ANDREW LANG

A MONK OF FIFE

EXTENDED EDITION

A Monk Of Fife

Being The Chronicle Written By Norman Leslie Of Pitcullo, Concerning Marvellous Deeds That Befell In The Realm Of France, In The Years Of Our Redemption, Mccccxxix-Xxxi. Now First Done Into English Out Of The French

Andrew Lang

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www.jazzybee-verlag.de
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

ANDREW LANG (1844-1912)

Biographical Sketch from "Portraits And Sketches" by Edmund Gosse

INVITED to note down some of my recollections of Andrew Lang, I find myself suspended between the sudden blow of his death and the slow development of memory, now extending in unbroken friendship over thirty-five years. The magnitude and multitude of Lang's performances, public and private, during that considerable length of time almost paralyse expression; it is difficult to know where to begin or where to stop. Just as his written works are so extremely numerous as to make a pathway through them a formidable task in bibliography, no one book standing out predominant, so his character, intellectual and moral, was full -of so many apparent inconsistencies, so many pitfalls for rash assertion, so many queer caprices of impulse, that in a whole volume of analysis, which would be tedious, one could scarcely do justice to them all. I will venture to put down, almost at haphazard, what I remember that seems to me to have been overlooked, or inexactly stated, by those who wrote, often very sympathetically, at the moment of his death, always premising that I speak rather of a Lang of from 1877 to 1890, when I saw him very frequently, than of a Lang whom younger people met chiefly in Scotland.

When he died, all the newspapers were loud in proclaiming his "versatility." But I am not sure that he was not the very opposite of versatile. I take "versatile" to mean changeable, fickle, constantly ready to alter direction with the weather-cock. The great instance of versatility in literature is Ruskin, who adopted diametrically different views of the same subject at different times of his life, and defended them with equal ardour. To be versatile seems to be unsteady, variable. But Lang was through his long career singularly unaltered; he never changed his point of view; what he liked and admired as a youth he liked and admired as an elderly man. It is true that his interests and knowledge were vividly drawn along a surprisingly large

number of channels, but while there was abundance there does not seem to me to have been versatility. If a huge body of water boils up from a crater, it may pour down a dozen paths, but these will always be the same; unless there is an earthquake, new cascades will not form nor old rivulets run dry. In some authors earthquakes do take place as in Tolstoy, for instance, and in S. T. Coleridge but nothing of this kind was ever manifest in Lang, who was extraordinarily multiform, yet in his varieties strictly consistent from Oxford to the grave. As this is not generally perceived, I will take the liberty of expanding my view of his intellectual development.

To a superficial observer in late life the genius of Andrew Lang had the characteristics which we are in the habit of identifying with precocity. Yet he had not been, as a writer, precocious in his youth. One slender volume of verses represents all that he published in book-form before his thirty-fifth year. No doubt we shall learn in good time what he was doing before he flashed upon the world of journalism in all his panoply of graces, in 1876, at the close of his Merton fellowship. He was then, at all events, the finest finished product of his age, with the bright armour of Oxford burnished on his body to such a brilliance that humdrum eyes could hardly bear the radiance of it. Of the terms behind, of the fifteen years then dividing him from St. Andrews, we know as yet but little; they were years of insatiable acquirement, incessant reading, and talking, and observing gay preparation for a life to be devoted, as no other life in our time has been, to the stimulation of other people's observation and talk and reading. There was no cloistered virtue about the bright and petulant Merton don. He was already flouting and jesting, laughing with Ariosto in the sunshine, performing with a snap of his fingers tasks which might break the back of a pedant, and concealing

under an affectation of carelessness a literary ambition which knew no definite bounds.

In those days, and when he appeared for the first time in London, the poet was paramount in him. Jowett is said to have predicted that he would be greatly famous in this line, but I know not what evidence Jowett had before him. Unless I am much mistaken, it was not until Lang left Balliol that his peculiar bent became obvious. Up to that time he had been a promiscuous browser upon books, much occupied, moreover, in the struggle with ancient Greek, and immersed in Aristotle and Homer. But in the early days of his settlement at Merton he began to concentrate his powers, and I think there were certain influences which were instant and far-reaching. Among them one was pre-eminent. When Andrew Lang came up from St. Andrews he had found Matthew Arnold occupying the ancient chair of poetry at Oxford. He was a listener at some at least of the famous lectures which, in 1865, were collected as "Essays in Criticism"; while one of his latest experiences as a Balliol undergraduate was hearing Matthew Arnold lecture on the study of Celtic literature. His conscience was profoundly stirred by "Culture and Anarchy" (1869); his sense of prose-form largely determined by "Friendship's Garland" (1871). I have no hesitation in saying that the teaching and example of Matthew Arnold prevailed over all other Oxford influences upon the intellectual nature of Lang, while, although I think that his personal acquaintance with Arnold was very slight, yet in his social manner there was, in early days, not a little imitation of Arnold's aloofness and superfine delicacy of address. It was unconscious, of course, and nothing would have enraged Lang more than to have been accused of "imitating Uncle Matt."

