

THE REBEL PASSION

by

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To
D.M.R. CADE.

Pity is a rebel passion. Its hand is against the strong, against the organized force of society, against conventional sanctions and accepted Gods. It is the Kingdom of Heaven within us fighting against the brute powers of the world. . . .

GILBERT MURRAY.

Introductory note to The Trojan Women.

This is a work of fiction, and all the characters in the book are drawn from the author's imagination. Care has been taken to avoid the use of names or titles belonging to living persons, and if any such names or titles have been used, this has been done inadvertently and no reference to such person or persons is intended.

THE REBEL PASSION

CHAPTER I

I GIRALDUS the Monk, of the Abbey of Glastonbury, bury, write these words, in the secrecy of my cell in the hours of sleep, with candle stolen, and parchment stolen also, and though I be a thief and thus displeasing to God, yet I will write my visions and then repent and then I pray heaven to die. And if I were killed suddenly, as it might be by a stone falling from the part of the Abbey that is building, God would remember the thief who was crucified with Our Lord Christ, and He would know that I repent of this sin while I commit it, but I must write down my visions, and that He knows also. No man must read what I write here, for though I believe the visions to be of God, the Abbot or indeed any other would say they are of the devil, heretical, unclean and sinful. But I know that none can be visited of the devil in this holy place, except he ask him and invite him to come, and carry him like a bride over the threshold of the Abbey. I, Giraldus, born the most wretched of all men and in the most grievous case, have yet been happy here, where our Lord Christ dwells for ever and ever. But now my visions are a torment, and the Child has left me, and they work in my thoughts like leaven in the dough so that my head is painful and weary, and I get no rest day nor night, nor any easement save in the

Mass and sometimes in the very early morning when the birds sing. So I will write them, for no living man's eyes, and if it takes me three years, yet in the end I shall have rest.

I am a man that has walked in shadow, under the curse of God. For though the Child showed me that what I am cursed with will be a blessing, and not rejected, nor despised, nor a cause of sorrow, yet at this time of the world it is a grief of the spirit, a shame, and a cause of mocking so that every one of us lives in some manner like Christ in the hall of the Jews, and I pray that for our sorrows He will forgive us the more readily for our sins, and have mercy upon us.

I am the son of a great Baron, and I will not write either his name nor the name of his land, for I have shamed him and he has cast me out. The curse was from childhood, and in my father's castle, far from this holy place, I grew up as different from my brothers as a sword of wood is different from a sword of steel, and in shape only are they like one to the other. A sword of wood is a gentle thing and deals no deadly blow, neither is it useful for offence or protection, and when it has served its purpose as a child's toy it is fit only to make kindling for a fire. But wood is a kindly thing and gracious, and comes from the great beauty of a forest tree, and trees there were in the Garden of Eden, but steel, as we suppose, was not. Only in the shape of a sword or lance-tip or arrow-head, or any manly weapon is wood out of place, for even the Old Men had their flint-stones, and the Romans, as I have seen, had bronze armour and iron weapons. But there was I, a boy in shape, and no boy, a wooden sword fit for the burning, once I had ceased to be my mother's plaything. For I would not hunt the deer nor the

small game once I had seen the death of a stag, nor fight with the other lads, but only wrestle with them harmlessly. Yet I was the second son of a great Baron, and must be brave and gallant and make the shedding of blood my work and my pleasure, and stand by to see justice dealt on the churls and their women oppressed, and say that the will of the Seigneur was the will of God. So, when I would do none of these things, but passed my days in learning from the old priest, Magnus, and in making friends of the wild creatures, and in harping, and in listening to the women's songs—my father was enraged, and beat me many times, but without avail. And they called me coward and woman, and the boys used me ill and the women despised me, but not all. But the bond that was on me not to slay the beasts, nor to hurt men, nor to oppress women, was stronger than fear and sorrow and more terrible to break than to keep, and my father's blows and his harsh words did no more than make me weep. Change the soul within me I could not, and neither could he.

