly in the quiet air, there was a moment of intense silence, and then just as King Charlemagne was about to rise from his knees, suddenly Pope Leo stood before him holding in his hands a golden crown. With a swift movement he placed this on the King's head, and at the same instant, as if by magic, thousands of voices rang out, "To Charles the Augustus, crowned of God, the great and pacific Emperor, long life and victory!" which was the ancient greeting with which the Roman people were accustomed to hail their Emperors. Then, led by Pope Leo, everybody sang a hymn asking all the saints to bless the new Emperor, his children and his subjects.

"What—what does it all mean?" asked Rainolf, when he could get his breath for bewilderment.

"It means," slowly answered Master Einhard, who had been keenly watching everything, "that our Frankish King Charlemagne is now also Emperor of the Roman Empire and the greatest monarch in all Christendom."

"But," said Rainolf, still puzzled, "I thought he was the greatest monarch before?"

"Yes," said Master Einhard, "he was; and what is left of the ancient Roman Empire has for years looked to him to defend it from its enemies; yet really to wear the crown as Emperor means a glory and power nothing else can quite give. You will understand better by and by, lad."

As to what King—no, we forget—*Emperor* Charlemagne himself thought about it all, nobody will ever be quite sure. Perhaps in his wisdom he foresaw how for centuries after his own time, when the Roman Empire had ceased to be either Roman or even an empire, the kings who followed him would still strive to be crowned Emperor as he had been and there would be much war and bloodshed because of it. Perhaps he dimly guessed something of this, for after the coronation was over, though he accepted all its responsibility, nevertheless he declared that he would never have gone to Saint Peter's Church that Christmas morning had he known what Pope Leo meant to do.

But whether he knew about it beforehand or not, there he was that Christmas Day of the year 800 leaving Saint Peter's with the Roman crown glittering on his head. And having thus seen our noble King Charlemagne made into

an Emperor, our story must end.

Good-bye, Rainolf! Good-bye, Aymon, and Malagis and Masters Einhard and Alcuin and all the rest!—And would you really like to know what became of some of them? Well, Rainolf's horoscope worked out fairly true. When troubles came to him he met them manfully, and always when needed for the Frankish wars he proved a good and loyal soldier; but always, too, as Master Leobard had said, there was something else for which he cared much more. It was his songs. And as he grew older his voice grew sweeter still, and he and Master Einhard together used often to delight the Emperor with their singing. Rainolf, by and by, became a famous minnesinger, making up his own beautiful song-stories, and even at last fulfilling his boyish wish, he learned to paint and write so well that he made a lovely book all of his own songs.

Aymon and the other boys all turned out well, too; though none of them made a name for himself as did Rainolf.

Malagis continued to wear the yellow tunic of jester and capered good-humoredly through life; though long after-

ward people declared he had been a great wizard and minnesingers told no end of marvelous stories about him.

Master Einhard served faithfully as scribe as long as Charlemagne lived; and then two years later he wrote a life of the Emperor. It is not very long, but is so perfectly well done that to this day when people want to know about him first of all they look to see what Master Einhard wrote.

As for the mighty Charlemagne himself, when he died no King or Emperor ever had so wonderful a burial. He was placed in a splendid tomb in the cathedral of Aachen, seated on a marble throne, arrayed in the magnificent royal robes he had scorned to wear during life, his jeweled crown upon his head, his golden scepter in his right hand, and spread open across his knees the beautiful painted Bible made at Tours and which Master Alcuin had presented to him that famous Christmas Day.

And then, by and by, the minnesingers began to make up songs about him; and for hundreds of years more and more were made up, all of them growing more and more wonderful till the song-stories of which Charlemagne is the hero are counted today among the most beautiful in the

world. And many of these minnesingers tell strange tales. Some of them even declare that the great monarch is not dead, but that fairies and wizards carried him off to a marvelous cavern in the lofty mountain of Dessenberg, and that there he sits sleeping a magical sleep, his head resting on a white marble table and his long white beard flowing to his feet. They say the mountain dwarfs guard the cavern, but that someday—someday— Charlemagne will waken! And, if he does—Oh, wouldn't you like to be there to see?

THE END.

Our Little Saxon Cousin of Long Ago

Julia Darrow Cowles

Illustrated by H.W. Packard



Turgar laid his hand with a gesture
of affection on his bracelet

Preface

Our Little Saxon Cousin of Long Ago is a story of the days immediately preceding the ascension of Alfred the Great to the throne of the Saxons. It was a time when the scant learning of the day was confined to the monasteries, and when military zeal was accounted of more worth than mental culture, for England was being constantly invaded, first by one marauding band and then by another.

I have sought, with the aid of the best historical authorities, to give a true and natural portrayal of boy life in the midst of these conditions. Hero-worship on the part of such a boy as Turgar was an inevitable outgrowth of the times, nor could the boys of any age have found a more worthy hero than Alfred, who has well been called "the most perfect character in (secular) history."

I hope that the boys and girls who read this story may count Turgar among their true book friends, and that this

friendship may lead them to find out more about the king who was Turgar's ideal, and who through all the years since his reign has borne the title of "The good King Alfred."

Julia Darrow Cowles

Pronunciation of Proper Names

Ac′ca
Al′fred
Al′gar
As′gard
Dane
Elswitha (elz-with′a)
Eth′el-red
Eth′el-wolf
Gy′neth
Gyrth (girth)
Her′i-bert
Jo′ly
Norse
O′din
Os′wyn
Sax′on
Sid′roc
The′o-dore
Thor
Tur′gar
Vik′ing
With′gar
Wo′den
Wul′stan

CHAPTER I

Turgar's Home

It was a rude sort of home, yet strongly built. The stones which formed its walls had been torn away from the ruined turrets of an old Roman watch tower. The thralls of Wulstan had laid them.

The walls of the house were solid and heavy. All the light that made its way into the rooms came through narrow spaces left for the purpose between some of the stones. But rude though it was, it was a home of unusual comfort and refinement for the time. The ends of the wooden benches about the fireplace were carved with the figures and heads of animals; skins were thrown across the benches and upon the floor; and pieces of fine embroidery covered the cushions.

The home was in Saxon England, in the year 868, when

Ethelred was King, and the young Prince Alfred had yet to earn his title of Alfred the Great.

Upon one of the skins spread upon the floor a boy lay stretched at full length, his chin propped in his hands, and his eyes gazing dreamily into the glowing fire. It was plainly to be seen that his thoughts were far away.

Presently he brought himself to a sitting posture, and, swaying his strong lithe body in time to the cadence of the music, he began to sing:

Once on a time it happened that we, on our vessel,
Ventured to ride o'er the billows, the high dashing surges.

As the notes of the stirring song rang out, the great dog, which had been lying beside him, stirred, stretched himself, then sat upon his haunches as though ready to bound forth at a word.

The boy gave a sympathetic nod to the dog and continued his song:

Full of danger to us were the paths of the ocean—

But just as he finished the third line a gust of wind came through the hole in the roof above the fireplace, carrying

with it a swirling cloud of smoke, which, for the moment, filled the room and threatened to choke both boy and dog.

"Ugh, what a way for the wind to treat us," spluttered the boy. "It must be a wild night outside."

As he spoke, a hand drew aside the heavy tapestry in the doorway, and a stately, graceful woman entered the room. She was tall, and her gown of rich blue was embroidered with threads of gold, while a wide mantle was drawn about her waist and over her left shoulder, its ends falling almost to the hem of her dress. Upon her shoulder a jeweled clasp held the mantle in place.

"Mother," said the boy, jumping to his feet as she entered, "sit on this side of the fire-place, where the smoke is not so bad. It is a wild night, and father will have a hard ride to the castle."

"You are right, Turgar," replied Gyneth. "I wish he might have put off going till the morning; but it was the King's business, and that brooks no delay."

"The Danes are not fighting, are they?" questioned Turgar anxiously.

"No," answered his mother, "the Danes are quiet and in

their camps; but the young Prince Alfred is soon to wed, and King Ethelred has matters to bring before his thanes."

"And are you not going to the wedding of the Prince?" asked Turgar.

"Yes," was the reply, "your father and I are asked, and so is your brother Withgar, but the wedding will not take place for a number of days. Your father will return for me."

"Oh, I wish I could see the wedding of the Prince!" exclaimed Turgar, with sparkling eyes. And then he added more quietly, and, with a slight flush, "He is my hero, Mother! Did you know that he was my hero?"

"He may well be," answered Gyneth, laying her hand lovingly upon Turgar's head. "Your father thinks him a wonderful youth. He is both honorable in his dealings and wise in counsel. I am glad he is your hero."

Turgar dropped upon his knee before his mother and was about to ask for a story of his hero, when there was a sudden commotion outside.

The dogs in the yard began barking; the servants cried, "Hi, hi, who comes?"

Gyneth's face grew pale. Turgar jumped to his feet with

clenched fists, and the great dog beside him, though he made no sound, drew back his lips in an ugly snarl, while the hair along his spine stood erect with bristling fierceness.

"The Danes!" This was the thought which shot through every mind—even the dogs seemed to know the word—for a band of these pirates and free-booters from the north was encamped in the country to the south, near the coast, where they proposed to spend the winter. They had promised to leave the Saxons in peace, but the promise of a Dane was easily broken, and the people were in constant dread of a sudden raid.

But as the little group in the home of Wulstan stood with suspended breath, waiting to know the cause of the sudden outcry, they heard a shout of welcome, a friendly calling and answering, and their tense attitudes relaxed. It proved to be a belated band of hunters returning from the chase. Among them was Withgar, Turgar's older brother. He had killed a wild boar in the forest and was dragging it home.

Turgar dashed out to meet him, and a few moments later the two brothers entered the room where Gyneth sat.



Turgar jumped to his feet with clenched fists

"Oh, Withgar, do tell us of the hunt," cried Turgar. "I shall be so glad when I am old enough to go with you!"

Withgar smiled at the boy's eagerness as he said, "We had rare sport, though for a time I was not sure whether I was to get the boar, or the boar was to get me.

"I came upon it suddenly, and the horse that I was riding was not used to the hunt. Then my spear broke when I thrust at the boar and he turned and charged me. But luckily Acca was near, and a better thrall it would be hard to find. I shouted for his spear, when mine broke, and, balancing it well, he threw it to me and I caught it, though my horse was plunging badly. In a trice I gave the boar another thrust and made an end of him. And now," he added lightly, "we shall have plenty of meat, and you will be glad of that, Turgar, I know."