The structure which his own individuality now began to build on the basis supplied by the learning of Oxford, and in

particular by the study of the Greeks, and "dressed" by courses of Matthew Arnold, was from the first eclectic. Lang eschewed as completely what was not sympathetic to him as he assimilated what was attractive to him. Those who speak of his "versatility" should recollect what large tracts of the literature of the world, and even of England, existed outside the dimmest apprehension of Andrew Lang. It is, however, more useful to consider what he did apprehend; and there were two English books, published in his Oxford days, which permanently impressed him: one of these was "The Earthly Paradise," the other D. G. Rossetti's " Poems." In after years he tried to divest himself of the traces of these volumes, but he had fed upon their honey-dew and it had permeated his veins.

Not less important an element in the garnishing of a mind already prepared for it by academic and aesthetic studies was the absorption of the romantic part of French literature. Andrew Lang in this, as in everything else, was selective. He dipped into the wonderful lucky-bag of France wherever he saw the glitter of romance. Hence his approach, in the early seventies, was threefold: towards the mediaeval *lais* and *chansons*, towards the sixteenth-century Pleiade, and towards the school of which Victor Hugo was the leader in the nineteenth century. For a long time Ronsard was Lang's poet of intensest predilection; and I think that his definite ambition was to be the Ronsard of modern England, introducing a new poetical dexterity founded on a revival of pure humanism. He had in those days what he lost, or at least dispersed, in the weariness and growing melancholia of later years a splendid belief in poetry as a part of the renown of England, as a heritage to be received in reverence from our fathers, and to be passed on, if possible, in a brighter flame. This honest and beautiful ambition to shine as one of the permanent benefactors to national verse, in the attitude so nobly

sustained four hundred years ago by Du Bellay and Ronsard, was unquestionably felt by Andrew Lang through his bright intellectual April, and supported him from Oxford times until 1882, when he published " Helen of Troy." The cool reception of that epic by the principal judges of poetry caused him acute disappointment, and from that time forth he became less eager and less serious as a poet, more and more petulantly expending his wonderful technical gift on fugitive subjects. And here again, when one comes to think of it, the whole history repeated itself, since in " Helen of Troy " Lang simply suffered as Ronsard had done in the "Franciade." But the fact that 1882 was his year of crisis, and the tomb of his brightest ambition, must be recognised by every one who closely followed his fortunes at that time. Lang's habit of picking out of literature and of life the plums of romance, and these alone, comes to be, to the dazzled observer of his extraordinarily vivid intellectual career, the principal guiding line. This determination to dwell, to the exclusion of all other sides of any question, on its romantic side is alone enough to rebut the charge of versatility. Lang was in a sense encyclopaedic; but the vast dictionary of his knowledge had blank pages, or pages pasted down, on which he would not, or could not, read what experience had printed. Absurd as it sounds, there was always something maidenly about his mind, and he glossed over ugly matters, sordid and dull conditions, so that they made no impression whatever upon him. He had a trick, which often exasperated his acquaintances, of declaring that he had " never heard " of things that everybody else was very well aware of. He had " never heard the name " of people he disliked, of books that he thought tiresome, of events that bored him; but, more than this, he used the formula for things and persons whom he did not wish to discuss. I remember meeting in the street a famous professor, who advanced with uplifted hands, and greeted me with " What do you think Lang says now? That

he has never heard of Pascal! " This merely signified that Lang, not interested (at all events for the moment) in Pascal nor in the professor, thus closed at once all possibility of discussion.

It must not be forgotten that we have lived to see him, always wonderful indeed, and always passionately devoted to perfection and purity, but worn, tired, harassed by the unceasing struggle, the lifelong slinging of sentences from that inexhaustible ink-pot. In one of the most perfect of his poems, " Natural Theology," Lang speaks of Cagn, the great hunter, who once was kind and good, but who was spoiled by fighting many things. Lang was never " spoiled," but he was injured; the surface of the radiant coin was rubbed by the vast and interminable handling of journalism. He was jaded by the toil of writing many things. Hence it is not possible but that those who knew him intimately in his later youth and early middle-age should prefer to look back at those years when he was the freshest, the most exhilarating figure in living literature, when a star seemed to dance upon the crest of his already silvering hair. Baudelaire exclaimed of Theophile Gautier: " Homme heureux! homme digne d'envie! il n'a jamais aimé que le Beau!" and of Andrew Lang in those brilliant days the same might have been said. As long as he had confidence in beauty he was safe and strong; and much that, with all affection and all respect, we must admit was rasping and disappointing in his attitude to literature in his later years, seems to have been due to a decreasing sense of confidence in the intellectual sources of beauty. It is dangerous, in the end it must be fatal, to sustain the entire structure of life and thought on the illusions of romance. But that was what Lang did he built his house upon the rainbow.