Then came the time when I was near grown, and one day I was watching a squirrel in the woods. I heard an outcry not far off and ran towards it, and there I found my eldest brother tormenting a woman, the daughter of a churl, as was his right and the custom of the Manor. But I could see only that the woman was unwilling and weaker than he, and that her eyes were like those of a hunted hind. I dealt my brother a blow that robbed him of all sense, for my arm was strong in those days, and the woman ran away. I left my brother lying in the green open glade, and went back to the castle and into the Great Hall where my father was giving his Justice. There before them all I denounced my

brother as an oppressor, and all men who force a woman against her will, and all who slay beasts for sport, and all who deal harshly with churls, and all who make war and shed the blood of men save in their own defence or in defence of the Church or of women. And I thought when I spoke that God had afflicted me with madness, for how should the world continue without war, and did not our Lord Christ Himself say that He came to bring a sword?

There was a murmur, but none dared shout out for fear of my father, who sat quietly in his great chair with his black brows frowning. But he did not burst out in wrath, only beat upon the floor with his staff for silence.

"And what else is wrong, Woman?" he said.

I spoke like a man at his hanging, who must speak before the rope goes round his neck to choke his breath and his words for ever.

"It is wrong to buy and sell women like cattle, and to make a young maid marry an old lecherous man."

"Then why do not the women make outcry?" said he, not yet in open wrath.

"What good would their outcry do them? A man must cry for them."

"Yet not half a man."

"If no man will cry for them, and for the beasts, and for the churls, then will I, the half-man, cry. For I tell you these things are hateful to God, and the world stinks with them. Now I have said."

"And now I will say. You shall leave my castles and my lands, Woman, my halls, my fields and my forests, and you shall go to be a monk and pray for the world. But far away you shall go, for you have shamed me before my household. It may be that you will make a good monk, but a man you

will be never, and I will no longer bear the sight of your girl's face at my board."

This I thought wrong in my father, to give to the Church something he despised himself, and as for me the thought of being shut up in a monastery was like the thought of the tomb. There would be no forest and no streams, and no wild creatures to watch, and no harping, and no sweet singing of women at the spinning wheels. There would be no heather hills, and no riding to the sea. I saw that God would have me yet more accursed, for now the things I loved must be taken away from me, and the heaviness of my heart be not lessened thereby but made more dreadful. But I said nothing more to my father, and I knew that all were wondering why he had not slain me out of hand. He did not fear the King's Justice greatly, being too powerful a Baron, and pity was not in him. Nor was it in my eldest brother, who would have his will with the churl woman and the more cruelly because she had seen him smitten down. At this thought, that while I was in the monastery the churl woman and other women, and helpless men and innocent beasts would be tormented and I not able even to make outcry for them, I groaned, for it seemed that my grief as a monk would be greater by far than my grief as the son of a Baron.

In the heavy silence this groan came forth from me, and but one moved. My only sister who had been with me since our bones were formed, even in our mother's womb, came to me in the Great Hall, and before my father's face she stood by me and put her arm round my neck. There, embracing me with one arm she held up her other hand, and she swore by Christ's Body and His Blood, as They were on the Cross, as They are on the Altar, that she would

go into a convent, neither allow any man's hand to come upon her, no, not if she were threatened with death. This was doubly displeasing to my father, for she was his only daughter, fair in face and form, and he had the mind to enrich himself with her marriage. Also he loved her as well as he loved any on earth, for she was all that I was not, gallant in bearing, unafraid, high-hearted and of a strong bold spirit, never weeping as other women do, and ready to crack rough jests with him or any other man. But long since she had told me she would never marry, and there was no remedy but to get to a convent and there live out all her days in prayer, for that a woman must either be married or a nun. Yet she liked the thought of her convent no better than I the thought of my monastery, and I felt her arm tremble on my neck. And when we bade farewell to each other she wept, and it was the first time I ever saw her weep since we were little children. After that I saw her no more, except in a vision.

So my father sent me to Glastonbury. He had acquaintance with the Abbot, and he would not keep me near my home, no, not even in the same part of England, because he was ashamed. He sent me away with thirty of his men and a bag of gold as a gift for the Abbey, and a letter written by the priest, Magnus, and his curse, my father's curse, to take with me also. After weeks of riding we came down off hills into a fair great valley, and the churl that was our guide said it was the Vale of Avalon. A round green hill there was, like an island in the sea, and it made me think of the hill where Christ was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem. The churl said it was the Isle of Avalon, and that the Abbey lay very close by, at its foot. Therewith he

began to talk in his own thick Saxon speech, with a dialect unlike our Saxons in the north, and I could not understand him well, but from words picked out here and there I understood that there was a prophecy among them concerning the green hill, and a man's death upon it, and the coming of the end of the world. But when I asked him to repeat it in the Norman he would not, and I knew he was gone sullen as the Saxons do, and that a man might split his head open to get the words out, but he would not let them out of his mouth.