Turgar's eyes shone like twin stars when Withgar finished, and it was clear that he was not thinking then of the boar's meat.

"Good! Good!" he cried.

To himself he said, "Oh, I do hope that I, too, may have great adventures, when I grow up."

And Turgar's wish was to be fulfilled in generous measure.

CHAPTER II

The Story of a Wonderful Journey

The Saxons were a restless people, and the men of the leading families seldom stayed long at home. The craftsmen, and those who tilled the fields, worked steadily enough, but the men of large estates, who had received their lands in return for services rendered the King, were constantly moving about.

Wulstan was a thane, a counselor of the King, and Withgar was a soldier, so Turgar and his mother were often left alone with the servants.

There was plenty going on about the place to entertain a young boy, and Turgar often occupied himself by going from one group of workmen to another. He watched the smith as he fashioned the implements for tilling the soil, or made knives for the use of Withgar in his hunting, or spear

heads and swords for the soldiers.

At other times he watched the women gathering honey from the hives, for honey was the only sweetening of those days, and the keeping of bees was an important part of the farm industries.

Turgar was always eager to do something, and sometimes the smith would let him try his hand at beating the metal, or polishing the implements that had not too sharp an edge. Then they would talk together about Prince Alfred, or the Danes, or the old tales of early history and legend.

These old stories had a fascination for Turgar, and he often wished that he had someone to talk with who knew more about the true history of the country than the smith knew. When he asked, "Who built the old stone towers, such as our house is made from?" or "Why cannot we Saxons make splendid roads like the bit of road that lies to the west of us?" the smith would answer, "They say that the Romans built the towers and the roads, and they must have been master workmen, but who they were or where they came from I do not know."

When Wulstan was at home Turgar asked him many questions about the Romans, and Wulstan could tell wonderful stories; but he was not at home long at a time, and when he was at home there were many matters about the farm to keep him busy.

Turgar's mother, Gyneth, was a woman much above the average of her time, but she did not read or write, and neither in fact did Wulstan. Indeed, there were very few people in the land who could. Gyneth had a good memory and she had learned much about the history of the country through the stories which had been handed down from one generation to another, and through the songs and tales of the minstrels who wandered about from castle to camp, and from camp to castle. These minstrels were welcomed wherever they went, and earned their living by means of their stories and songs.

History, preserved only by such means as these, could not be very accurate, and its heroes were sure to be given more than mortal honors as one after another told the tale of their brave deeds; but all early history has been handed down in this same fashion.

Gyneth could not tell Turgar much about the Romans, but she knew the stories of her own time and her own people, as well as the legends of the gods of Asgard.

One day Turgar came to her, carrying in his hand a trinket which the goldsmith had just made for him. "May I have a chain, mother," he asked, "so that I may wear the charm about my neck? The goldsmith told me that Prince Alfred always wears a charm, and that his mother gave it to him when he was a very little boy."

Gyneth laid aside her embroidery while she selected a light chain which she fastened about Turgar's neck, with the new ornament attached to it. Then she said, "Yes, Turgar, I have heard about Prince Alfred's charm. His mother had it made for him, and she placed it about his neck just before he left her to go on his long pilgrimage to Rome."

"Oh, do tell me all about it!" cried Turgar. "How old was the Prince then?"

"He was five years old," answered Gyneth; "a very little boy to go on so long and perilous a pilgrimage. But he was put in the care of the good bishop Swithin, who watched

over him like a father."

"And is it a long way to Rome?" asked Turgar, for, since there were no schools in the land of the Anglo-Saxons, Turgar had not the remotest idea of geography.

"Yes, it is a long way," replied Gyneth. "The little Prince had to travel first on horseback to the sea, then in vessels with big brightly colored sails, and, after that, on horseback again. Part of the way they passed over mountains where the paths were steep and narrow, and where bands of robbers were hiding. But King Ethelwolf, his father, knew of these perils, and so he sent a whole troop of thanes and priests, of soldiers and horsemen and thralls to guard the Prince, for he knew that no band of robbers would dare to assail so large a number of men."

"How long were they on the way?" asked Turgar.

"Many, many weeks," replied his mother. "They took great stores of food and goods with them, and always they looked out for the little Prince first. They had furs to wrap him in when the weather was cold, and the bishop and his nurse were always close beside him to see that he did not grow too tired, or lack for any good thing that they could

furnish. But even then the pilgrimage was long and tiresome.

"Here and there on the way they came to great walled castles, and then they stopped for several days to rest, for the owners of the castles were glad to have a royal guest, even though he were but a little boy.

"At last they reached Rome, where they could rest for a long time. They had brought rich gifts to the Pope, Leo IV, and he was especially pleased with the little Prince who had come so far to see him."

"What did they take to the Pope?" questioned Turgar.

"There were vessels of gold and of silver set with precious jewels. There were robes of great beauty, embroidered in gold and precious stones, and there were gifts of money for schools and churches."

"I am so glad the Pope liked the Prince," said Turgar; then he added hastily, "but he could not help it."

Gyneth smiled. "He liked him so well," she said, "that he anointed him, it is said, with holy oil, and told him that he would one day be King."

"Oh," cried Turgar, "did he say that? And Alfred is not

the eldest son. Oh, I am glad! I wish I could help to make it come true."

"Perhaps you can," said Gyneth, "if it proves to be for the good of the country. Every man can help his country and his King by being brave and true. There is no telling what your chance may be when you are grown. But you can be ready for it by being strong and courageous and faithful each day."

"Must I wait till I am grown?" asked Turgar.

"What could a boy do?" asked his mother.

"I do not know," said Turgar, "but sometimes boys can help if they are brave."

CHAPTER III

My Prince

The wedding of Prince Alfred to Elswitha had been heralded throughout the land. Wulstan, Gyneth, and their elder son, Withgar, had, as we know, been bidden to the castle of King Ethelred to witness the event, and to take part in the festival which would follow.

"Oh, I do wish I were as old as Withgar!" exclaimed Turgar vehemently, bringing his foot down upon the stone flagging of the floor as he spoke. He thought himself alone, but a hearty, laughing voice responded, "And why are you so eager to be of Withgar's age?"

"Oh, Father!" exclaimed Turgar, recognizing the voice, although he had not known of his father's return, "I want to witness the wedding of my Prince. I want to look upon him just once. I am sure if I could only see him it would

help me to be true and brave always."

"Why!" exclaimed his father, "I did not know you were so fond of Prince Alfred. How do you happen to know so much about him?"

"Oh," said Turgar, "long ago I heard Withgar telling of a hunt in which he and the Prince took part. It ended in a battle with a party of Danes, and oh! the Prince was wonderful. Withgar said they came upon the Danes just as they were about to set fire to a farmhouse, and a woman and a young girl were shut inside the house. The Prince fought like a young lion, and he alone killed three of the Danes, and he set the woman and girl free. The others of the hunting party settled the rest of the Danes and put out the fire. Oh, it was glorious, the way Withgar told it, and the Prince has been my hero ever since!"

"That was truly a brave deed," said Wulstan. "But is that all that you know about the Prince?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" replied Turgar. "I have asked everybody questions about him since then, and I have heard ever so many stories. And in them all he is good and just, as well as brave and strong. Mother told me about his going to

Rome when he was only five years old, and of how much the Pope liked him—and that he said he would someday be King."

Turgar was quite breathless when he finished. His father looked into his flushed face and smiled, but the smile was a very tender one. "And so Alfred is your Prince and your hero," he said. "Well, Turgar, you could not find a worthier model. I truly wish that you might see him, and I hope that someday you may."

Then Wulstan went in search of Gyneth, that they might complete their plans for an early start in the morning.

When the party left on the following day no one was quite so happy as Turgar himself, for it had been decided that he should accompany his father and mother as far as the castle, and then return with the escort of soldiers and servants, under the special care of Acca, and a stern young warrior named Algar.

In his heart Turgar hoped that he might by some chance see the Prince, but Gyneth assured him that this was altogether unlikely.

It was a gay procession that started out. They were

mounted upon horses wearing rich trappings, while other horses were laden with costly wedding gifts.

For many weeks Gyneth and her maidens had been busily at work weaving and embroidering rich garments and furnishings, while the goldsmith had been equally busy fashioning curious jeweled clasps and bracelets and cups.

When, after several hours of riding, the party reached the castle, the gifts were taken from the packs and carried by the servants into one of the great rooms which had been set aside to receive them.

Then Wulstan and Gyneth bade Turgar good-bye, and gave special charge to Acca and Algar regarding him.

Turgar looked longingly back as he rode away, for although the journey had been full of interest, and the sight of the castle with all its bustling activities had aroused his enthusiasm, his dearest hope—cherished in spite of his mother's words—had not been realized, for he had not seen his Prince.

As they rode along, the men of the company, relieved of the restraint which they felt when in the presence of Wulstan and Withgar, began an eager discussion of the

scenes at the castle. They joked and laughed, and even the horses seemed to feel the relaxation of their riders. Turgar rode between Acca and Algar where the width of the road would permit, and listened keenly to the conversation of the men.

The leader of the party was riding some little distance in advance. As he came to an abrupt turn in the road, an arrow shot swiftly across the way, so close to his horse's head that the animal gave a sudden plunge, wheeled about, unseating his rider by the quick and unexpected movement, and galloped madly back among the other horses.

In a moment all was confusion. The horses and many of the men became panic stricken. Of course the first thought of all was "the Danes!"

In an instant Algar's voice arose in stern command, but although there were soldiers in the company, there were untrained thralls as well, and these lost all control of their plunging horses as well as of themselves.

There was a moment of wild confusion. One of the frightened animals reared, struck the horse upon which Turgar was mounted with his hoofs, and, before Algar or

Acca saw what had happened, Turgar was being borne down the road at breakneck speed. At the bend of the road the horse reared, then plunged, and Turgar was thrown in a crumpled heap in the dust.

Algar and Acca followed swiftly, but before they could reach him a strange rider dashed from the side of the road, slipped from his horse, and lifted Turgar's head upon his arm.

"I crave your pardon," he said, as Algar and Acca came up. "I saw a buck in yonder thicket, and sent an arrow after it, not knowing of your approach."

