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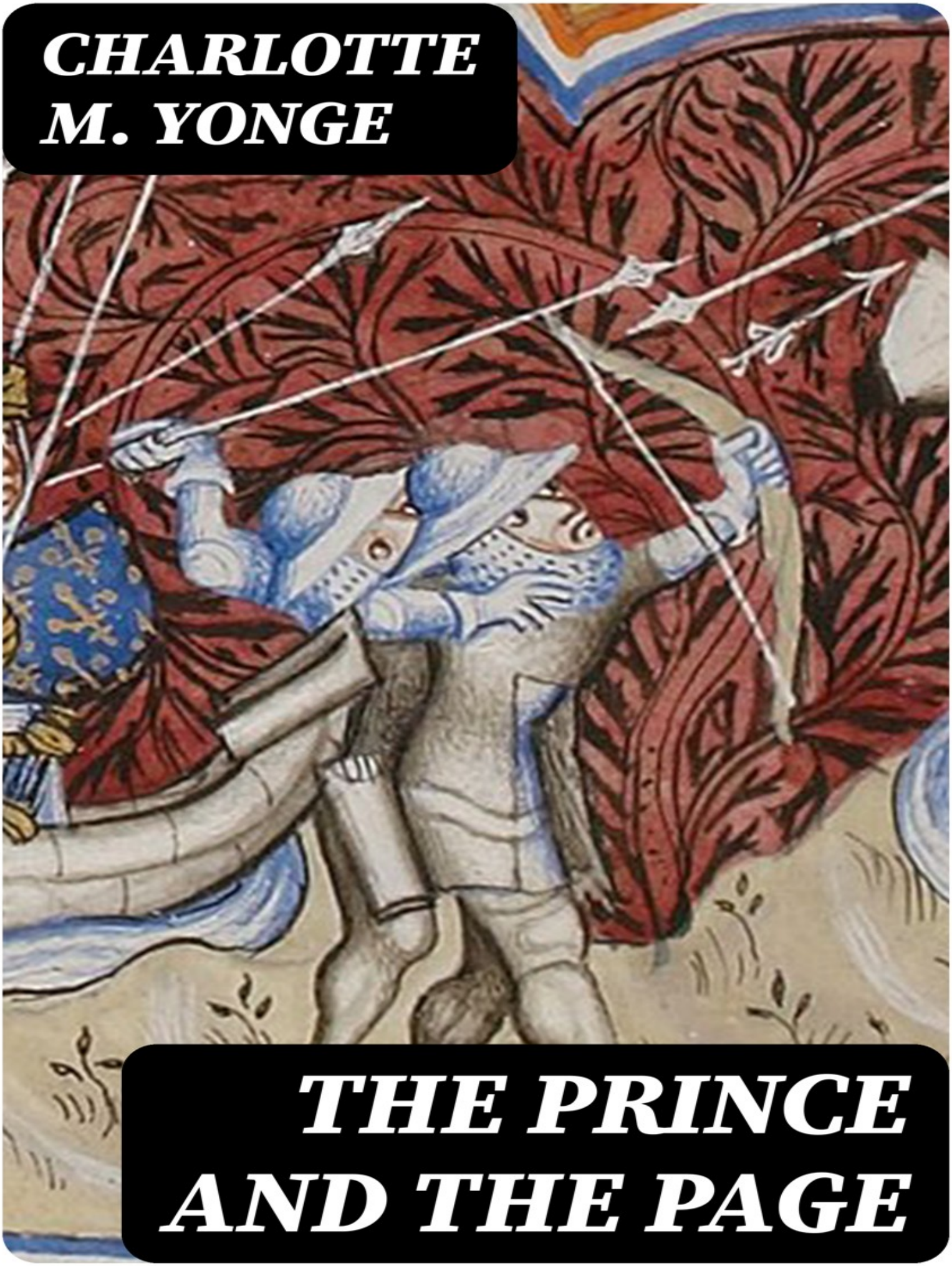

# THE PRINCE AND THE PAGE

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## A Story of the Last Crusade