So I came to Glastonbury, and the Abbot read my father's letter, written by the old priest, Magnus, and he looked coldly on me, but for God's sake, or the gold's sake (Christ knows which and that Abbot has passed to judgment) he would not turn me away. But my father had told him what I had said about the oppression of the Saxon churls, and of the justice of the Barons which was an oppression, and the Abbot feared lest I should lift my heel against the authority of the Holy Church, and bring seditious rebellion amongst his monks. But that I had never done, and with God's help I will never do either, in spite of my visions, which are of God. So he questioned me straitly, and I promised obedience on the Body of Christ, and that I would make my vows and keep them narrowly.

So I became a monk and took my vows, and changed my name to Giraldus, and that Abbot passed and a new one came, and for sixteen years I lived as it might have been in Paradise, so that when those years were ended they seemed like one summer day in the North when the sun has far to go to pass over the earth, and takes time to it. I found that everything our Lord Christ took away from me with one hand He gave back to me a thousandfold with

the other, so that where before I had been lonely but free, now I was not lonely and not free, but in His own hand. For Christ is in the fields and the forests, in the barley stalks and in the young green of beech leaves, in the autumn woods when the trees flame at sunset, in the spring flowers and the growing of the grass at springtime. And He is in the eyes of the hind and the fawn, and in the voice of the stag in the pride of his strength when he goes roaring through the woods in the hot season. And He is in all the waters of the rivers and the streams, and the little springs bubbling through sand, and the green marshes on the moors where the silken white flowers grow in the summer. And He is in the waste places summer and winter, whether the bees are in the heather or the ground is deep in snow. So that if a man has Christ in his heart he has all these things also, and everything that is delightful and beautiful is his, and so I found it. For our Lord Christ walks in Glastonbury, and every stone that is laid there He blesses with His own hand, and His foot has blessed every blade of grass, and He has touched every flower, and the Holy Thorn is His and gives forth blessing and sweetness like a scent blown on the wind. If a man kneel down in a field and pray, Christ will come to him and walk with him, but in Glastonbury He walks with all, and even if their hearts be shut against Him yet He is there with them, without calling, and without prayer. So I thanked God that He had put it into my father's mind to send me to this place, where every day was like one long Mass, and Christ was on my lips with every breath I drew. I forgot the world and the cruelty of it, and trusted God to put all right in His own time, and I forgot the harsh lives of men and the unhappy lives

of women and churls, and I was no longer cursed nor beaten nor despised, for my brothers loved me, and I them, and in particular the monk who had been John de Crespigny, but was now called Martin. He was older than I by many years, and had come before me to the Abbey. In the prime of his strength he had given himself to God, for he had done an evil thing which is not my concern nor any man's, and Christ had touched him so that he repented, and so sorely that he could find no peace anywhere, nor on any pilgrimage until he came to touch the Holy Thorn. But in Glastonbury he found the Peace of God which passeth all understanding, so he stayed there and became a monk. He was very tall and dark-haired, with an eagle's face and fierce, bright, blue eyes. But for all his fierce eyes and the wild temper he never conquered utterly he never gave me a word or look that was not in loving kindness, and I never heard word from his mouth that was not clean. So I loved him, and to him only I told all that was in my heart, and he was wont to muse and ponder and shake his dark head and say :

"Giraldus, thou art a man born out of due time, and there is no place for thee in the world as it is now."

That I knew well, that there was no place for me, except in Glastonbury where our Lord Christ is for ever and ever.

The new Abbot, Henry of Blois, looked kindly on me, nor was cold and suspicious as had been my first Abbot, and because I could write well and draw in colours he gave me books to copy for my daily work, and I drew the great first letters in colours of red and gold and blue, with many conceits and fancies of my own, some of which pleased him, and

some did not. But even if he were disappointed he was never harsh, only he said sometimes that my thoughts ran too much upon the beauty of the earth and too little on the glory of the heaven. He said there were too many wheat-ears and flowers and animals in my pictures for the first letters, and too few angels with wings. But I thought that no one has seen an angel, and the angels we draw are but winged children, neither could they fly with their wings unless their shape was changed to the shape of a bird. So I drew a bird with a child's face for an angel, and that did not please him either. He said it was a confusion and monstrous, and that I had better return to my flowers and trees and animals. But gravely he cautioned me against thinking too much of God's creatures and too little of God, and he told me then that he meant to spend his life rebuilding and increasing the Abbey for the glory of God ; and every day at the Mass he prayed God's blessing on it and that he might be allowed to finish it.