In an instant the two men were beside him in the road, while the men of the company, relieved from their fear of the Danes, were succeeding in quieting the horses, and getting themselves into more orderly array.

Algar's face was dark with rage at the conduct of his band, which had resulted in such an accident, and been witnessed by the man who now held Turgar's head upon his arm. For this stranger was no stranger to Algar, the soldier; and as the latter leaped from his horse beside him, he gravely saluted as he said: "Your Honor, Prince Alfred!"

But what of Turgar? Stunned by the fall, he lay for a moment wholly unconscious, but as Algar uttered these words it was as though a magic potion had been given him. His eyes opened, and he looked long and earnestly into the face bent above his own.

"Prince Alfred?" he repeated questioningly. "Yes, my boy," was the answer, "I am Prince Alfred."

A sudden flood of color came back into Turgar's face as he raised himself, saluted, and said, still half wonderingly, "My Prince; my hero!"

At these words the eyes of the young prince shone with pleasure, and then he helped Turgar to his feet. Fortunately there were no bones broken, though it had been a bad throw, and in a few moments Turgar declared himself well able to mount and continue his journey.

Algar, muttering imprecations upon his own head for the accident, assisted him to mount, and then Prince Alfred offered Turgar his hand. He blamed himself heartily for the accident and ended by saying, "Someday, Turgar, I shall hope to see you again, and then I will try to make amends for this."



He looked long and earnestly into the
face that bent above his own

But Turgar, with shining eyes, replied, "I trust that I may someday be able to serve you, my Prince."

As they resumed their journey, Algar on one hand and Acca upon the other, Turgar quite forgot the fright and the hurt, for both were crowded out by the joy of having seen and spoken with "his Prince."

CHAPTER IV

A Royal Saxon Wedding

It was several days later when Wulstan and Gyneth returned from the wedding feast.

Prince Alfred had sought out Wulstan at the castle and told him of the accident to Turgar, taking upon himself even more than his share of the blame, but reassuring him as to any serious injury to the lad. Wulstan had therefore had several days in which to let his indignation at the conduct of his men cool, and it is probably well for them that he had.

When, upon their return, he and Gyneth questioned Turgar, the latter exclaimed, "Oh, I was so glad it happened, because if it had not, I would not have seen my Prince." And so, with a laugh, Wulstan let the matter drop.

"Mother," said Turgar the next day, "please tell me all

about the wedding. Is Elswitha nice?"

"She seems like a sweet, sensible girl," answered Gyneth, "and I am sure she is very fond of your Prince."

"Please tell me all about it," repeated Turgar, stretching himself upon the rug before the fire, and looking up into his mother's face. "You see," he added, "I do not know how people are wedded at all, or what they do."

"Well," replied Gyneth with a smile, "I will describe the wedding to you as well as I can. In the first place, Alfred and a company of his friends rode away many miles to the home of Elswitha. He and his company were dressed in their most splendid armor, and they made an imposing company. The old Saxon custom required that they go armed, because in those remote days brides were sometimes carried away from their homes by force, and often there would be a battle with the followers of some other suitor. Those days have passed, but in our own times it is equally necessary for the men to go armed on account of the presence of the Danes in our land; for no one knows when there may be an attack from them.

"But nothing of this kind occurred to Prince Alfred, and

he and his company had returned the day before we reached the castle. They brought with them Elswitha and her father, two of her brothers, and a group of young maidens who were to act as her attendants.

"The wedding occurred the day after we arrived, in the church which belongs to the castle. Alfred and Elswitha were dressed in royal garments, heavy with gold embroidery and sparkling with jewels. Each wore a crown of flowers, and the church was decorated with blossoms of many sorts.

"As they stood before the altar, Alfred promised to care for Elswitha as his dearest treasure as long as he lived, and then Elswitha's father gave his consent to their being made man and wife. Then the priest read the wedding service of the church, and gave them his blessing."

"Was that all?" asked Turgar.

"That was all of the wedding ceremony," replied Gyneth, "but after that came the wedding feast, and that lasted very much longer.

"We all went from the church to the castle, and there we took part in a great banquet, where every imaginable kind of food was served. There were singers and harpists

and minstrels to entertain us. They sang the old ballads of kings and conquests, and then they sang a group of songs which had been newly written in honor of Alfred's brave deeds and noble courage. And they sang, too, of Elswitha's high birth and gentle courtesy.

"The feasting and song lasted all night and far into the next day, and then Alfred and his bride rode away to their own home."

"Did they have many gifts?" asked Turgar, as his mother finished, for he had been greatly interested in the work of his mother and the goldsmith in the days preceding the wedding.

"Wagon loads of them," answered Gyneth. "When they started away it looked like a triumphal procession. We all stood in the castle grounds and waved our scarfs and banners till they were out of sight."

"What sort of presents were there?" persisted Turgar, for no detail of this wonderful wedding was to be overlooked.

"There were beautiful chains and clasps and rings, made from gold and silver and precious stones," replied Gyneth. "There were dishes of gold and of silver, cups with jeweled

edges, tapestries and hangings of the richest embroidery, and furniture with wonderful carving upon it. I am sure all the most skilled workmen of the land must have been busy for many months to produce the wonderful things that were given."

"Oh, I am glad!" exclaimed Turgar. "I wish I knew some of the songs that the minstrels sang—the new songs that told about the Prince."

"Perhaps Withgar will remember them," Gyneth replied. "He sings well, and would be apt to remember the words. I am sure he will be glad to teach them to you when he returns."

"But when will Withgar come back?" asked Turgar.

"He went with the singers and musicians and friends who accompanied Alfred and Elswitha to their home."

"Oh, then when he comes he will be sure to know the new songs," cried Turgar happily, and he ran out to the yard, where he found Acca feeding the dogs.

"Oh, Acca," he cried, "Mother has just been telling me all about the wedding and the feasting, and the presents. It must have been a wonderful time, and I can shut my eyes

and imagine it all, for now, you see, I know just how the Prince looks."

Poor Acca's face flushed deeply, as it did every time he was reminded of the accident to Turgar, but the lad was too intent to notice. "Oh," Turgar added, "I would not have missed seeing him for anything! I don't believe I would have minded if the fall had broken my leg."

"Bless you!" said Acca fervently. "It is some comfort to hear you say that."

CHAPTER V

Leaving Home

Long before the time of our story the Saxons had given up the worship of Thor and of Odin, and had accepted the Christian religion; but in those days all the Christians in England were Romanists, and their teachers were bishops and priests.

There were those among the older or the more ignorant of the people who still clung to the old Norse religion with its many gods and heroes; but even they were in a sad state of doubt when they realized that this was the religion of the hated Danes, whom they called savages and barbarians.

The monasteries and abbeys of Saxon England were the seats of learning. The monks could read both Saxon and Latin, and when any man determined to learn to read and to write he entered a monastery as a pupil. Those who

intended to devote their lives to the service of the church became priests; but others went to the monastery to study for a time only, expecting to take their place again in the world when their services were needed by the King, or for private duties. In this way the monasteries took the place of schools; indeed, they were the only schools the Saxons had.

Most of the people, however, were too busy fighting, or getting ready to fight, the Danes, to think or care much whether they could read or write. If it were necessary for them to sign a document, some priest could write the name for them and beneath that they could place their mark, which answered the same purpose. Few even of the kings, up to this time, could write their own names.

Wulstan and Gyneth had noticed Turgar's eagerness to learn, and his interest in all the historical tales that were told him, and they had at length decided to place him in an abbey where he could study under the monks, and learn at least how to read and to write.

When the news was told to Turgar he was at first quite overwhelmed. He was delighted at the prospect of knowing

for himself how to read, and yet he wondered how, with all his restlessness and love of activity, he could ever adapt himself to the quiet life of a monastery.

"They will not require too much of you, my son," said Wulstan, when Turgar spoke of this. "The monks are men like ourselves, and some of them have been active warriors. They will give you the freedom that you need, if you win their approval. And you are not going with the idea of becoming a priest, but only as a pupil."

So Turgar was reassured, and when the time came for him to accompany his father he was very happy, except for the sorrow of parting from his mother.

Withgar rode with them, and a bodyguard followed, made up of soldiers and servants, or thralls. It was scarcely safe even for two or three to venture off to a distance alone, since they might be overtaken by a party of marauding Danes at any time. No outrages had been committed recently, but the Saxons never knew when there might be a raid.

The Saxons had become a quiet people, and they had little love for fighting; but they were often forced to fight in

order to protect their homes and those that they loved.

Nothing was sacred to the wild, fierce Danes. They burned houses and churches, they tortured and killed not only men, but women and children, till men shuddered to hear of their cruel and blood-thirsty deeds. They carried away the treasures of homes which they plundered, and then set fire to the buildings. The Saxons had repeatedly defeated them in battle, but new hordes kept coming from the north until, to the more thoughtful of the thanes, the struggle began to seem endless.

"Tell me more about Crowland, Father," said Turgar, as they rode along a quiet road—for Crowland was the name of the abbey in which he was to study.

"Crowland Abbey lies between two rivers," replied Wulstan, "and it is a very large stone building. There are several hundred monks living there, and it is one of the greatest abbeys in the land."

"It has had many rich gifts," added Withgar, "and it has great quantities of gold and silver plate, of jeweled robes and vestments. There is one table in the church, used in the service of the altar, which is covered with gold. And

there are relics and treasures of priceless worth within its walls."

"Is there anyone there that you know?" asked Turgar, struggling against a sudden feeling of homesickness which seized him.

"Oh, yes, indeed," answered his father. "The Abbot Theodore has been my friend from boyhood. He is prior of the abbey, and he will be like a father to you."

"Then there is Friar Joly, whom you are sure to like. He is a warrior as well as a priest, and he can tell you scores of stories such as you like to hear. Besides, he will teach you how to read such stories from books."

"It will all seem very strange," said Turgar, "but I think I shall like it."

"I am sure you will, my son," replied Wulstan. Then he drew rein and pointed some distance ahead. "Do you see the gray turrets yonder between the trees?" he asked, and when Turgar nodded he said, "That is your first view of Crowland Abbey. We will soon be there."