The charm of Andrew Lang's person and company was founded upon a certain lightness, an essential gentleness and elegance which were relieved by a sharp touch; just as a very dainty fruit may be preserved from mawkishness by something delicately acid in the rind of it. His nature was slightly inhuman; it was unwise to count upon its sympathy beyond a point which was very easily reached in social intercourse. If any simple soul showed an inclination, in eighteenth-century phrase, to " repose on the bosom " of Lang, that support was immediately withdrawn, and the confiding one fell among thorns. Lang was like an Angora cat, whose gentleness and soft fur, and general aspect of pure amenity, invite to caresses, which are suddenly met by the outspread paw with claws awake. This uncertain and freakish humour was the embarrassment of his friends, who, however, were preserved from despair by the fact that no malice was meant, and that the weapons were instantly sheathed again in velvet. Only, the instinct to give a sudden slap, half in play, half in fretful caprice, was incorrigible. No one among Lang's intimate friends but had suffered from this feline impulse, which did not spare even the serenity of Robert Louis Stevenson. But, tiresome as it sometimes was, this irritable humour seldom cost Lang a friend who was worth preserving. Those who really knew him recognised that he was always shy and usually tired.

His own swift spirit never brooded upon an offence, and could not conceive that any one else should mind what he himself minded so little and forgot so soon. Impressions swept over him very rapidly, and injuries passed completely out of his memory. Indeed, all his emotions were too fleeting, and in this there was something fairy-like; quick and keen and blithe as he was, he did not seem altogether like an ordinary mortal, nor could the appeal to gross human experience be made to him with much chance of success. This, doubtless, is why almost all imaginative

literature which is founded upon the darker parts of life, all squalid and painful tragedy, all stories that " don't end well" all religious experiences, all that is not superficial and romantic, was irksome to him. He tried sometimes to reconcile his mind to the consideration of real life; he concentrated his matchless powers on it; but he always disliked it. He could persuade himself to be partly just to Ibsen or Hardy or Dostoieffsky, but what he really enjoyed was Dumas pêre, because that fertile romance-writer rose serene above the phenomena of actual human experience. We have seen more of this type in English literature than the Continental nations have in theirs, but even we have seen no instance of its strength and weakness so eminent as Andrew Lang. He was the fairy in our midst, the wonder-working, incorporeal, and tricksy fay of letters, who paid for all his wonderful gifts and charms by being not quite a man of like passions with the rest of us. In some verses which he scribbled to R.L.S. and threw away, twenty years ago, he acknowledged this unearthly character, and, speaking of the depredations of his kin, he said:

Faith, they might steal me, w? ma will,
And, ken'd I ony fairy hill
I#d lay me down there, snod and still,
Their land to win;
For, man, I maistly had my fill
O' this world's din

His wit had something disconcerting in its impishness. Its rapidity and sparkle were dazzling, but it was not quite human; that is to say, it conceded too little to the exigencies of flesh and blood. If we can conceive a seraph being fanny, it would be in the manner of Andrew Lang. Moreover, his wit usually danced over the surface of things, and rarely penetrated them. In verbal parry, in ironic misunderstanding, in breathless agility of topsy-turvy

movement, Lang was like one of Milton's " yellow-skirted fays," sporting with the helpless, moon-bewildered traveller. His wit often had a depressing, a humiliating effect, against which one's mind presently revolted. I recollect an instance which may be thought to be apposite: I was passing through a phase of enthusiasm for Emerson, whom Lang very characteristically detested, and I was so ill-advised as to show him the famous epigram called " Brahma." Lang read it with a snort of derision (it appeared to be new to him), and immediately he improvised this parody:

If the wild bowler thinks he bowls,
Or if the batsman thinks he's bowled,
They know not, poor misguided souls,
They, too, shall perish unconsoled.
I am the batsman and the bat,
I am the bowler and the ball,
The umpire, the pavilion cat,
The roller, pitch and stumps, and all

This would make a pavilion cat laugh, and I felt that Emerson was done for. But when Lang had left me, and I was once more master of my mind, I reflected that the parody was but a parody, wonderful for its neatness and quickness, and for its seizure of what was awkward in the roll of Emerson's diction, but essentially superficial. However, what would wit be if it were profound? I must leave it there, feeling that I have not explained why Lang's extraordinary drollery in conversation so often left on the memory a certain sensation of distress.