Soon after this I was walking in the Cloister Garth one mid-day, and I saw that three tall lilies that grew in a certain place were in full blow. They were tall and white with golden hearts, and they looked beautiful standing in the shade against a grey wall. I knew that Christ had blessed them in their perfection, and I kneeled before the lilies to worship Him who was in them. The Abbot was walking in the garden also and he saw me kneeling and bade me get up, though not harshly, for with me he was never harsh. He said :

" Giraldu, our Lord Christ bade us consider the lilies, but not to kneel down and pray before them. It is sin."

I would have gone away saying nothing, thinking

it not seemly to answer him when he rebuked me, but he told me to speak, so I said :

“ Father, our Lord Christ is in the lilies for He has touched them in their perfection. I worship Him in them.”

“ Then you would say that the lilies are like the Body of the Lord in the Mass and as meet to be worshipped ? ”

I was confounded then, and could not tell what to answer, for indeed it seemed to me that everywhere in Glastonbury Christ was, as He is in the Mass. But not to the Abbot did I dare to say that, though I had told Martin. Then the Abbot said :

“ Well for thee that thou art in my Abbey and not another's. Worship Christ in the church and in thy cell.”

He said no more, neither forced me to confess myself a heretic and in error, for he was a wise man and always kindly to me. So in his countenance, and in the love of the monk Martin, and in my work done as well as I might, and in the Communion of Christ I lived happy for sixteen years, until my torments fell upon me again, and in this wise.

CHAPTER II

IT was in the seventh year of the reign of King Stephen. For a long time past there had been trouble in England, and disorders and many horrible wickednesses done which we heard of in the Abbey from time to time as messengers came. But still I was untouched in heart, and trusting to God to put all right in His own time. But on this one night in the seventh year of the new King's reign, a man came to the Abbey half out of his senses with a thing he had seen done, and he would cry it out loud before the Abbot and the brethren, and could not be let or hindered. I will not write down what he had seen, for my pen would not form the words, and my hand shakes and fails even with thinking on it. It was an abominable deed committed by a great Baron's men on the bodies of a woman, a little girl-child, and a very young boy. In the end they killed them all three and left them torn and broken, an offence in the face of the sun. But the woman, the little maid, and the young lad had done no harm to any. As I heard this thing my heart felt as if it were pierced with a sword, and I knew that my torment of pity and my agony were come upon me again, as they used to do in my father's castle. And because I was a man grown and in the prime of the full flowering of his mind the distress was the greater until it seemed that for pure sorrow I must swoon or die.

After the man had been led away, leaving the monks white-faced and trembling like aspens, I rose in my place and asked for speech with the Abbot. He granted this to me, and I kneeled before him in his own chamber, and prayed him to let me go out from the Abbey, and preach to the people on the roads or in the fields or wherever I could find any to listen, for so, I knew, I could readily come by my death. I felt in my heart that if I could find neither understanding nor forgetfulness my burden must grow till I could no longer bear it. I cried to the Abbot :

“ Father, I feel in my own soul the fear, the pain, the sorrow of every weak thing that is cruelly used—the women, the children, the churls, yes, and the hunted beasts—and how shall any one man live under that weight of grief ? Let me go forth.”

The Abbot pondered and mused, and then he said :

“ Giraldus, it seems thou art like our Lord Christ, Who bore our afflictions.”

I said : “ How can a man be like Christ, and least of all such a man as I ? But I bear their griefs, and in my own soul I feel them all. Let me go forth, and in my life I will preach that men love one another, and in my speedy death I shall find either understanding or forgetfulness. One or the other I must have, or my heart will burst.”

But he refused me, and said :

“ I should be an unfaithful shepherd if I let my sheep fare forth into the jaws of the wolves, and let my monks go preaching on the roads in this time of disorder. Neither would I lose thee from this place. Stay thou here, Giraldus, and remember that this troubled time will pass. The Barons are out of hand, and the King's justice is powerless.”