Turgar sat very erect upon his horse. It was the first time he had taken a long journey away from home, and he was

filled with conflicting emotions. He would be glad to study, he was quite sure of that, although it was a great mystery, this learning how the strange marks upon a piece of white parchment could say things to you. But they surely could, for a priest who visited at their home had shown him a small volume and had read to him what the marks said.

He wished that he had brought Wulf, his great dog, for he felt just now as though Wulf would be a great comfort after his father and Withgar had gone.

Suddenly he turned to Withgar and said, "I hope you will bring home another boar soon, Withgar. I wanted to go with you hunting someday, but now I shall not have a chance."

"Oh, yes, you will!" replied Withgar. "You will be home again one of these days, and then we will go hunting together. And you may not find life at Crowland as quiet, perhaps, as you think. With so many men and boys here you will have plenty of company."

"Oh, I am going to like it," exclaimed Turgar sturdily, "but don't forget the boar hunt we are going to have together."

CHAPTER VI

The Abbey

The Prior Theodore met Wulstan and his party as they drew rein at the abbey door. He greeted Wulstan warmly, and laid a protecting hand upon the shoulder of Turgar.

"He shall be to me like an own son," he said, looking into Turgar's face approvingly. "It is well for him to study, and in the stress and uncertainty of the times I trust that he will be safer here—though the Danes stop not for the cross," he added in a low voice, speaking more to himself than to his friends.

At the earnest invitation of the prior, Wulstan and Withgar remained overnight at the abbey, while the soldiers and thralls of their company made themselves comfortable in the court.

At the call to prayer they all went with the monks to the

chapel. The service was in Latin, so none of them understood the words, but the reverent attitude of the monks, and the sweet face and voice of the prior, impressed them strangely, and Turgar felt rather than understood the contrast between the atmosphere of the monastery and that of the turbulent, restless life outside.

He enjoyed the singing of the monks, accompanied by the playing of pipes. The singing was different from any that he had heard. He was accustomed to the free, bold songs of Withgar and his friends when they sang in praise of great battles, or in honor of some brave warrior. Often, too, they sang the older Saxon songs of the heroes of Asgard, of the Viking ships and their dauntless crews; although such songs were beginning to be looked upon with disfavor by those who were devoted to the church. But Turgar loved the wild freedom of their music, and when he heard such singing he often exclaimed, half in fun and yet half in earnest, "The blood of the Sea Kings runs wild in my veins"—for was it not literally true, although he no longer worshiped the mighty Thor?

But he liked, too, this strangely monotonous music of

the monks, this chanting of psalms, for the voices of the men rolled forth with a solemn musical cadence that rose and fell, and seemed to bear him along with it into unknown spaces.

The music ceased, the prior arose and stretched forth his hands in benediction, and Turgar reverently bowed his head, though the Latin words held no meaning for his ears.

After the service, Wulstan and his sons were shown through the chapel and the abbey by the priest Joly, whom the prior summoned.

All the rich treasures of the abbey were displayed, and Turgar wondered at the enormous wealth, the priceless gifts, which had been brought or sent to the monastery by devoted Catholics of the land. There were gold and silver vessels for the service of the chapel; the vestments for the priests were richly embroidered and heavy with fringes of gold. There were robes of the most costly materials, and golden chains, and candlesticks, and crosses, the latter several feet in height.

It was a new and wonderful sight to Turgar, and even to Wulstan and Withgar, for although this was not their first

visit to a monastery, the Abbey of Crowland was unusually rich in treasures.

But, as they went from one wonder to another, Turgar watched the face of the monk Joly quite as much as he did the golden candle-sticks, or the rich robes. There was something about this priest which attracted and fascinated him. He remembered that Wulstan had said that he was a soldier as well as a priest, and although that seems to us a strange combination, the conditions in Saxon England were such that even the priests were at times called upon to fight, and Friar Joly had been a leader of the monks in more than one scrimmage upon the field of battle. And so it was to this soldier-priest that Turgar was especially drawn, for he seemed to him to combine the elements of his own old life and the new one upon which he was just entering.

He felt sure that he would find a father in the Prior Theodore, and he knew already that it would be easy to love him; but in Friar Joly he saw a companion and friend whom he could meet upon a more familiar level.

And the monk responded to the boy's eager interest,

and told many strange stories connected with the various gifts, and with the people who had bestowed them.

"You may be interested in the story of this cup," he said, as he handed a heavy golden goblet to Wulstan. "It has long been in the abbey, but it is said to have belonged at one time to King Arthur who, with his Knights of the Round Table, fought so valiantly against our Saxon forefathers. He was a King of whom the Britons had a right to be proud, for he was strong, and daring, and powerful. He fought giants and wild beasts single-handed and overcame them. And he was kind and chivalrous, as well as strong, and his Knights loved him, and would have died for him."

"And yet he was not a Saxon?" asked Turgar in surprise, for the story was a new one to him.

"No, indeed," replied the friar, with a laugh. "He probably had the same feeling toward the Saxons that we now have toward the Danes."

Turgar's eyes opened wide.

"The early Saxons, you remember," continued the friar, "came from much the same stock that the Danes do. They were wild and fierce rovers of the sea, and they fought the

Britons, over whom King Arthur ruled, much as the Danes fight us."

Even Withgar was surprised at such a statement as this.

"It is quite true," said Friar Joly. "We worshiped Thor and Woden, as you know some of our people do to this day." The older men nodded in assent.

"But when our forefathers had overcome the Britons," he continued, "they gave up the sea and settled down to till the soil and become permanent residents of the land. That helped to change their character and habits, but the one thing that changed them most completely was their giving up the worship of heathen gods and accepting Christianity. The religion of Christ has in it no place for cruelty or lust or revenge, even though men are forced sometimes to fight for the protection of their homes, their families, or the church."

Friar Joly's stories had awakened the keenest interest on the part of Turgar, and had aroused in him a great desire to read, and so to learn for himself the early history of his land and his people. He wanted to know more about this King Arthur and his Knights. And so when the time came for

Wulstan and Withgar to return, he was quite willing to remain at the abbey, for with Friar Joly as a companion he felt sure that the days would not be dull.

CHAPTER VII

From Abbey to Army

Nearly two years had passed since Turgar had come to Crowland Abbey.

At first the life had seemed very quiet to him, but he became deeply interested in his studies, he loved the Prior Theodore devotedly, and his admiration for Friar Joly knew no bounds.

He had learned to read the Saxon language, and was making good progress with his Latin.

Practically all the books in the monastery were written in Latin, but the monks devoted much of their time to translating these into Saxon and making copies of them in their own tongue. All books of that time were really manuscripts written by hand upon parchment, and the copying of a single book took many, many weeks. The monks tried

to make their work as perfect as possible, and the letters of titles, or at the beginning of chapters or paragraphs, were often illuminated in rich colors. Sometimes these illuminated letters were embellished with very small heads, sometimes with landscapes, or figures or flowers. Gold was used with the rich colors, and the work was often very beautiful.

This hand process of making books, as well as their great scarcity, gave to each one a value which we of today can scarcely comprehend. A book was one of the rarest gifts that one friend could give to another, and only the nobles and families of great wealth had so much as one.

After Turgar had learned to read there were not many books in the monastery which were of any use to him, since only those that had been translated into Saxon had any meaning for him. But these few he read as often as possible, and from them and the tales told him by the monks he gained a very good idea of the history of his country and the deeds of his forefathers.

The works on theology he found rather hard to understand, but he read eagerly the poems and psalms, and found much of interest in the books of the law. The book that he

loved best of all, however, was the book of psalms, which seemed to him to contain all the beautiful thoughts of the world.

He had not been long in the monastery when his friend, the good Joly, permitted him to use some of his paints and brushes, for no one in all the monastery could do more beautiful illuminating than the soldier-priest. Turgar was delighted. Painting was a wholly new occupation to him, but he was fascinated by it, even though his first efforts were poor and crude. In spite of this fact, Friar Joly saw that the lad had a latent talent, and he encouraged him to keep on. Within a few weeks Turgar was illuminating letters with greater skill and taste than some of the monks had ever been able to do.

The various studies, and the daily services in the chapel, together with the hours given to recreation, filled Turgar's days so full that he had little time for loneliness. There were other boys in the monastery, too, and with them he spent his recreation hours in outdoor games and contests that developed his physical strength. Their sports consisted in games of ball, discus throwing, and foot races.



The good Joly permitted him to use
some of his paints and brushes

Turgar was a favorite with all. He was not only studious, which pleased the monks, but he was strong, athletic, and full of a fine courage that made him a leader among the boys.

One day as Turgar sat beside Friar Joly, bending over a Latin manuscript and trying to translate some of its unfamiliar phrases, they heard a sound of rapid hoof beats, and then someone pounded heavily upon the outer door.

In a moment all work within the monastery ceased. Friar Joly slipped the precious book back within its case, and all waited with suspended breath.

The prior answered the summons in person. A little later he returned, his face set and stern, and very white.

"The Danes are to the north of us," he said. "King Ethelred is sorely pressed, and has need of reinforcements."

Instantly the sober band of monks was transformed.

"I beg of you, give me a band of men to lead out!" cried Friar Joly. And a chorus of voices shouted, "Take me! Take me!"

In less than an hour's time there issued from the monastery gates an orderly company of soldiers, although still

clad in the garb of monks. Friar Joly was in command.

Turgar's blood tingled as he saw them march away, and his heart beat fast. He would have been glad to form one of the band under the leadership of his beloved friar, for he felt that it would be a glorious thing to help even a little in battling against the cruel Danes.

"Oh, I wish I were a few years older!" he exclaimed to Heribert, one of his boy friends. "Nothing could hold me back then."

"Indeed," answered Heribert, "it would be much easier to go than to stay. I wonder how near the Danes are to Crowland."

But their conversation was interrupted by the bell calling them to prayer in the chapel.

The following days passed slowly to the thirty or forty inmates of the abbey. Their thoughts were with their comrades rather than upon parchments or the singing of psalms. They well knew that if conditions had not been desperate with the army of King Ethelred, he would not have asked for reinforcements from the abbey. But there were no means of communication. They could only wait and hope.

In the midst of his anxiety the good Prior Theodore did not forget Turgar, for he knew how greatly the lad would miss his friend, Friar Joly, and how distressed he would be regarding him.

Theodore had well kept his promise to Wulstan, that Turgar should be to him as his own son. He truly loved the lad, and his love was warmly returned.