But this was not the characteristic of his humour at its best, as it was displayed throughout the happiest period of his work. If, as seems possible, it is as an essayist that he will ultimately take his place in English literature, this element

will continue to delight fresh generations of enchanted readers. I cannot imagine that the preface to his translation of " Theocritus," "Letters to Dead Authors," "In the Wrong Paradise," " Old Friends," and " Essays in Little " will ever lose their charm; but future admirers will have to pick their way to them through a tangle of history and anthropology and mythology, where there may be left no perfume and no sweetness. I am impatient to see this vast mass of writing reduced to the limits of its author's delicate, true, but somewhat evasive and ephemeral. genius. However, as far as the circumstances of his temperament permitted, Andrew Lang has left with us the memory of one of our most surprising contemporaries, a man of letters who laboured without cessation from boyhood to the grave, who pursued his ideal with indomitable activity and perseverance, and who was never betrayed except by the loftiness of his own endeavour. Lang's only misfortune was not to be completely in contact with life, and his work will survive exactly where he was most faithful to his innermost illusions.

A MONK OF FIFE

TO HENRIETTA LANG

My Dear Aunt,—To you, who read to me stories from the History of France, before I could read them for myself, this Chronicle is affectionately dedicated.

Yours ever,

ANDREW LANG.

PREFACE

Norman Leslie of Pitcullo, whose narrative the reader has in his hands, refers more than once to his unfinished Latin Chronicle. That work, usually known as “The Book of Pluscarden,” has been edited by Mr. Felix Skene, in the series of “Historians of Scotland” (vol. vii.). To Mr. Skene’s introduction and notes the curious are referred. Here it may suffice to say that the original MS. of the Latin Chronicle is lost; that of six known manuscript copies none is older than 1480; that two of these copies contain a Prologue; and that the Prologue tells us all that has hitherto been known about the author.

The date of the lost Latin original is 1461, as the author himself avers. He also, in his Prologue, states the purpose of his work. At the bidding of an unnamed Abbot of Dunfermline, who must have been Richard Bothwell, he is to abbreviate “The Great Chronicle,” and “bring it up to date,” as we now say. He is to recount the events of his own time, “with certain other miraculous deeds, which I who write have had cognisance of, seen, and heard, beyond the bounds of this realm. Also, lastly, concerning a certain marvellous Maiden, who recovered the kingdom of France out of the hands of the tyrant, Henry, King of England. The aforesaid Maiden I saw, was conversant with, and was in her company in her said recovery of France, and till her life’s end I was ever present.” After “I was ever present” the copies add “etc.,” perhaps a sign of omission. The monkish author probably said more about the heroine of his youth, and this the copyists have chosen to leave out.

The author never fulfilled this promise of telling, in Latin, the history of the Maid as her career was seen by a Scottish ally and friend. Nor did he ever explain how a Scot, and a foe of England, succeeded in being present at the Maiden's martyrdom in Rouen. At least he never fulfilled his promise, as far as any of the six Latin MSS. of his Chronicle are concerned. Every one of these MSS.—doubtless following their incomplete original—breaks off short in the middle of the second sentence of Chapter xxxii. Book xii. Here is the brief fragment which that chapter contains:—

"In those days the Lord stirred up the spirit of a certain marvellous Maiden, born on the borders of France, in the duchy of Lorraine, and the see of Toul, towards the Imperial territories. This Maiden her father and mother employed in tending sheep; daily, too, did she handle the distaff; man's love she knew not; no sin, as it is said, was found in her, to her innocence the neighbours bore witness . . . "

Here the Latin narrative of the one man who followed Jeanne d'Arc through good and evil to her life's end breaks off abruptly. The author does not give his name; even the name of the Abbot at whose command he wrote "is left blank, as if it had been erased in the original" (Mr. Felix Skene, "Liber Pluscardensis," in the "Historians of Scotland," vii. p. 18). It might be guessed that the original fell into English hands between 1461 and 1489, and that they blotted out the name of the author, and destroyed a most valuable record of their conqueror and their victim, Jeanne d'Arc.

Against this theory we have to set the explanation here offered by Norman Leslie, our author, in the Ratisbon Scots College's French MS., of which this work is a translation. Leslie never finished his Latin Chronicle, but he wrote, in

French, the narrative which follows, decorating it with the designs which Mr. Selwyn Image has carefully copied in black and white.

Possessing this information, we need not examine Mr. W. F. Skene's learned but unconvincing theory that the author of the fragmentary Latin work was one Maurice Drummond, out of the Lennox. The hypothesis is that of Mr. W. F. Skene, and Mr. Felix Skene points out the difficulties which beset the opinion of his distinguished kinsman. Our Monk is a man of Fife.

As to the veracity of the following narrative, the translator finds it minutely corroborated, wherever corroboration could be expected, in the large mass of documents which fill the five volumes of M. Quicherat's "Procès de Jeanne d'Arc," in contemporary chronicles, and in MSS. more recently discovered in French local or national archives. Thus Charlotte Boucher, Barthélemy Barrette, Noiroufle, the Scottish painter, and his daughter Elliot, Capdorat, ay, even Thomas Scott, the King's Messenger, were all real living people, traces of whose existence, with some of their adventures, survive faintly in brown old manuscripts. Louis de Coutes, the pretty page of the Maid, a boy of fourteen, may have been hardly judged by Norman Leslie, but he certainly abandoned Jeanne d'Arc at her first failure.