But I cried out : “ What use is it for men to be

made merciful by the King's justice, or the roads to be made safe for the weak by the laws of man? Why is there no pity in men's hearts so that they abhor cruelty whether the King rules, or the Barons rule, or the Church rules, or none rules at all? Why will they do such things as they did to the woman and the little maid and the young lad when their own hearts should have made them ashamed? It is the heart of man that is evil, and it is no more evil if there be no law and they do what they will without fear, and it is no less evil if the land be made peaceful by force of the King's justice. God, God, why hast thou made the hearts of the people pitiless?"

"No, Giraldus. That is the devil, not God. There are many pitiful men who do not countenance such things."

"Father, I pray your forgiveness, but I would speak contrary to that."

"Speak then, son."

"If a man will be hardy and gallant, and a shedder of other men's blood, and a slayer of beasts, and deal out harsh justice to his churls and take women unwilling because it is his right, and bring up his sons to do all these things he will have praise. Because he is cruel and fierce as a wolf and brings tears to women and slays men he has praise. But if a man will do none of these things—neither shed blood nor harm the weak—then he has no praise, but shame. He is called coward and woman, and cast out of his father's house. A man is not a man unless he is pitiless, and he is not brave unless he is a slayer of men. And men call women cowards because they cannot be man-slayers, and they forget their labour and sorrow and the courage that goes to the making of a man. Men are exalted and women

are despised, yet the women bring the life and the men take it. Men it was who did the things that we have heard, and they despise women who do not such things, and they despise me because they say I am not a man. O God, I thank Thee that Thou hast not made me a man to do such things—such things."

But the Abbot said gently : " Brother Martin is a man, and you love him well. Men are not all evil, Giraldus, neither are all women good. And the devil is loose in the world, but doubt not that in the end God shall overcome him."

" I doubt it not, but the end is too far away, even the end of my own life. Father, for our Lord Christ's sake, I pray you to let me go forth and preach."

" No, my son. I will not let you go."

" Then I shall die slowly like a man in torment, having neither understanding nor forgetfulness."

" Pray to God, and if it be His will, He will grant you one or the other. But I will not send you out to your death, Giraldus. My conscience and heart is against it, neither is the world ready for your message, so would your death avail nothing. Go and pray now that your burden be eased, and God give you peace."

So he blessed me, and I went to my cell.

And there I prayed until the sweat ran down, either that I might have understanding, or else that my agony of pity might pass away from me, and I be happy again as I was before the man came with his ghastly tale. But that prayer seemed to fall back against me as if it were impossible of answering, and after a while I prayed altogether for understanding. With the fierceness and strength and long endurance of my prayer, I seemed to have come

myself to the gates of heaven and to be beating on them, clamouring and crying out for understanding. The gates began to open, and the vision passed.

But at my side in the cell a fair Child stood, and as I looked at his face my wretchedness was eased. He was in the likeness of a human child of about ten years old, but in his countenance there was wisdom and no possibility of sin. He was very fair, a golden and white child like the lilies in the Cloister Garth, and his limbs and raiment shone with fire. I kneeled to him to adore him, thinking he was an angel or the Christ Child himself, but he laughed and bade me rise.

"Never kneel to me, Giraldus, I am not our Lord Christ, neither an angel, but one of the Children of God. And because of your torment of pity God has had mercy on you and has heard your prayer, and through me He will give you understanding in a little measure so that your pain be eased and your heart be lightened. And for a sign I will answer any question you will, and show you in a vision anything you would see. So ask, Giraldus, and it shall be answered."

I sat on the bed in my cell, for my knees had failed me, and my body felt weak and heavy from the sweat of my praying, and my wits wandered, and I could not well see the Child for weakness and light-headedness and the mist in my eyes. So I asked an old and foolish and selfish question, but one I had wanted answered for many a year. I said :

"Why am I a man accursed, a wooden sword, a man and no man, an outcast from my father's house and a shame among my fellows ? "

The Child laughed. We men that live on the earth and see the sorrow in it without understanding

are apt to think that everything holy must be solemn and that laughter in holiness is an offence to God. But this Child who was of God and wise and sinless was often laughing, and the sound of it was as pleasant as music. So he laughed at me, and presently answered me.

"Giraldus, you are a man not accursed but blessed, yes, even in this time that now is, for neither to a man nor a woman would God have sent me, but only to you. For you have been pure of heart and life, gentle and merciful, brave to speak your mind in your father's hall, obedient where you could be to him, and always to the Abbot. With the understanding of a man and the soul of a woman are you, and very near to the heart of Christ. For a man must always in a sort be pitiless and bring sorrow to women through lack of understanding, and a woman is like a dumb beast which accepts all in meekness, but to you who bear their sorrows will God speak, and to no other. And now, is there any in all the world that you would see, for I will show him to you in a vision."