On the second morning following the departure of the monks he sought Turgar out. "Come," he said, "I will hear your lesson in Latin today. Bring me your book."

Turgar took the manuscript to the prior and began to read. But try as he would to keep his mind upon his lesson, he made sad work of it.

"I do not always read so badly," he said at length, looking up into the prior's face. But he saw at once that the prior had not heard either his bad Latin or his apology for it. The eyes of Theodore were filled with a look of anxious dread, and it was evident that his thoughts were many leagues away.

With a start he came to himself, as he felt Turgar's gaze upon him. He took the manuscript and replaced it in its

case. Then he laid his hand upon Turgar's shoulder with an affectionate clasp, and with a gentle smile he said, "We will try it again another day."

But little the kind old prior dreamed what another day would bring to his beloved abbey.

CHAPTER VIII

The Raid

It was late in the evening. The monks were assembled once more in the little chapel to engage in prayer. The psalms had been chanted to the accompaniment of the pipes, and Theodore and the diminished company of monks had knelt, when suddenly there came a pounding upon the door. It was burst open, and three men, cut and bleeding and weary, staggered over the threshold.

"May the Lord have mercy!" cried Theodore, as he rose and hurried down the chapel aisle.

The monks scrambled to their feet, they cried out in dismay, and then they crowded about the three men.

Turgar mounted a bench that he might see them more plainly, then he covered his face in horror. One was Friar Joly, but so pale and haggard that he hardly knew him, and

with a cut across his face that told how desperately near he had come to death.

But what was it that the men were saying?

"Fly! Fly! The Danes are close at hand! They will soon be upon us. They have learned of the rich treasures of Crowland, and they care nothing for the cross. Gold and booty are what they are after, and they hate the Christ, for they worship Woden. We are all that remain of the two hundred who marched away from Crowland!"

There was little time for lament. "What shall we do?" was the one question asked.

Weary and weak as he was, Joly was the one to suggest a plan of action, and the prior at once gave commands to carry it out.

"A boat is at the nearest point on the river," he said. "It is dark, but you know the way, and it is close by. Take all the treasures that can be carried and put them in the boat."

Swiftly, and as silently as possible, all the inmates of the monastery set to work. Gold and silver, jeweled ornaments, and embroidered fabrics were carried to the river. The golden cup which Friar Joly had said once belonged to King

Arthur was put into Turgar's hand, and with his other he caught up a massive silver candlestick and bore them swiftly to the boat. Heribert ran with him, carrying two jeweled cups which had been standing before the altar.

"I know all the woods and paths about here," Heribert said in an undertone, as they hurried back for other treasure. "My home is not far away, and I have always hunted and trapped small game. Keep with me if you can, should the Danes come."

Presently the voice of Theodore rang out. "Hear me!" he called. "If any treasure is left we will conceal it afterward in the woods, or by dropping it into the water of the well. The boat must be taken down the river to the hermitage of Gyrth. He knows all the secret places, and will conceal both men and treasure. I will remain here with the older men and some of the boys. We could not defend ourselves against the Danish horde even if all were to stay. If we attempt no defense we may be spared."

A cry of protest went up from all the monks. They could not leave the prior without defense! They would not save themselves and leave him unprotected!

But Theodore was like adamant. The younger men and treasures must be saved for the future good of the church. If he must, he would gladly give his life; but he could not leave his abbey. His very defencelessness would save him.

The monks protested, plead, rebelled; but the prior was firm, and as their superior he commanded that they obey.

Slowly and sadly the strong men of the abbey filed down to the riverbank, boarded the boats, and glided away down the river. The three who had returned weary and bleeding were taken with them, although Friar Joly had resisted with all his remaining strength, and only the solemn command of the prior had reduced him to submission.

"The church and the country have need of you. Go!" And Friar Joly bowed his head and was led away.

"Of what use can we be?" whispered Heribert, with white lips, to Turgar.

The prior, a few old men, and four or five boys were all that were left in defense of Crowland.

"Come," said Heribert, laying hold upon Turgar's tunic. "I know all the ways of the woods hereabout. We can slip away unseen."

The Danes were coming. He had not even a knife with which to defend himself. He could be of no use to anyone. These were the thoughts that went like a series of lightning flashes through Turgar's mind. Then he looked toward the altar where the Prior Theodore knelt.

In an instant Turgar's head was thrown back. "Go, if you will," he cried. And then, in a softer tone, he continued: "It is not in my heart to blame you; but whether I can help him or not, I shall not desert my prior."

A moment later Heribert had gone.

A few treasures and relics had been left behind or dropped in the hurry of departure, and those who remained busied themselves in carrying these to the well and dropping them into the water. Two or three forgotten manuscripts were hastily buried at the foot of a shattered oak.

Daylight was beginning to break, and the feeling of relief, which always comes with the approach of light, was stealing over the little group in the abbey when they heard a far-away shout, then another. Then came a chorus of horrid yells, the tramp of many feet.

The Danes were descending upon Crowland.

Turgar sprang to the side of the prior, not for protection, but—if there were a possibility of such a thing—to protect; and with blazing eyes he stood there.

"Save yourself, if you can," said Theodore. "Your country has need of such as you."

The prior had thought to speak to the leader of the Danes and throw his helpless band upon his mercy. But there was no time for speech or protestation. The merciless Danes poured into the building, searched in vain for the treasure they had hoped to find in such abundance, and in their frenzied anger at being thwarted, turned upon the little band and thrust them through with their spears.

Turgar, standing with clenched hands beside the prior, saw him stricken, and, tearing aside his own tunic, he took a step forward with bared breast and blazing eyes, saying: "You have killed my prior; kill me, too."

The hand of the Dane was already raised to thrust, but for an instant he paused and looked into the handsome, fearless face of the boy.

His arm dropped. "You are brave enough to be a Dane," he said, and with a quick motion he drew him beneath his



He took a step forward with bared breast

own mantle.

"Follow me," he said, "wherever I go."

A moment later the Dane drew him to one side, stripped off his torn tunic and threw about him a Danish cloak. "Keep close to me," he repeated. "I am Count Sidroc. I will save you, and make you a Dane."

At the words, "I will make you a Dane," Turgar was about to tear off the cloak and bare himself once more for a thrust, but at the instant he remembered the words of his prior—the last command which he could ever give—"Save yourself, if you can. Your country has need of such as you."

CHAPTER IX

Turgar's Escape

Turgar, sick at heart, and full of wrath, nevertheless kept close to Count Sidroc.

From one part of the abbey to another the Danes went, searching for the treasures they believed were hidden. Finding little of value, their wrath knew no bounds, for they well knew that not an abbey in the country was reputed to hold as great treasure as Crowland.

"To the tombs, then!" cried the leader. "No doubt there is treasure there."

At this the men grasped their weapons and used them to beat, and pry, and hammer, until they had broken open the tombs of the monastery, and rifled them of such ornaments and treasures as had been buried there.

Turgar reeled with sickening horror at the scene.

"Who is this?" cried one of the Danes, stopping for a moment in his work to look into Turgar's face. He raised his weapon; then he hesitated for a moment as he noted the Danish cloak.

At that moment Sidroc wheeled about. "Hold!" he shouted. "He is a Dane, and my attendant."

The fellow muttered a word of apology, though he still looked with unconvinced eyes at Turgar. But, in another moment, he turned to snatch up a jeweled bracelet which had been stolen from one of the tombs and dropped by the plunderer, and so the boy was forgotten.

At last the marauding band was convinced that they had found all that there was of value, and prepared to leave. But their lust for cruelty and revenge was not yet satisfied. Piling together the bodies of the slain monks, they set fire to the monastery and marched away to the sound of the crackling flames.

Turgar had hoped that he might at the last slip away from Sidroc and hide, but Sidroc seemed never to forget him for a moment.

As he marched away with the hated Danes and looked

back at the burning abbey his heart cried out, "Oh, my prior! Your fate is far happier than mine."

From Crowland the Danes marched to another abbey, which was also famed for its treasure, and there they repeated their terrifying attack. The inmates here had not been warned in advance, and the marauders were richly rewarded. They carried away great stores of gold and silver, rich vestments and robes, and these they loaded into wagons.

When they at last marched away, Count Sidroc was placed in charge of the rear wagon, into which the heaviest and richest of the plunder had been piled.

Across the marshes and through the forest roads they marched, the men singing wild snatches of songs of the Northland, stopping now and then to put their shoulder to a wagon which was mired, or to repair a broken harness which had given way under the tugging of the horses, for the roads were rough and stony in places, and soft and miry in others.

The men seemed never to tire, and to Turgar, unused to traveling long distances on foot, the way seemed endless.

But he clenched his fists and kept up, for he would not prove less hardy than these hated Danes—though he had had no food that day.

At length the line of march was halted long enough to eat a hasty meal, and Count Sidroc saw that Turgar was given his full share, so that when they again went on he felt much stronger and able to think more clearly.

Presently there was a great shouting ahead, and once more they stopped. Word was sent back that those in advance were crossing a stream, and that the bottom was rocky and the water deep. The men could wade or swim, but it was difficult to get the horses and wagons across.

Slowly the lines moved forward, until just as dusk began to creep upon them the wagon under Sidroc's care, the last of the line, reached the edge of the stream.

"We must hasten on or night will overtake us before we reach our boats," said Sidroc to the driver, who urged his horses forward.

Then, turning to a companion, Sidroc added, "The boats are just beyond the point of land which separates this troublesome stream from the main river. We must get this

booty on board our ships tonight. It is too valuable to run any risk of losing."

"You are right," his companion answered. "The prating priests cheated us at Crowland, or we would have had twice as much."

The wagon was now in the stream, and the men were just entering the water when they heard a sudden bump, and then a sound of grinding and wrenching, and the breaking of heavy wood.

Sidroc sprang forward with a great oath and splashed through the water. His companion followed. Turgar, who was just entering the water at Sidroc's side, looked up just in time to see the wagon lurch and throw the driver into the stream.

In a moment all was confusion. One of the wagon wheels had struck a boulder and been wrenched off, breaking the heavy axle. The men shouted and called to those ahead, and the men nearest came back to help. They swarmed into the water, trying to prop the wagon so that its treasure should not be lost in the stream. Each man was intent on trying to avert a worse disaster to the precious

load. Sidroc was in command, floundering here and there in the water, shouting orders, and hurrying the men, for darkness was settling down upon them.