So, after explaining the true position and character of our monkish author and artist, we leave his book to the judgment which it has tarried for so long.

CHAPTER I—HOW THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN, AND HOW NORMAN LESLIE FLED OUT OF FIFE

It is not of my own will, nor for my own glory, that I, Norman Leslie, sometime of Pitcullo, and in religion called Brother Norman, of the Order of Benedictines, of Dunfermline, indite this book. But on my coming out of France, in the year of our Lord One thousand four hundred and fifty-nine, it was laid on me by my Superior, Richard, Abbot in Dunfermline, that I should abbreviate the Great Chronicle of Scotland, and continue the same down to our own time. {1} He bade me tell, moreover, all that I knew of the glorious Maid of France, called Jeanne la Pucelle, in whose company I was, from her beginning even till her end.

Obedient, therefore, to my Superior, I wrote, in this our cell of Pluscarden, a Latin book containing the histories of times past, but when I came to tell of matters wherein, as Maro says, “pars magna fui,” I grew weary of such rude, barbarous Latin as alone I am skilled to indite, for of the manner Ciceronian, as it is now practised by clerks of Italy, I am not master: my book, therefore, I left unfinished, breaking off in the middle of a sentence. Yet, considering the command laid on me, in the end I am come to this resolve, namely, to write the history of the wars in France, and the history of the blessed Maid (so far at least as I was an eyewitness and partaker thereof), in the French language, being the most commonly understood of all men, and the most delectable. It is not my intent to tell all the story of the Maid, and all her deeds and sayings, for the world would scarcely contain the books that should be written. But what I myself beheld, that I shall relate, especially concerning certain accidents not known to the general, by reason of which ignorance the whole truth can scarce be understood. For, if Heaven visibly sided with France and the Maid, no less did Hell most manifestly take part with our old enemy of England. And often in this life, if we look not the more closely, and with the eyes of faith, Sathanas shall seem to have the upper hand in the battle,

with whose very imp and minion I myself was conversant, to my sorrow, as shall be shown.

First, concerning myself I must say some few words, to the end that what follows may be the more readily understood.

I was born in the kingdom of Fife, being, by some five years, the younger of two sons of Archibald Leslie, of Pitcullo, near St. Andrews, a cadet of the great House of Rothes. My mother was an Englishwoman of the Debatable Land, a Storey of Netherby, and of me, in our country speech, it used to be said that I was “a mother’s bairn.” For I had ever my greatest joy in her, whom I lost ere I was sixteen years of age, and she in me: not that she favoured me unduly, for she was very just, but that, within ourselves, we each knew who was nearest to her heart. She was, indeed, a saintly woman, yet of a merry wit, and she had great pleasure in reading of books, and in romances. Being always, when I might, in her company, I became a clerk insensibly, and without labour I could early read and write, wherefore my father was minded to bring me up for a churchman. For this cause, I was some deal despised by others of my age, and, yet more, because from my mother I had caught the Southron trick of the tongue. They called me “English Norman,” and many a battle I have fought on that quarrel, for I am as true a Scot as any, and I hated the English (my own mother’s people though they were) for taking and holding captive our King, James I. of worthy memory. My fancy, like that of most boys, was all for the wars, and full of dreams concerning knights and ladies, dragons and enchanters, about which the other lads were fain enough to hear me tell what I had read in romances, though they mocked at me for reading. Yet they oft came ill speed with their jests, for my brother had taught me to use my hands: and to hold a sword I was instructed by our smith, who had been prentice to Harry Gow, the Burn-the-

Wind of Perth, and the best man at his weapon in broad Scotland. From him I got many a trick of fence that served my turn later.

But now the evil time came when my dear mother sickened and died, leaving to me her memory and her great chain of gold. A bitter sorrow is her death to me still; but anon my father took to him another wife of the Bethunes of Blebo. I blame myself, rather than this lady, that we dwelt not happily in the same house. My father therefore, still minded to make me a churchman, sent me to Robert of Montrose's new college that stands in the South Street of St. Andrews, a city not far from our house of Pitcullo. But there, like a wayward boy, I took more pleasure in the battles of the "nations"—as of Fife against Galloway and the Lennox; or in games of catch-pull, football, wrestling, hurling the bar, archery, and golf—than in divine learning—as of logic, and Aristotle his analytics.

Yet I loved to be in the scriptorium of the Abbey, and to see the good Father Peter limning the blessed saints in blue, and red, and gold, of which art he taught me a little. Often I would help him to grind his colours, and he instructed me in the laying of them on paper or vellum, with white of egg, and in fixing and burnishing the gold, and in drawing flowers, and figures, and strange beasts and devils, such as we see grinning from the walls of the cathedral. In the French language, too, he learned me, for he had been taught at the great University of Paris; and in Avignon had seen the Pope himself, Benedict XIII., of uncertain memory.