EAN 8596547167716

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

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# PREFACE

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In these days of exactness even a child’s historical romance must point to what the French term its *pièces justficatives*. We own that ours do not lie very deep. The picture of Simon de Montfort drawn by his wife’s own household books, as quoted by Mrs. Everett Green in her Lives of the Princesses, and that of Edward I. in Carte’s History, and more recently in the Greatest of the

Plantagenets, furnished the two chief influences of the story. The household accounts show that Earl Simon and Eleanor of England had five sons. Henry fell with his father at Evesham. Simon and Guy deeply injured his cause by their violence, and after holding out Kenilworth against the Prince, retired to the Continent, where they sacrilegiously murdered Henry, son of the King of the Romans—a crime so much abhorred in Italy that Dante represents himself as meeting them in torments in the *Inferno*, not however before Guy had become the founder of the family of the Counts of Monforte in the Maremma. Richard, the fourth son, appears in the household books as possessing dogs, and having garments bought for him; but his history has not been traced after his mother left England. The youngest son, Amaury, obtained the hereditary French possessions of the family, and continued the line of Montfort as a French subject. Eleanor, the only daughter, called the Demoiselle de Montfort, married, as is well known, the last native prince of Wales, and died after a few years.

The adventure of Edward with the outlaw of Alton Wood is one of the stock anecdotes of history, and many years ago the romance of the encounter led the author to begin a tale upon it, in which the outlaw became the protector of one of the proscribed family of Montfort. The commencement was placed in one of the manuscript magazines which are so often the amusement of a circle of friends. It was not particularly correct in its details, and the hero bore the peculiarly improbable name of Wilfred (by which he has since appeared in the *Monthly Packet*). The story slept for many years in MS., until further reading and

thought had brought stronger interest in the period, and for better or for worse it was taken in hand again. Joinville, together with the authorities quoted by Sismondi, assisted in picturing the arrival of the English after the death of St. Louis, and the murder of Henry of Almayne is related in all crusading histories; but for Simon’s further career, and for his implication in the attempt on Edward’s life at Acre, the author is alone responsible, taking refuge in the entire uncertainty that prevails as to the real originator of the crime, and perhaps an apology is likewise due to Dante for having reversed his doom.

For the latter part of the story, the old ballad of The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green, gives the framework. That ballad is believed to be Elizabethan in date, and the manners therein certainly are scarcely accordant with the real thirteenth century, and still less with our notions of the days of chivalry. Some liberties therefore have been taken with it, the chief of them being that Bessee is not permitted to go forth to seek her fortune in the inn at Romford, and the readers are entreated to believe that the alteration was made by the traditions which repeated Henry de Montfort’s song.

It was the late Hugh Millar who alleged that the huge stone under which Edward sleeps in Westminster Abbey agrees in structure with no rocks nearer than those whence the mighty stones of the Temple at Jerusalem were hewn, and there is no doubt that earth and stones were frequently brought by crusaders from the Holy Land with a view to the hallowing of their own tombs.

The author is well aware that this tale has all the incorrectnesses and inconsistencies that are sure to attend a historical tale; but the dream that has been pleasant to dream may be pleasant to listen to; and there can be no doubt that, in spite of all inevitable faults, this style of composition does tend to fix young people’s interest and attention on the scenes it treats of, and to vivify the characters it describes; and if this sketch at all tends to prepare young people’s minds to look with sympathy and appreciation on any of the great characters of our early annals, it will have done at least one work.

*December* 12*th*, 1865.

# CHAPTER I
# THE STATELY HUNTER

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"'Now who are thou of the darksome brow
Who wanderest here so free?'
"'Oh, I'm one that will walk the green green woods,
Nor ever ask leave of thee.'"—S. M.

A FINE EVENING—six centuries ago—shed a bright parting light over Alton Wood, illuminating the gray lichens that clung to the rugged trunks of the old oak trees, and shining on the smoother bark of the graceful beech, with that sidelong light that, towards evening, gives an especial charm to woodland scenery. The long shadows lay across an open green glade, narrowing towards one end, where a path, nearly lost amid dwarf furze, crested heather, and soft bent-grass, led towards a hut, rudely constructed of sods of turf and branches of trees, whose gray crackling foliage contrasted with the fresh verdure around. There was no endeavour at a window, nor chimney; but the door of wattled boughs was carefully secured by a long twisted withe.