"Now is my time," muttered Turgar under his breath.

He ran along the edge of the water as others were doing in their search for stones and timber with which to prop up the broken wagon. A little farther up the stream a great branch of a tree hung almost to the water's edge. Turgar reached it and hid behind its shelter for a moment to see whether his action had been noticed. But no one had thought of the boy in the excitement and turmoil.

Seeing this, he turned, and, still sheltered from sight by the branch, clambered up the bank and slipped in among the trees. Then he began to run, back, back, anywhere, away from the cruel Danes.

He knew nothing of the country he was in. He dared not make his way back to the road. It was rapidly growing dark.

He ran on and on, with nothing to guide his course except that as he ran the noise and shouting of the Danes grew less and less distinct, until at last he could hear it no more.

Exhausted, he at last dropped to the ground, weary, hungry, and footsore, and somewhat sheltered by the trunk of a great tree, he laid his head upon a hummock of earth and fell asleep.

CHAPTER X

Heribert

"Turgar! Turgar!" The name was spoken softly but insistently. The lad who called waited a moment. Then he took hold of the Danish cloak and pulled it a bit as he again called softly, "Turgar!"

Slowly Turgar's eyes opened, and he looked up—into the face of Heribert. "Why—" he began slowly, too dazed for the moment to realize where he was or what had happened. Then he leaped to his feet.

"Heribert!" he cried. "Where am I? Was it all a terrible dream? Tell me, Heribert! How came you here, or are all the horrors a part of my dream?"

"Softly," whispered Heribert, placing his hand upon Turgar's lips; and then he added, "No, Turgar, the horrors were all too real. But I told you that I knew the woods and

all the country hereabout, and after I had run away I was ashamed, and I did not go far. I climbed up into a tree, high up, and I pulled the branches close about me, so that I was sure I could not be seen, and then I watched. Oh, Turgar, I know what followed! I heard them in the chapel, murdering, and chopping and hewing at the tombs and the altar. I thought you all had been killed. I saw the smoke come curling over the abbey walls and through the windows, and I saw the Danes march away. And then, Turgar, I saw a boy in a Danish cloak amongst them, and I looked sharp and saw that it was you. Oh, Turgar, I cannot tell you how I felt then, for I knew that that was worse than death.

"When the Danes had gone far enough so that I dared, I climbed down from the tree. I could not save the abbey from the flames, though I tried; then I thought I would try to save you.

"I had no plan, but I followed, away off to one side through the woods. The voices of the Danes guided me, and I knew the road they had taken. I saw them reach the second abbey, and I watched them load their wagons with the treasure they had stolen. Then again I followed them,

till at last they came to the ford where the water was high and covered the rocks. Under cover of the darkness I drew nearer, and then I heard the tumult, and learned what had happened to one of the wagons. Then, oh, Turgar, a wonderful thought came to me!

"I went farther down the stream and swam across, and I listened on the farther side and learned that the Danes had concluded to spend the night at the river, for they feared to leave the treasure that was in the broken wagon. I was near enough in the darkness to hear them talk, and I learned just where their ships were at anchor—the ships upon which they intended to sail away with the treasure they had stolen. They were just across a strip of land, for there is the river. And I knew exactly, then, where I was. Oh, I could have shouted, but I dared not!

"I ran as fast as I could in the darkness until I came to the river, and there lay the Danish fleet. Five boats in all.

"Turgar!" cried Heribert, gripping his companion's arm, "I took my knife from my belt, placed it between my teeth, and swam out to where the boats were moored, and I cut the ropes that held them, one by one. I feared that there

would be Danes on board, but I saw no one, and as I cut the ropes the ships began floating away with the current, toward the sea."

As Heribert finished he sank down upon the ground, and Turgar was frightened, for he thought that Heribert had fainted.

"Heribert!" he called, as softly and intently as Heribert had called his own name a few moments before.

Heribert opened his eyes and sat up. "This is no time to collapse," he said. "There is still work ahead of us."

Turgar's eyes were gleaming. "And the Danish ships are gone!" he cried.

"Gone!" answered Heribert. "I know not how far, of course, but so long as I could see them the current carried them free of the banks, and the sea was not far distant."

"And how did you get back? How did you find me?" asked Turgar, scarcely able to breathe for excitement over Heribert's tale.

"That was an accident," replied Heribert, "although I am sure our good prior would not put it so. He would have said it was the providence of God. But I ran back because I

wanted to arouse Oswyn the Saxon, and tell him of the plight of the Danes. Perhaps he could yet gather enough men to attack them and get back the treasure that was stolen. And then, on my way back, just as the dawn broke, I saw what looked like a Danish cloak at the foot of a tree, and I stooped over it—and I saw your face. Oh, Turgar, I never can tell you how thankful I am that you escaped. How did you manage it?"

"They were all so busy with the broken wagon and the danger to the stolen treasure that they forgot me. I saw my chance and slipped away under cover of the darkness. But it was nothing—nothing, to what you did!"

"Ah!" said Heribert sorrowfully, "but you stayed and faced death, while I ran away."

"Don't, Heribert, don't!" cried Turgar. "You have more than made up for that. But come, you were on the way to the home of Oswyn. Can we not go on together?"

"Yes," said Heribert, "and we must hasten, for the Saxons must attack the Danes before they leave the ford, for now their arms are laid aside while they work."

"Come then," said Turgar, springing to his feet.

"It is not far," said Heribert.

Cautiously, yet as rapidly as possible, the two boys ran on, Heribert in the lead, for he seemed to find his way through the woods and marshes as a deer finds its way to water.

Once they stopped to gather a handful of wild berries, for neither one had tasted food for many hours, and they were weak and faint. Yet still they ran on.

At another time Heribert ran to one side to pull a strange looking plant. Rubbing the dirt from its long tuberous root with his tunic, he broke it in half and handed one piece to Turgar. "Eat it," he said, "it will strengthen you." And, eating the root as they went, they ran on.

They kept watch to right and to left, for they feared that straggling Danes might have stayed behind to search for further booty, but they saw no one.

Presently Heribert pointed ahead, and Turgar saw that they were approaching a cluster of buildings.

"That is the home of Oswyn," said Heribert, and in a few moments they staggered up to the door and pounded upon it with all their remaining strength.

When Oswyn answered the summons he was amazed to see upon his threshold two haggard, wild-eyed boys, one in a ragged, dirty tunic, the other in a crumpled Danish cloak.

"What means this?" he asked.

"Oh, Oswyn," cried Heribert, "I am Heribert, and this is Turgar. We are from the monastery at Crowland which the Danes have burned. Listen to my story; call your men; give us food and drink!"

The members of Oswyn's household gathered quickly about. Oswyn insisted upon each boy's drinking a glass of mead before they told their tale, and then all listened with breathless interest while they were told of the horrors of the raid upon Crowland and the second abbey, and then of the present plight of the Danes.

Hurriedly Oswyn sent out messengers and gathered together a band of armed men. The Saxons of those days were always prepared for battle, and in an incredibly short space of time they were upon the way.

Turgar and Heribert, strengthened by a hearty meal, accompanied them, to direct them by the shortest route back to the ford.

CHAPTER XI

A Reward and a Victory

The band of well-armed men had reached the road which led to the ford, not far distant, when Oswyn turned to the boys.

"You must not go farther," he said. "You have no weapons, no armor, and the fight is likely to be a bitter one." Then, seeing the deep disappointment in their faces, he added: "You have done your part and done it well. When you are grown you will be among the bravest and truest of the King's men. Save yourselves for that." Then he rode away.

Instantly the words of his beloved prior came back to Turgar's mind. "Save yourself, if you can. The country has need of such as you." And though it was a great disappointment to see the men ride forward while they remained

behind, the boys knew there was nothing for them to do but obey.

"Let us wait here," said Turgar. "I must learn how the battle goes. Oh, what would I not give to see the Danes when they discover that their ships are gone!"

"Our Saxons are bound to defeat them, if they are still at the ford. Then, I imagine, the Danes will retreat, thinking to get away on their ships. And the ships will be gone!" Turgar's eyes shone as he pictured this hoped-for outcome of the battle, and Heribert laughed aloud as he listened.

Then suddenly Turgar spoke again. "Heribert," he exclaimed, "I have an idea! The band of monks who left the abbey and took the treasure in their boat must still be with the hermit, Gyrth. Friar Joly is with them. Could we not tell them? They would join Oswyn's company. Could you find the hermitage?"

"I know it well," replied Heribert. "Come!"

Once more the boys ran through the woods, their hearts beating high with hope. Could they but send a band of men to reinforce Oswyn's forces they would not feel as though they were merely useless boys, left behind at the approach

of danger. "Sometimes boys can help, if they are brave," Turgar said to himself, unconsciously repeating the words he had spoken to his mother after she had told him of the Pope's words regarding his Prince.

Heribert seemed instinctively to know his way, and it was not long before they came to the hermitage. It was so well concealed that Turgar had no thought of its being near until they came directly upon it. "It is no wonder the prior thought it a good place for concealment!" he exclaimed.

In a moment the boys were surrounded by the monks, their familiar friends and companions of the monastery. Hurriedly, but sorrowfully, they told of the destruction of the abbey, and of the death of the prior and of the faithful few who remained with him. Turgar, in a few brief words, recounted his capture and escape, told of Heribert's bold adventure in cutting adrift the Danish ships, and then of Oswyn's company, now on their way to the ford.

It was a breathless account, given in the barest outlines, for their main message was, "Hasten, and join Oswyn's men!"

"Stay with Gyrth and the treasure," commanded Joly, as

the monks prepared to ride away. "Those of us who return," he added grimly, "will bring you news of the battle."

He stopped long enough to clasp Turgar's hand, and then Heribert's, and both boys offered a fervent prayer, as they saw him ride away, that he might once more be spared from the Danish sword.

The vast treasures of Crowland had been hastily buried and concealed by the monks as soon as they had reached the hermitage, so the boys felt that it would be easier to follow Friar Joly's command to remain behind than Oswyn's, for here there were vast treasures for them to guard!

And Gyrth, though a hermit, proved a most companionable man, for he was bound to admire these two boys who were proving themselves so fearless and efficient!