Much I loved to be with Father Peter, whose lessons did not irk me, but jumped with my own desire to read romances in the French tongue, whereof there are many. But never could I have dreamed that, in days to come, this art of painting would win me my bread for a while, and that a

Leslie of Pitcullo should be driven by hunger to so base and contemned a handiwork, unworthy, when practised for gain, of my blood.

Yet it would have been well for me to follow even this craft more, and my sports and pastimes less: Dickon Melville had then escaped a broken head, and I, perchance, a broken heart. But youth is given over to vanities that war against the soul, and, among others, to that wicked game of the Golf, now justly cried down by our laws, {2} as the mother of cursing and idleness, mischief and wastery, of which game, as I verily believe, the devil himself is the father.

It chanced, on an October day of the year of grace Fourteen hundred and twenty-eight, that I was playing myself at this accursed sport with one Richard Melville, a student of like age with myself. We were evenly matched, though Dickon was tall and weighty, being great of growth for his age, whereas I was of but scant inches, slim, and, as men said, of a girlish countenance. Yet I was well skilled in the game of the Golf, and have driven a Holland ball the length of an arrow-flight, there or thereby. But wherefore should my sinful soul be now in mind of these old vanities, repented of, I trust, long ago?

As we twain, Dickon and I, were known for fell champions at this unholy sport, many of the other scholars followed us, laying wagers on our heads. They were but a wild set of lads, for, as then, there was not, as now there is, a house appointed for scholars to dwell in together under authority. We wore coloured clothes, and our hair long; gold chains, and whingers {3} in our belts, all of which things are now most righteously forbidden. But I carried no whinger on the links, as considering that it hampered a man in his play. So the game went on, now Dickon leading “by a

hole," as they say, and now myself, and great wagers were laid on us.

Now, at the hole that is set high above the Eden, whence you see far over the country, and the river-mouth, and the shipping, it chanced that my ball lay between Dickon's and the hole, so that he could in no manner win past it.

"You laid me that stimy of set purpose," cried Dickon, throwing down his club in a rage; "and this is the third time you have done it in this game."

"It is clean against common luck," quoth one of his party, "and the game and the money laid on it should be ours."

"By the blessed bones of the Apostle," I said, "no luck is more common. To-day to me, to-morrow to thee! Lay it of purpose, I could not if I would."

"You lie!" he shouted in a rage, and gripped to his whinger.

It was ever my father's counsel that I must take the lie from none. Therefore, as his steel was out, and I carried none, I made no more ado, and the word of shame had scarce left his lips when I felled him with the iron club that we use in sand.

"He is dead!" cried they of his party, while the lads of my own looked askance on me, and had manifestly no mind to be partakers in my deed.

Now, Melville came of a great house, and, partly in fear of their feud, partly like one amazed and without any counsel, I ran and leaped into a boat that chanced to lie convenient on the sand, and pulled out into the Eden. Thence I saw them raise up Melville, and bear him towards the town, his

friends lifting their hands against me, with threats and malisons. His legs trailed and his head wagged like the legs and the head of a dead man, and I was without hope in the world.

At first it was my thought to row up the river-mouth, land, and make across the marshes and fields to our house at Pitcullo. But I bethought me that my father was an austere man, whom I had vexed beyond bearing with my late wicked follies, into which, since the death of my mother, I had fallen. And now I was bringing him no college prize, but a blood-feud, which he was like to find an ill heritage enough, even without an evil and thankless son. My stepmother, too, who loved me little, would inflame his anger against me. Many daughters he had, and of gear and goods no more than enough. Robin, my elder brother, he had let pass to France, where he served among the men of John Kirkmichael, Bishop of Orleans—he that smote the Duke of Clarence in fair fight at Baugé.

Thinking of my father, and of my stepmother's ill welcome, and of Robin, abroad in the wars against our old enemy of England, it may be that I fell into a kind of half dream, the boat lulling me by its movement on the waters. Suddenly I felt a crashing blow on my head. It was as if the powder used for artillery had exploded in my mouth, with flash of light and fiery taste, and I knew nothing. Then, how long after I could not tell, there was water on my face, the blue sky and the blue tide were spinning round—they spun swiftly, then slowly, then stood still. There was a fierce pain stounding in my head, and a voice said—

"That good oar-stroke will learn you to steal boats!"

I knew the voice; it was that of a merchant sailor-man with whom, on the day before, I had quarrelled in the market-

place. Now I was lying at the bottom of a boat which four seamen, who had rowed up to me and had broken my head as I meditated, were pulling towards a merchant-vessel, or carrick, in the Eden-mouth. Her sails were being set; the boat wherein I lay was towing that into which I had leaped after striking down Melville. For two of the ship's men, being on shore, had hailed their fellows in the carrick, and they had taken vengeance upon me.

"You scholar lads must be taught better than your masters learn you," said my enemy.