A halbert, a broken arrow, a deer-skin pegged out on the ground to dry, a bundle of faggots, a bare and blackened patch of grass, strewn with wood ashes, were tokens of recent habitation, though the reiterations of the nightingale, the deep tones of the blackbird and the hum of insects, were the only sounds that broke the stillness.

Suddenly the silence was interrupted by a clear, loud, ringing whistle, repeated at brief intervals and now and then exchanged for the call—“Leonillo! Leon!” A footstep approached, rapidly overtaken and passed by the rushing gallop of a large animal; and there broke on the scene a large tawny hound, prancing, bounding, and turning round joyfully, pawing the air, and wagging his tail, in welcome to the figure who followed him.

This was a youth thirteen years old, wearing such a dress as was usual with foresters—namely, a garment of home-spun undyed wool, reaching to the knee, and there met by buskins of deer-skin, with the dappled hair outside; but the belt which crossed one shoulder was clasped with gold, and sustained a dagger, whose hilt and sheath were of exquisite workmanship. The cap on his head was of gray rabbit-skin, but a heron’s plume waved in it; the dark curling locks beneath were carefully arranged; and the port of his head and shoulders, the mould of his limbs, the cast of his features, and the fairness of his complexion, made his appearance ill accord with the homeliness of his garb. In one hand he carried a bow over his shoulder; in the other he held by the ears a couple of dead rabbits, with which he playfully tantalized the dog, holding them to his nose, and then lifting them high aloft, while the hound, perfectly entering into the sport, leapt high after them with open mouth, and pretended to seize them, then bounded and careered round his young master with gay short barks, till both were out of breath; and the boy, flinging the rabbits on the turf, threw himself down on it, with one arm upon the

neck of the panting dog, whose great gasps, like a sobbing of laughter, heaved his whole frame.

“Ay, good Leonillo, take your rest!” said the boy: “we have done yeoman’s service to-day, and shown ourselves fit to earn our own livelihood! We are outlaws now, my lion of the Pyrenees; and you at least lead a merrier life than in the castle halls, when we hunted for sport, and not for sustenance! Well-a-day, my Leon!”—as the creature closed his mouth, and looked wistfully up at him with almost human sympathy and intelligence—“would that we knew where are all that were once wont to go with us to the chase! But for them, I would be well content to be a bold forester all my days! Better so, than to be ever vexed and crossed in every design for the country’s weal—distrusted above—betrayed beneath! Alack! alack! my noble father, why wert thou wrecked in every hope—in every aim!”

These murmurings were broken off as Leonillo suddenly crested his head, and changed his expression of repose for one of intense listening.

“Already!” exclaimed the boy, springing to his feet, as Leonillo bounded forward to meet a stout hardy forester, who was advancing from the opposite end of the glade. This was a man of the largest and most sinewy mould, his face tanned by sun and wind to a uniform hard ruddy brown, and his shaggy black hair untrimmed, as well as his dark bristly beard. His jerkin was of rough leather, crossed by a belt, sustaining sword and dagger; a bow and arrows were at his back; a huge quarter-staff in his hand; and his whole aspect was that of a ferocious outlaw, whose hand was against every man.

But the youth started towards him gleefully, as if the very sight of him had dispelled all melancholy musings, and shouted merrily, “Welcome—welcome, Adam! Why so early home? Have the Alton boors turned surly? or are the King’s prickers abroad, and the neighbourhood unwholesome for bold clerks of St. Nicholas?”

“Worse!” was the gruff mutter in reply. “Down, Leon: I am in no mood for thy freaks!”

“What is it, Adam? Have the keepers carried their complaints to the King, of the venison we have consumed, with small thanks to him?”

“Prince Edward is at Alton! What think you of that, Sir? Come to seek through copse and brake for the arrant deer-stealer and outlaw, and all his gang!”

“Why, there’s preferment for you!” said the boy, laughing. “High game for the heir of the throne! And his gang! Hold up your head, Leonillo: you and I come in for a share of the honour!”