When the monks had gone he asked the boys for their story in detail, and when Turgar told of the cruel massacre in the monastery Gyrth covered his face with his hands. When he again looked up he said, "What a monstrous thing! But our good Prior Theodore has gone to his reward, and his faithful companions with him!"

Then he entertained the boys by telling them of the coming of the monks, and of the hasty burial of the treasure.

In the midst of his recital a step was heard outside the door. Instantly the three sprang to their feet, their hands upon the knives in their belts.

"Friends, I trust!" said a hearty voice, and a man stood in the doorway, his horse's bridle over his arm.

At sight of him Gyrth dropped upon his knee, and motioned to the boys to do the same, but Turgar needed no bidding, for he recognized in the unexpected visitor none other than "his Prince."

"I have ridden on in advance of my men," said Alfred, when he had bidden the three arise, "and by the merest chance I stumbled upon your well-hidden retreat."

Humbly Gyrth invited the Prince to enter, and hastily he set before him some of the food which had been carried from the monastery to the boat.

"You fare well," said the Prince, "and as I have ridden long and hard, your entertainment is most welcome."

"'Tis good fare, Your Honor, but dearly bought," replied

Gyrth sadly.

"What mean you?" asked Alfred.

"'Tis from the Abbey of Crowland, Your Honor, which the Danes have just destroyed," answered Gyrth.

"Destroyed! Crowland!" exclaimed Alfred, rising, and involuntarily putting his hand upon his sword.

"Came you not that way?" inquired Gyrth. "It is a terrible tale, but the lads here can tell you of it better than I, Your Honor, for they were witnesses to the attack."

Alfred resumed his seat and looked earnestly at the boys. A puzzled expression came into his eyes as his gaze rested upon Turgar. Then it cleared and he exclaimed, "Are you not the son of Wulstan, and brother of Withgar!"

"Do you remember me, Your Honor?" cried Turgar, and there was a joyous ring to his voice.

"I ought to," answered the Prince, "when I caused you so bad a fall. But you have grown much since then! And were you in the abbey when it was attacked?" he asked. "Tell me all about it."

So, once more, Turgar told in detail all the horrors of the massacre and of the burning of the abbey. He told how

the treasure was first carried away, and that it was brought to the hermitage of Gyrth where they now were. And then he described the striking down of the prior; the manner in which his own life had been spared by Count Sidroc; the accident at the ford; and his escape.

Through it all the Prince sat with bowed head and knitted brow, only glancing up now and then to study the face of the boy who told his story so simply and sadly, taking no credit to himself for anything.

"But Heribert found me," cried Turgar, "after he had cut adrift the ships belonging to the Danes. He must tell of that, himself!"

Then the Prince's eyes sought Heribert's face, and the boy, with flushed cheeks, but unflinching truth, told how he had run away from the abbey while Turgar had stayed, of his shame at having done so, and of all his later experiences up to the time of his finding Turgar. "Then together," he added, "we ran to the home of Oswyn and told him of the predicament the Danes were in at the ford, and Oswyn gathered a company of men and has even now gone to the ford to meet the Danes. Then Turgar suggested that we

come here and tell the monks. And now they have gone to join Oswyn's forces."

When the story was finished Alfred stood up and looked at the two boys who were on their feet before him. "You are brave lads," he said. As he spoke he caught up his horse's bridle.

Then, for an instant, he stopped. "Before I go," he added, "I want to prove to you that I value your bravery and your help."

With that the prince took from his own mantle a clasp which he fastened to the shoulder of Heribert's tunic, and from his arm he slipped a bracelet of gold and clasped it upon the arm of Turgar.

The next moment he sprang to his saddle, then turning, he said, "If you catch sight of my men anywhere about, direct them to the ford, and tell them to ride with all speed."

The boys had at first been too overwhelmed with happiness for speech, and indeed the Prince had given them no time for it. But now, as he was about to dash away, there came a sound of shouting and the tramping of many feet.

"The Danes are overthrown! They have paid the price of their bloodthirsty deeds!"

It was the shout of the monks, as they returned to the hermitage of Gyrth.

CHAPTER XII

Restoring the Treasure

Turgar and Heribert had been made happy beyond measure by the gifts of Prince Albert, and two more justly proud and delighted boys could not have been found in all the land of the Saxons.

The rout of the Danes at the ford had been complete. Oswyn's men had surprised them while their arms were laid aside, for they had worked long in trying to repair the broken wagon, and, finding it an impossible task, they had sent away for another wagon into which they were transferring the treasure when they were attacked.

They had, in a measure, recovered from their surprise, and had armed themselves, when the monks arrived with such shouting that it seemed as though this handful of men had been a whole army, for the Danes could hear but could

not see them. Before they emerged from the woods, the Danes, thinking that the Saxons were being fully reinforced, left their coveted treasure and ran toward the river, thinking to sail away in their ships and thus at least save their own lives.

But arriving at the point where their ships had been anchored, and finding that all were gone, the men lost all semblance of order and were destroyed by the pursuing Saxons, to a man.

There was great rejoicing in the neighborhood of Gyrth's little home when the monks returned and told their story, and no one rejoiced more heartily than the two boys who had witnessed the terrible cruelty of the Danish horde, and who had been the means of bringing about their punishment.

In spite of their rejoicing over this victory, however, it was a sad company of monks that made its way on the following morning from the hermitage back to the ruined abbey of Crowland. Turgar and Heribert accompanied them.

But they set about their task of burying, of clearing

away, and of rebuilding with the determination of men who found a grim satisfaction in building up what the hated Danes had destroyed, and to whom the hardest tasks were far better than idleness.

The boys found much that they could do to help, but how different were the days spent in clearing rubbish or mixing mortar for the masonry, from the former days when they had sung in the chapel choir, studied with the good Prior Theodore, or illumined the letters of a manuscript beside their beloved Friar Joly.

Turgar thought deeply of all these things as he toiled, for after the happenings of the last few days he would never again be the same carefree boy that he had been before. But in spite of the character of the hard work that he was now doing, he realized that a life of physical activity and even of danger, suited him better than the life of a student. He was happier when helping even to build walls and to fashion casements than when reciting Latin chants and translating books, so long as there were Danes in the land, and the people were subject to such attacks as he had witnessed.

"I am glad that I have learned to read and to write," he

said one day to Heribert, "but I could not be satisfied to stay here forever. When the abbey is rebuilt, I hope that I may go home."

"If you go, I shall wish to go home, too," answered Heribert.

Their days of peril and excitement had made the two boys fast friends, for each had recognized the true heroism of the other, and their admiration soon turned to a deep and lasting love.

After a moment Turgar asked, "Have you ever heard, Heribert, what became of the Danish ships after you cut them adrift?"

"Friar Joly told me only this morning," replied Heribert, "that some of Oswyn's men were sent to follow them down the river, and that they captured all of them. One had reached the sea, one had run its prow into a bank and was held fast, while the others were at the mouth of the river. They were all delivered over to the King."

"You will be rewarded for that someday," said Turgar.

"This is reward enough," replied Heribert simply, touching the clasp on the shoulder of his tunic.

Turgar laid his hand with a gesture of affection upon his bracelet. "I like to feel it there," he said, "and to know that it has been upon the arm of Prince Alfred. It gives me greater courage for every sort of duty. Though I hope," he continued, with a laugh, "that the duty may not always be that of mixing mortar."

Heribert laughed, too, as he started away with a bucket of the despised mortar upon his shoulder.

Slowly the abbey began to take on something of its former appearance, and at last the walls were completed, the altar replaced, and the work of restoration finished.

Then a day was set apart for certain of the monks to go to the hermitage of Gyrth and bring back the hidden treasure. Friar Joly headed the little band, and at his request Turgar and Heribert were permitted to go with them.

To the monks this return of the treasure was a solemn festival, but to the two boys it seemed more like an adventure, for they were glad of the change of occupation and of scene. Then, too, there was always the need of looking out for Danes, although none had been reported in that part of the country for some time.

Their trip to the hermitage was without special adventure, and the company was warmly greeted by Gyrth. After a simple ceremony, they began the actual work of unearthing the hidden treasure.

Friar Joly saw that the boys were equipped with tools for the work, and instructed them to use the greatest care so that no injury should be done the precious vessels.

"Here is the spot," said Turgar, as he and Heribert reached a certain tree. "Under this gnarled branch, the friar told me that we would find certain of the pieces." He knelt as he spoke and pushed aside the leaves and leaf mold, revealing beneath it the unmistakable signs of freshly turned earth.

Then the boys began digging, but the treasure was not deeply covered.

"Carefully now!" cried Heribert. Then, together, they worked with their hands to remove the remaining earth.

"Ah," exclaimed Turgar a moment later, holding up a heavy golden goblet, "this seems always to fall to my lot, and I am glad!" Then, as they worked, he told Heribert the story of King Arthur and his Knights, as Friar Joly had told

it to him, though he knew the story more fully now, for he had read about it, and had asked many questions since he had first heard the tale.

"And this," he added, as he completed his story, "once belonged to King Arthur. I wonder if Sir Lancelot or Sir Galahad ever drank from it."

"I would like to have lived in those days, and to have followed King Arthur," said Heribert. "I wonder if there were Danes to fight in those days, too."

"There were Saxons to fight in those days," replied Turgar, with a laugh, "and, from what I am told, they must have been nearly as bad as the Danes."

"How so?" exclaimed Heribert warmly, for Heribert had spent less time in study than Turgar.

"The early Saxons, you know, were heathen, and they worshiped the gods of Asgard, just as the Danes do now. They, too, came from the Northland, and were fierce pirates as well as terrible fighters."

"Then King Arthur and his Knights were not Saxons?" asked Heribert.

"No, they were Britons, and the Saxons conquered them

and settled upon their land."

"Well, if that is the case," responded Heribert, "I think I am quite as well satisfied to fight with Prince Alfred against the Danes. I have no love for the Britons. But I don't like your comparing the Saxons with the Danes!"

"It isn't a nice comparison, I admit," agreed Turgar, "but look it up for yourself. The books in the abbey tell about it. They say that it is the Christian religion that has changed the nature of the Saxons, and that it would do the same for the Danes if they would accept it."

"That is hard to believe of the Danes," replied Heribert, as he replaced the last shovelful of earth, and Turgar, gathering up his share of the treasure, responded, "That is true; but it probably is just what the Britons said about the Saxons long years ago."