And therewith they carried me on board the vessel, the "St. Margaret," of Berwick, laden with a cargo of dried salmon from Eden-mouth. They meant me no kindness, for there was an old feud between the scholars and the sailors; but it seemed to me, in my foolishness, that now I was in luck's way. I need not go back, with blood on my hands, to Pitcullo and my father. I had money in my pouch, my mother's gold chain about my neck, a ship's deck under my foot, and the seas before me. It was not hard for me to bargain with the shipmaster for a passage to Berwick, whence I might put myself aboard a vessel that traded to Bordeaux for wine from that country. The sailors I made my friends at no great cost, for indeed they were the conquerors, and could afford to show clemency, and hold me to slight ransom as a prisoner of war.

So we lifted anchor, and sailed out of Eden-mouth, none of those on shore knowing how I was aboard the carrick that slipped by the bishop's castle, and so under the great towers of the minster and St. Rule's, forth to the Northern Sea. Despite my broken head—which put it comfortably into my mind that maybe Dickon's was no worse—I could have laughed to think how clean I had vanished away from St. Andrews, as if the fairies had taken me. Now having

time to reason of it quietly, I picked up hope for Dickon's life, remembering his head to be of the thickest. Then came into my mind the many romances of chivalry which I had read, wherein the young squire has to flee his country for a chance blow, as did Messire Patroclus, in the Romance of Troy, who slew a man in anger over the game of the chess, and many another knight, in the tales of Charlemagne and his paladins. For ever it is thus the story opens, and my story, methought, was beginning to-day like the rest.

Now, not to prove more wearisome than need be, and so vex those who read this chronicle with much talk about myself, and such accidents of travel as beset all voyagers, and chiefly in time of war, I found a trading ship at Berwick, and reached Bordeaux safe, after much sickness on the sea. And in Bordeaux, with a very sore heart, I changed the links of my mother's chain that were left to me —all but four, that still I keep—for money of that country; and so, with a lighter pack than spirit, I set forth towards Orleans and to my brother Robin.

On this journey I had good cause to bless Father Peter of the Abbey for his teaching me the French tongue, that was of more service to me than all my Latin. Yet my Latin, too, the little I knew, stood me in good stead at the monasteries, where often I found bed and board, and no small kindness; I little deeming that, in time to come, I also should be in religion, an old man and weary, glad to speak with travellers concerning the news of the world, from which I am now these ten years retired. Yet I love even better to call back memories of these days, when I took my part in the fray. If this be a sin, may God and the Saints forgive me, for if I have fought, it was in a rightful cause, which Heaven at last has prospered, and in no private quarrel. And methinks I have one among the Saints to pray for me,

as a friend for a friend not unfaithful. But on this matter I submit me to the judgment of the Church, as in all questions of the faith.

CHAPTER II—HOW NORMAN LESLIE MET NOIROUFLE THE CORDELIER, CALLED BROTHER THOMAS IN RELIGION: AND OF MIRACLES WROUGHT BY BROTHER THOMAS

The ways were rude and long from Bordeaux town to Orleans, whither I had set my face, not knowing, when I left my own country, that the city was beleaguered by the English. For who could guess that lords and knights of the Christian faith, holding captive the gentle Duke of Orleans, would besiege his own city?—a thing unheard of among the very Saracens, and a deed that God punished. Yet the news of this great villainy, namely, the leaguer of Orleans, then newly begun, reached my ears on my landing at Bordeaux, and made me greatly fear that I might never meet my brother Robin alive. And this my doubt proved but too true, for he soon after this time fell, with many other Scottish gentlemen and archers, deserted shamefully by the French and by Charles de Bourbon, Comte de Clermont, at the Battle of the Herrings. But of this I knew nothing—as, indeed, the battle was not yet fought—and only pushed on for France, thinking to take service with the Dauphin against the English. My journey was through a country ruinous enough, for, though the English were on the further bank of the Loire, the partisans of the Dauphin had made a ruin round themselves and their holds, and, not being paid, they lived upon the country.

The further north I held, by ways broken and ruined with rains and suns, the more bare and rugged grew the whole land. Once, stopping hard by a hamlet, I had sat down to

munch such food as I carried, and was sharing my meal with a little brown herd-boy, who told me that he was dinnerless. A few sheep and lean kine plucked at such scant grasses as grew among rocks, and herbs useless but sweet-scented, when suddenly a horn was blown from the tower of the little church. The first note of that blast had not died away, when every cow and sheep was scampering towards the hamlet and a kind of "barmkyn" {4} they had builded there for protection, and the boy after them, running with his bare legs for dear life. For me, I was too amazed to run in time, so lay skulking in the thick sweet-smelling herbs, whence I saw certain men-at-arms gallop to the crest of a cliff hard by, and ride on with curses, for they were not of strength to take the barmkyn.