So I said : " I would see my twin-sister who is a nun."

The Child made as it were a darkness come upon the wall of the cell. Then a light shone and out of it grew a vision, and I saw my sister in her nun's habit praying alone in a church. Her face was towards me and in sixteen years it was changed as it well might be, though I saw in it the features of the child I had loved and the young maid who had stood with me against our father in his Great Hall. But the face had grown sterner and more masterful with the years, and she looked like a man in a nun's habit. Yet her eyes were noble and pure, with some quality of shining honesty and truth in them,

and it seemed to me she had won through to happiness through the blessing of Christ. The Child said :

“ Go now into the vision and kiss her, but she will not see you nor feel you.”

I moved forward and as I passed the Child he touched me, and I entered into the vision and was in the church with my sister. I kneeled down beside her and prayed, then put my arm round her neck as she had done to me in the Great Hall, and I kissed her on the cheek. She did not feel me nor see me, but some happy thought came to her mind, for she smiled and I heard her giving thanks, not in the Latin of her prayers but in our own childhood's Norman tongue.

That vision passed, and I was back in my cell with the Child. He asked me if there were any other small thing he could show me, for he said that he would not at that time show what God had appointed for me, as I was not ready, being weak and fore-wandered in my head.

I said : “ I would see the Abbey, when Henry of Blois has finished his building.”

The Child made the darkness, and the vision grew out of it and there was the new increased Abbey, built and finished by Henry of Blois for the glory of God. But a minute later, or it seemed to me but a minute, it was all in flames, and the fire devoured the Abbey and the church, and it was all fallen in black ruins.

“ Ah, Child of God ! ” I cried out, in amazement and sadness, “ is the new Abbey of Henry of Blois to be burnt down ? It will break his heart.”

“ Twelve years from his death it will be burnt as you see it. But now look, Giraldus, and see what will come after this fire.”

I looked, and in the vision I saw another church, greater by far than the church which should be burnt, and exceedingly beautiful. It was built in a strange and lovely fashion with soaring pointed arches, such as I had never seen, and this gave a lightness and a spirit to the place which was not there with the old, round arch. It was the greatest and most glorious church that ever I saw, and the monks were in it, praising God.

"See now," said the Child.

And again it might have been a minute, or a hundred years, or three thousand, I knew not, but the great splendid church was still there and a man with a noble strong face was preaching in the church at the people's Mass. There were many hearing him, and some of the women were weeping.

"Why do they weep?" I asked.

"They fear for the Abbot, for his enemies encompass him. Now look, Giraldus."

The vision changed, and I saw the fulfilment of the Saxon churl's prophecy, for on the round green hill outside the city they hanged the Abbot, and my eyes grew faint with horror so that I must turn them away from that vision. The Child said:

"That is the last Abbot, and in the Great Church of Glastonbury there will be no more masses said or sung."

"Child of God! Have they driven Christ away from Glastonbury? Alas! Alas!"

"Christ is above the Abbots. Christ is above the Mass. And as long as the world endures He will walk in Glastonbury Abbey grounds, if it were a forest, a green field, or part of a city, or a garden. Look, Giraldus."

I looked, and saw the great church fallen into ruins, and where the floor of the church had been

was now a fair grass lawn, and not far from the High Altar was a big beech-tree with her leaves in the tender green of early summer. And one of the soaring pointed arches was left, but its top was broken. Yet it was still marvellously beautiful, so springing and so light that it seemed to have no foundation in the earth, but to rest upon it with but the pressure of a butterfly's feet. So light was it that it seemed if God called down from His throne the arch would leap up and away at His voice and fly back to heaven, where surely it was made.

The Child said :

" Christ has blessed every stone that man has laid in Glastonbury. He has blessed every stone and every growing thing. He is in the broken arch, and He is in the beech tree, and His feet have blessed every blade of grass upon the lawns. Now see, here is a man in grief. Go down into the vision, Giraldus, and sit by him and you shall know Christ is still in Glastonbury, though the Mass and the Abbots have passed away."