CHAPTER XIII

"My King"

The monastery at Crowland had been rebuilt, so far as it had been possible for the monks to restore it, and its treasures had been returned.

Once more the candles burned upon its altars, and psalms and anthems were chanted. The usual routine of monastery life was again established, though with sadly diminished ranks.

The boys resumed the study of lessons and tried faithfully to keep their minds upon translations and texts, but it was difficult for both.

"I tell you, Turgar," Heribert said one day, "I am no student, and there is no use in trying to make me one. I would far rather handle a spear than a paint brush, and even during prayers my mind is off with the soldiers."

"It is hard to settle down to life in the abbey after having that experience with the Danes," responded Turgar. "I have always said I was too active to lead the life of a monk. If I were older I would not remain here another day. But what can two boys do?"

"Well, sometimes they can do quite a bit, when they get a chance," replied Heribert significantly.

"Yes, that is true," assented Turgar. "But for myself, I have concluded to stay and learn all that I can in the abbey until I am old enough to serve the Prince. I hope our country may not always have the Danes to fight, and in times of peace the knowledge we gain here will be good to have."

"I suppose you are right," answered Heribert, "and I shall try not to waste my time while I must stay."

But neither boy dreamed how soon his quiet life at the abbey was to come to an end.

A few days later there was great commotion in the abbey, caused by the arrival of a solitary soldier. He proved to be a young chief of the Saxon army, bearing news of a recent battle. He was dressed in shining armor of gilded scales from which the rays of the western sun were reflected

in countless flashes of light. His sheathed sword hung by his side. On his arms were many bracelets of gold, and a golden torque was about his neck. So splendid a figure the boys had never seen. Even Prince Alfred was not so splendidly equipped when he rode to the hermitage of Gyrth.

The monks gathered quickly about the newly arrived warrior, for they felt sure that he must be the bearer of important news.

He did not wait to be questioned. Raising his shining helmet, he said, "I have come from battle. Ethelred, the King, is sorely wounded."

The faces of the monks grew pale; then their cheeks flushed, and their eyes flashed. "Where are the Danes?" demanded Friar Joly.

"They have fled to their fortified stronghold by the river. But the victory is with the Saxons, and only a remnant of the Danes escaped."

"Praise God for that!" exclaimed the monks earnestly and reverently.

Then, briefly, the young chief told of the events of the battle: how Ethelred had held solemn services in his tent

before he led his division of the army into battle: how the young Prince Alfred had stood in the thickest of the fight, encouraging and strengthening the men of his division: of how, together, the Saxons had overcome the heathen horde and driven them back with great slaughter. It was a mighty victory for the Saxons—but Ethelred, their King, was badly wounded.

After the soldier had ridden away to bear his message to other places, his news remained the one topic of conversation at the abbey, and there was great rejoicing at the overthrow of the Danes.

A few days later, as Turgar was engaged upon his lessons with Friar Joly, he suddenly asked, "Do you think the Danes will dare make another attack? Are they not fully conquered now?"

Friar Joly shook his head. "The Danes are like swarms of troublesome insects," he said. "When one swarm is crushed, another comes from the north to take its place."

Turgar had seldom seen the jovial friar so downcast, and he resumed his translation with a feeling of impending trouble.

He was struggling with a Latin phrase, when the friar said, "Turgar, listen. Something impels me to tell you what is in my heart. I have thought much about these matters, and prayed much. I believe that someday Alfred will be made King of the Saxons. He is young now, but, young as he is, he is the greatest man amongst us. He is a thinker. He is not ruled by passion. If he becomes ruler in fact, he will have a terrible task before him, but I believe that in the end he will conquer the Danes, and bring peace to this sorely afflicted land. It will be a great victory, and he will be a great King.

"I do not know why I tell you this," Friar Joly added, as he looked down into Turgar's shining eyes.

"Perhaps," answered Turgar softly, "it is because I love the Prince so well."

A few weeks later another messenger arrived at the monastery. He, too, was a soldier, but not dressed in such wonderful armor. But as he rode into the court, Turgar, who was crossing it, looked up, and then gave a great cry of joy. "Withgar!"

Truly it was Withgar, his brother, come to Crowland to

bring news of great importance. Turgar ran to him, and Withgar sprang from his horse and folded the boy in a strong embrace. He told him news of home, of Wulstan, of Gyneth, and even of Wulf his dog. Then, as the monks crowded about, he addressed the whole company.

"I have sad news to unfold," he said, "for Ethelred, the King, is dead." There was a hush over all the band, as Withgar gave some details of the King's illness, resulting from the wound he had received in the battle with the Danes.

"A successor has been chosen," Withgar continued, and all waited in breathless silence as he added, "Prince Alfred will succeed him."

"And not his eldest son!" exclaimed the prior.

"No," said Withgar, "the times are too filled with peril for a young and untried ruler to be placed in power. Alfred has for many years been ruler in all but name. Now he is to be ruler in fact. It was the wish of his father, King Ethelwolf, that Albert, his youngest son, should succeed Ethelred, his oldest son, and when he was little more than a babe the Pope declared Albert would yet be King."

Turgar's eyes sought those of Friar Joly, as he whispered to himself, "My Prince! And now he is a King!"

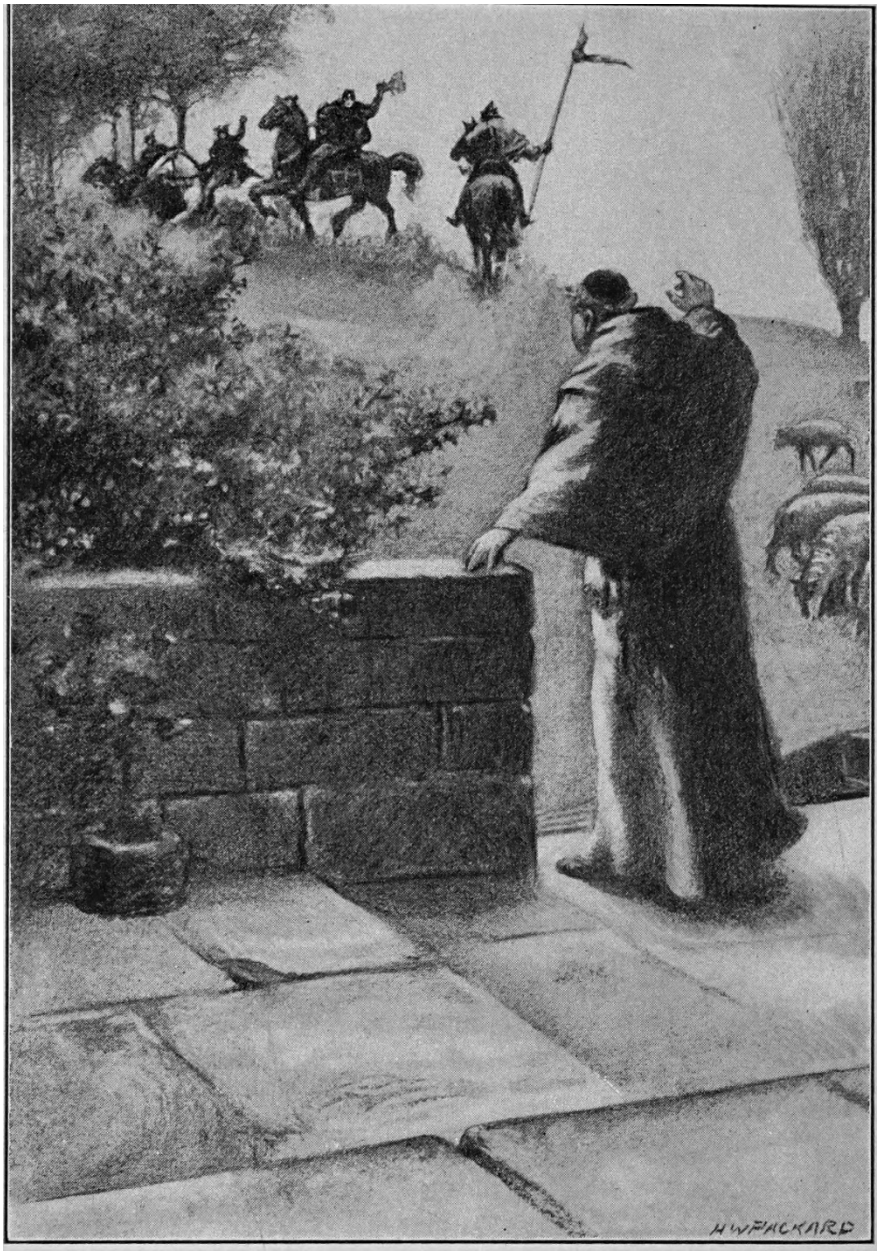
When the voices, raised in comment and in exclamation, had somewhat subsided, Withgar spoke again. "I have yet another message to deliver," he said, "and one that I count it a joy to be able to bring in person. I come directly from the court of King Alfred, and I am commissioned to return there with two youths whose names are Turgar and Heribert."

The two boys could scarcely believe their ears. What could it mean?

"The new King had need of pages," continued Withgar, while his eyes rested upon Turgar's flushed face, "and, first of all, he has named these two."

A murmur of approval went up from the company of monks. Turgar felt such a surging joy that at first he could not speak. At last he exclaimed, "But how did he happen to choose us?"

"Such things do not happen, Turgar," said Friar Joly, whose face was wreathed in smiles over the happiness of his favorite pupil.



They found it hard to bid good-bye to the monks

"King Alfred told me a story," said Withgar, "of the work you two boys did the night the monastery was burned. He called it 'man's work,' and he said that you were the sort of boys he wanted to have about him, and to have trained for his service."

"Heribert! can you believe it?" cried Turgar, grasping his friend's arm.

"It seems altogether too good to be true," answered Heribert with shining eyes.

But when, at Withgar's bidding, they went to prepare themselves for the journey to the court, they found it hard to bid good-bye to the monks who had been their friends for so many months, and with whom they shared so many sad and tender memories. It was especially hard to take leave of Friar Joly, but, as they rode away, his was the last face that they saw, and his the last voice that they heard, calling, "God be with you, my boys. I know you will be faithful pages to Alfred the King."

THE END.