“Hold up your head!” said the outlaw bitterly. “You may chance to hold it as high as your father’s is, for all your gibes and jests, my young Lord, if the Longshanks gets a hold of you, which our Lady forefend.”

“Nay, I think better of my Cousin Longshanks. I loved him well when I was his page at Hereford: he was tenderer to me than ever my brothers were; and I scarce think he would hang, draw, and quarter me now.”

“You may try, if you are not the better guided.”

“How did you hear these tidings?” inquired the boy, changing his mood to a graver one.

“From the monk to whom you confessed a fortnight back. Did you let him know your lineage?”

“How could I do otherwise?”

“He looked like a man who would keep a secret; and yet —”

“Shame—shame to doubt the good father!”

“Nay, I do not say that I do; but I would have the secret in as few men’s power as may be. Nevertheless, I thank the good brother. He called out to me as he saw me about to enter the town, that if I had any tenderness for my own life, I had best not show myself there; and he went on to tell me how the Prince was come to his hunting-lodge, with hawk and hound indeed, but for the following of men rather than bird or beast.”

“And what would you have me do?”

“Be instantly on the way to the coast, ere the search begins; and there, either for love of Sir Simon the righteous or for that gilt knife of yours, we may get ferried over to the Isle of Wight, whence—But what ails the dog! Whist, Leonillo! Hold your throat: I can hear naught but your clamour!”

The hound was in fact barking with a tremendous lion-like note; and when, on reiterated commands from his master and the outlaw, he changed it for a low continuous growling like distant thunder, a step and a rustling of the boughs became audible.

“They are upon us already!” cried the boy, snatching up and stringing his bow.

“Leave me to deal with him!” returned the outlaw. “Off to Alton: the good father will receive you to sanctuary!”

“Flee!—never!” cried the boy. “You teaching my father’s son to flee!”

“Tush!—’tis but one!” said the outlaw. “He is easily dealt with; and he shall have no time to call his fellows.”

So saying, the forester strode forward into the wood, where a tall figure was seen through the trees; and with uplifted quarter-staff, dealt a blow of sudden and deadly force as soon as the stranger came within its sweep, totally without warning. The power of the stroke might have felled an ox, and would have at once overthrown the new-comer, but that he was a man of unusual stature; and this being unperceived in the outlaw’s haste, the blow lighted on his left shoulder instead of on his head.

“Ha, caitiff!” he exclaimed; and shortening the hunting-pole in his hand, he returned the stroke with interest, but the outlaw had already prepared himself to receive the blow on his staff. For some seconds there was a rapid exchange; and all that the boy could detect in the fierce flourish of weapons was, that his champion was at least equally matched. The height of the stranger was superior; and his movements, if less quick and violent, had an equableness that showed him a thorough master of his weapon. But ere the lad had time to cross the heather to the scene of action, the fight was over; the outlaw lay stunned and motionless on the ground, and the gigantic stranger was leaning on his hunting-pole, regarding him with a grave unmoved countenance, the fair skin of which was scarcely flushed by the exertion.

“Spare him! spare him!” cried the boy, leaping forwards. “I am the prey you seek!”

“Well met, my young Lord,” was the stern reply. “You have found yourself a worthy way of life, and an honourable companion.”

“Honourable indeed, if faithfulness be honour!” replied the boy. “Myself I yield, Sir; but spare him, if yet he lives!—O Adam, my only friend!” he sobbed, as kneeling over him, he raised his head, undid his collar, and parted the black locks, to seek for the mark of the blow, whence blood was fast oozing.

“He lives—he will do well enough,” said the hunter. “Now, tell me, boy—what brought you here?”

“The loving fidelity of this man!” was the prompt reply: —“a Poitevin, a falconer at Kenilworth, who found me sore wounded on the field at Evesham, and ever since has tended me as never vassal tended lord; and now—now hath he indeed died for me!” and the boy, endeavouring to raise the inanimate form, dropped heavy tears on the senseless face.

“True,” rigidly spoke the hunter, though there was somewhat of a quivering of the muscles of the cheek discernible amid the curls of his chestnut beard: “robbery is not the wonted service demanded of retainers.”

“Poor Adam!” said the youth with a flash of spirit, “at least he never stripped the peaceful homestead and humble farmer, like the royal purveyors!”