Such was the face of France in many counties. The fields lay weedy and untilled; the starving peasant-folk took to the highway, every man preying on his neighbour. Woods had grown up, and broken in upon the roads. Howbeit, though robbers harboured therein, none of them held to ransom a wandering poor Scots scholar.

Slowly I trudged, being often delayed, and I was now nearing Poictiers, and thought myself well on my road to Chinon, where, as I heard, the Dauphin lay, when I came to a place where the road should have crossed a stream—not wide, but strong, smooth, and very deep. The stream ran through a glen; and above the road I had long noted the towers of a castle. But as I drew closer, I saw first that the walls were black with fire and roofless, and that carrion birds were hovering over them, some enemy having fallen upon the place: and next, behold, the bridge was broken, and there was neither ford nor ferry! All the ruin was fresh, the castle still smouldering, the kites flocking and yelling above the trees, the planks of the bridge showing that the destruction was but of yesterday.

This matter of the broken bridge cost me little thought, for I could swim like an otter. But there was another traveller down by the stream who seemed more nearly concerned. When I came close to him, I found him standing up to his waist in the water, taking soundings with a long and heavy staff. His cordelier's frock was tucked up into his belt, his long brown legs, with black hairs thick on them, were naked. He was a huge, dark man, and when he turned and stared at me, I thought that, among all men of the Church and in religion whom I had ever beheld, he was the foulest and most fierce to look upon. He had an ugly, murderous visage, fell eyes and keen, and a right long nose, hooked like a falcon's. The eyes in his head shone like swords, and of all eyes of man I ever saw, his were the most piercing and most terrible. On his back he carried, as I noticed at the first, what I never saw on a cordelier's back before, or on any but his since—an arbalest, and he had bolts enough in his bag, the feathers showing above.

"Pax vobiscum," he cried, in a loud, grating voice, as he saw me, and scrambled out to shore.

"Et cum anima tua," I answered.

"Nom de Dieu!" he said, "you have bottomed my Latin already, that is scarce so deep as the river here. My malison on them that broke the bridge!" Then he looked me over fiercely.

"Burgundy or Armagnac?" he asked.

I thought the question strange, as a traveller would scarce care to pronounce for Burgundy in that country. But this was a man who would dare anything, so I deemed it better to answer that I was a Scot, and, so far, of neither party.

“Tug-mutton, wine-sack!” he said, these being two of many ill names which the French gave our countrymen; for, of all men, the French are least grateful to us, who, under Heaven and the Maid, have set their King on his throne again.

The English knew this, if the French did not; and their great King, Harry the Fifth, when he fell ill of St. Fiacre’s sickness, after plundering that Scots saint’s shrine of certain horse-shoes, silver-gilt, said well that, “go where he would, he was bearded by Scots, dead or alive.” But the French are not a thankful people.

I had no answer very ready to my tongue, so stepped down silent to the water-edge, and was about taking off my doublet and hose, meaning to carry them on my head and swim across. But he barred the way with his staff, and, for me, I gripped to my whinger, and watched my chance to run in under his guard. For this cordelier was not to be respected, I deemed, like others of the Order of St. Francis, and all men of Holy Church.

“Answer a civil question,” he said, “before it comes to worse: Armagnac or Burgundy?”

“Armagnac,” I answered, “or anything else that is not English. Clear the causeway, mad friar!”

At that he threw down his staff.

“I go north also,” he said, “to Orleans, if I may, for the foul ‘manants’ and peasant dogs of this country have burned the castle of Alfonse Rodigo, a good knight that held them in right good order this year past. He was worthy, indeed, to ride with that excellent captain, Don Rodrigo de

Villandradas. King's captain or village labourer, all was fish that came to his net, and but two days ago I was his honourable chaplain. But he made the people mad, and a great carouse that we kept gave them their opportunity. They have roasted the good knight Alfonse, and would have done as much for me, his almoner, frock and all, if wine had any mastery over me. But I gave them the slip. Heaven helps its own! Natheless, I would that this river were between me and their vengeance, and, for once, I dread the smell of roast meat that is still in my nostrils—pah!"

And here he spat on the ground.

"But one door closes," he went on, "and another opens, and to Orleans am I now bound, in the service of my holy calling."

"There is, indeed, cause enough for the shriving of souls of sinners, Father, in that country, as I hear, and a holy man like you will be right welcome to many."

"They need little shriving that are opposite my culverin," said this strange priest. "Though now I carry but an arbalest, the gun is my mistress, and my patron is the gunner's saint, St. Barbara. And even with this toy, methinks I have the lives of a score of goddams in my bolt-pouch."

I knew that in these wild days many clerics were careless as to that which the Church enjoins concerning the effusion of blood—nay, I have named John Kirkmichael, Bishop of Orleans, as having himself broken a spear on the body of the Duke of Clarence. The Abbé of Cerquenceaux, also, was a valiant man in religion, and a good captain, and, all over France, clerics were gripping to sword and spear. But such a priest as this I did not expect to see.