“Ha—young rebel!” exclaimed the hunter. “Know you what you say?”

“I reck not,” replied the boy: “you have slain my father and my brothers, and now you have slain my last and only friend. Do as you will with me—only for my mother’s sake,

let it not be a shameful death; and let my sister Eleanor have my poor Leonillo. And let me, too, leave this gold with the priest of Alton, that my true-hearted loving Adam may have fit burial and masses."

"I tell thee, boy, he is in no more need of a burial than thou or I. I touched him warily. Here—his face more to the air."

And the stranger bent down, and with his powerful strength lifted the heavy form of Adam, so that the boy could better support him. Then taking some wine from the hunting-flask slung to his own shoulder, he applied some drops to the bruise. The smart produced signs of life, and the hunter put his flask into the boy's hand, saying, "Give him a draught, and then—" he put his finger to his own lips, and stood somewhat apart.

Adam opened his eyes, and made some inarticulate murmurs; then, the liquor being held to his lips, he drank, and with fresh vigour raised himself.

"The boy!—where is he? What has chanced? Is it you, Sir? Where is the rogue? Fled, the villain? We shall have the Prince upon us next! I must after him, and cut his story short! Your hand, Sir!"

"Nay, Adam—your hurt!"

"A broken head! Tush, 'tis naught! Here, your hand! Canst not lend a hand to help a man up in your own service?" he added testily, as stiff and dizzy he sat up and tried to rise. "You might have sent an arrow to stop his traitorous tongue; but there is no help in you!" he added, provoked at seeing a certain embarrassment about the youth. "Desert me at this pinch! It is not like his father's son!" and he was sinking

back, when at sight of the hunter he stumbled eagerly to his feet, but only to stagger against a tree.

“You are my prisoner!” said the calm deep voice.

“Well and good,” said Adam surlily. “But let the lad go free: he is a yeoman’s son, who came but to bear me company.”

“And learn thy trade? Goodly lessons in falling unawares on the King’s huntsmen, and sending arrows after them! Fair breeding, in sooth!” repeated the stranger, standing with his arms crossed upon his mighty breadth of chest, and looking at Adam with a still, grave, commanding blue eye, that seemed to pierce him and hold him down, as it were, and a countenance whose youthfulness and perfect regularity of feature did but enhance its exceeding severity of expression. “You know the meed of robbery and murder?”

“A halter and a bough,” said Adam readily. “Well and good; but I tell thee that concerns not the boy—since,” he added bitterly, “he is too meek and tender so much as to lift a hand in his own cause! He has never crossed the laws.”

“I understand you, friend,” said the hunter: “he is a valued charge—maybe the son of one of the traitor barons. Take my advice—yield him to the King’s justice, and secure your own pardon.”

“Out, miscreant!” shouted Adam; and was about to spring at him again, but the powerful arm collared him, and he recognized at once that he was like a child in that grasp. He ground his teeth with rage and muttered, “That a fellow with such thews should give such dastardly counsel, and *he* yonder not lift a finger to aid!”

“Wilt follow me,” composedly demanded the stranger, “with hands free? or must I bind them?”

“Follow?” replied Adam, ruefully looking at the boy with eyes full of reproach—“ay, follow to any gallows thou wilt—and the nearest tree were the best! Come on!”

“I have no warrant,” returned the grave hunter.

“Tush! what warrant is needed for hanging a well-known outlaw—made so by the Prince’s tender mercies? The Prince will thank thee, man, for ridding the realm of the robber who fell on the treasurer bearing the bags from Leicester!”

And meanwhile, with uncouth cunning, Adam was striving to telegraph by winks and gestures to the boy who had so grievously disappointed him, that the moment of his own summary execution would be an excellent one for his companion’s escape.

But the eye, so steady yet so quick under its somewhat drooping eyelid, detected the simple stratagem.

“I trow the Prince might thank me more for bringing in this charge of thine.”

“Small thanks, I trow, for laying hands on a poor orphan—the son of a Poitevin man-at-arms—that I kept with me for love of his father, though he is fitter for a convent than the green wood!” added Adam, with the same sound of keen reproach and disappointment in his voice.

“That shall we learn at Guildford,” replied the stranger. “There are means of teaching a man to speak.”

“None that will serve with me,” stoutly responded Adam.

“That shall we see,” was the brief answer.

And he signed to his prisoners to move on before him, taking care so to interpose his stately person between them,

that there should be no communication by word, far less by look.

# CHAPTER II
# THE LADY OF THE FOREST

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"Behold how mercy softeneth still
The haughtiest heart that beats:
Pride with disdain may he answered again,
But pardon at once defeats!"—S. M.

THE so-called forest was in many parts mere open heath, thickly adorned by the beautiful purple ling, blending into a rich carpet with the dwarf furze, and backed by thickets of trees in the hollows of the ground.

Across this wild country the tall forester conducted his captives in silence—moving along with a pace that evidently cost him so little exertion, and was so steady and even, that his companions might have supposed it slow, had they only watched it, and not been obliged to keep up with it. Light of foot as the youth was, he was at times reduced to an almost breathless run; and Adam plodded along, with strides that worked his arms and shoulders in sympathy.

After about three miles, when the boy was beginning to feel as if he must soon be in danger of lagging, they came into a dip of the ground where stood a long, low, irregular building, partly wood and partly stone, roofed with shingle in some parts, in others with heather. The last addition, a deep porch, still retained the fresh tints of the bark on the timber sides, and the purple of the ling that roofed it.

Sheds and out-houses surrounded it; dogs in couples, horses, grooms, and foresters, were congregated in the

background; but around this new porch were gathered a troop of peasant women, children, and aged men. The fine bald brow and profile of the old peasant, the eager face of the curly-haired child, the worn countenance of the hard-tasked mother, were all uplifted towards the doorway, in which stood, slightly above them, a lady, with two long plaited flaxen tresses descending on her shoulders, under a black silken veil, that disclosed a youthful countenance, full of pure calm loveliness, of a simple but dignified and devotional expression, that might have befitted an angel of charity. A priest and a lady were dispensing loaves and warm garments to the throng around; but each gift was accompanied by a gentle word from the lady, framed with difficulty to their homely English tongue, but listened to even by uncomprehending ears like a strain of Church music.

Adam had expected the forester to turn aside to the group of servants, but in blank amazement saw him lead the way through the poor at the gate; and advancing to the porch with a courteous bending of his head, he said in the soft Provençal—far more familiar than English to Adam's ears—"Hast room for another suppliant, mi Dona?"

The sweet fair face lighted up with a sudden sunbeam of joy; and a musical voice replied. "Welcome, my dearest Lord: much did I need thee to hear the plaints of some of these thy lieges, which my ears can scarce understand! But why art thou alone? or rather, why thus strangely accompanied?"

"These are the captives won by my single arm, whom, according to all laws of chivalry, thine own true knight thus

lays at thy feet, fair lady mine, to be disposed of at thine own gracious will and pleasure."

And a smile of such sweetness lightened his features, that a murmur of "Blessings on his comely face!" ran through the assembly; and Adam indulged in a gruff startled murmur of "'Tis the Prince, or the devil himself!" while his young master, comprehending the gesture of the Prince, and overborne by the lovely winning graces of the Princess, stepped forward, doffing his cap and bending his knee, and signing to Adam to follow his example.

"Thou hast been daring peril again!" said the Princess, holding her husband's arm, and looking up into his face with lovingly reproachful yet exulting eyes. "Yet I will not be troubled! Naught is danger to thee! And yet alone and unarmed to encounter such a sturdy savage as I see yonder! But there is blood on his brow! Let his hurt be looked to ere we speak of his fate."

"He is at thy disposal, mi Dona," returned Edward: "thou art the judge of both, and shall decide their lot when thou hast heard their tale."

"It can scarce be a very dark one," replied Eleanor, "or thou wouldst never have led them to such a judge!" Then turning to the prisoners, she began to say in her foreign English, "Follow the good father, friends—" when she broke off at fuller sight of the boy's countenance, and exclaimed in Provençal, "I know the like of that face and mien!"

"Truly dost thou know it," her husband replied; "but peace till thou hast cleared thy present court, and we can be private.—Follow the priest," he added, "and await the Princess's pleasure."

They obeyed; and the priest led them through a side-door, through which they could still hear Eleanor’s sweet Castillian voice laying before her husband her difficulties in comprehending her various petitioners. The priest being English, was hardly more easily understood than his flock; and her lady spoke little but *langue d’oui*, the Northern French, which was as little serviceable in dealing with her Spanish and Provençal as with the rude West-Saxon-English. Edward’s deep manly tones were to be heard, however, now interrogating the peasants in their own tongue, now briefly interpreting to his wife in Provençal; and a listener could easily gather that his hand was as bounteous, his heart as merciful, as hers, save where attacks on the royal game had been requited by the trouble complained of; and that in such cases she pleaded in vain.

The captives, whom her husband had surrendered to her mercy, had been led into a great, long, low hall, with rudely-timbered sides, and rough beams to the roof, with a stone floor, and great open fire, over which a man-cook was chattering French to his bewildered English scullion. An oak table, and settles on either side of it, ran the whole length of the hall; and here the priest bade the two prisoners seat themselves. They obeyed—the boy slouching his cap over his face, averting it, and keeping as far as possible from the group of servants near the fire. The priest called for bread, meat, and beer, to be set before them; and after a moment’s examination of Adam’s bruise, applied the simple remedy that was all it required, and left them to their meal. Adam took this opportunity to growl in an undertone, “Does *he* there know you?” The reply was a nod of assent. “And

you knew him?” Another nod; and then the boy, looking heedfully round, added in a quick, undertone, “Not till you were down. Then he helped me to restore you. You forgive me, Adam, now?” and he held out his hand, and wrung the rugged one of the forester.

“What should I forgive! Poor lad! you could not have striven in the Longshanks’ grasp! I was a fool not to guess how it was, when I saw you not knowing which way to look!”

“Hush!” broke in the youth with uplifted hand, as a page of about his own age came daintily into the hall, gathering his green robe about him as if he disdained the neighbourhood, and holding his head high under his jaunty tall feathered cap.

“Outlaws!” he said, speaking English, but with a strong foreign accent, and as if it were a great condescension, “the gracious Princess summons you to her presence. Follow me!”

The colour rushed to the boy’s temples, and a retort was on his lips, but he struggled to withhold it; and likewise speaking English, said, “I would we could have some water, and make ourselves meeter for her presence.”

“Scarce worth the pains,” returned the page. “As if thou couldst ever be meet for her presence! She had rather be rid of thee promptly, than wait to be regaled with thy May-day braveries—honest lad!”

Again the answer was only restrained with exceeding difficulty; and there was a scornful smile on the young prisoner’s cheek, that caused the page to exclaim angrily, “What means that insolence, malapert boy?”

But there was no time for further strife; for the door was pushed open, and the Prince’s voice called, “Hamlyn de Valence, why tarry the prisoners?”

“Only, Sir,” returned Hamlyn, “that this young robber is offended that he hath not time to deck himself out in his last stolen gold chain, to gratify the Princess!”

“Peace, Hamlyn,” returned the Prince: “thou speakest thou knowest not what.—Come hither, boy,” he added, laying his hand on his young captive’s shoulder, and putting him through the door with a familiarity that astonished Hamlyn—all the more, when he found that while both prisoners were admitted, he himself was excluded!

Princess Eleanor was alone in another chamber of the sylvan lodge, hung with tapestry representing hunting scenes, the floor laid with deer-skins, and deer’s antlers projecting from the wall, to support the feminine properties that marked it as her special abode. She was standing when they entered; and was turning eagerly with outstretched hand and face of recognition, when Prince Edward checked her by saying, “Nay, the cause is not yet tried:” and placing her in a large carved oaken chair, where she sat with a lily-like grace and dignity, half wondering, but following his lead, he proceeded, “Sit thou there, fair dame, and exercise thy right, as judge of the two captives whom I place at thy feet.”

“And you, my Lord?” she asked.

“I stand as their accuser,” said Edward. “Advance, prisoners!—Now, most fair judge, what dost thou decree for the doom of Adam de Gourdon, rebel first, and since that the terror of our royal father’s lieges, the robber of his