I went down, and saw many people in strange raiment and speaking a strange tongue. But the man who was sorrowful was not speaking, he was alone, sitting on a seat under the big beech tree, looking at the broken arch. I saw into his heart, that it was troubled, and that he was perplexed about many things, and in a sore unhappy repentance like John de Crespigny when he came to touch the Holy Thorn. But our Lord Christ was still in Glastonbury, and He laid hands on the man and forgave him his sins, and eased him of his perplexities, and He gave him a sign. The broken arch was outlined in white fire, and for a breath the fire sprang out from the broken ends, and each line of fire met at the key of the arch, so that the man saw the

whole arch as it had been, and as I had seen it in my vision.

Then this vision of the ruin of the great church of Glastonbury passed also, and I was back in my cell with the Child. He said :

“ Giraldus, you believe that I have power to show you time past, time present, and time to come ? ”

“ Yes, Child of God.”

“ I will show you what is to be shown, and you shall walk with me on earth as it has been and as it will be, and know strange tongues and see strange things, and so you shall come to a little measure of understanding. Now sleep, for you are tired, and in the time appointed I shall come again.”

So he left me, and I fell on my bed in the sweetest sleep I ever had in my life.

CHAPTER III

ON the fourth night after, the Child came again to me in my cell to begin to show me the visions which should bring me to a little measure of understanding. But of the first he showed me it is hard to write, for my head whirls and faints at the thought and the remembrance, and the pen shakes in my hand as if it had a palsy, and I must get down to my knees to worship the glory of God which I saw in that vision.

I saw growing out of the darkness the Child made on the wall of the cell the whole firmament, and all the stars moving according to the will of God. There was a music which was so vast and sweet that it had passed beyond sound and was a silence. It was too great for sound and too perfect, so that music, the music of the spheres, was a silence. And in this silence the stars moved in their courses, according to the will of God. It was His will that one star should pass close by another, and on the smaller star tides arose, and convulsions, and labours terrific and enormous, and of that labouring of the star were born eight more stars flung off from its body to revolve round it for ever and ever, or according to the will of God. And the Child pointed to one of these eight new-born stars and said : "That is earth, and that which flung it off is the sun." But the earth was a whirling molten mass, and I cried out and fell on the floor of the cell like one dead.

For three days I could hear nothing, because of the music of the spheres which was a silence, and I lay without motion like a man in a trance. They let me blood, and the Abbot visited me, but I could not hear him. I smiled at him and told him that I was well but could hear neither my own voice nor his, and I asked to be left alone in my cell. On the fourth day I was recovered, and that night the Child came again.

This vision was of the earth alone by itself, and it was not the flaming hot, molten mass, but cool, as the Child told me, and on its surface was slime. Minutes passed, and things began to move and crawl in the slime. Minutes, I said, but whether minutes or thousands of years, or millions, I could not tell, for in the visions time was not.

"See," said the Child, "God has made Life come on the earth."

So I looked, and saw horrible things that had life and moved in the slime, and the face of the earth was ghastly and unkind.

"Child of God, I would rather walk down into hell than go on to that earth as it is now."

The Child laughed.

"Why, no, Giraldus, we will not go down yet. There is no place for man on the earth as it is now. Look again."

I looked, and saw green trees coming, and the most awesome great beasts of shapes incredible, and I would have said that none but the devil could have conceived the shapes of those beasts. But the Child heard my thought, and he said :

"Whatever is, is God. Look now, and see this new beast, for he is the beast that is to be man."

I looked, and saw a small and hairy beast of a

shape not unbelievable like the shapes of the huge monsters God had made, yet he was far from the form of a man.

"Child of God!" I cried out in perplexity. "Is this the beast that is to be man?"

"Yes, that is he."

"But it is written otherwise in the book of Genesis, and it is written that God made man after His own image, and woman out of man. Is this beast made in the image of God?"

The Child laughed.

"Why, no. But God has not made man yet, only the beast that is to be man. See, he is still a beast, sinless, not fearing God, not knowing God."

Minutes passed, or thousands upon thousands of years, and the beast grew a little more like man as generations of him were born and grew up and died, leaving their seed. Then the Child said:

"Come down upon this earth and see a miracle."

So we passed into the vision of earth, and the Child led me by the hand up into a high mountain, whereon sat the Spirit of God looking upon the earth and the life He had made to come upon it. He looked upon the beast that was to be man, and saw that he was sinless, and that his ravenings and cruelties were but the ravenings and cruelties of a beast, and that he could not love God nor praise Him, nor do evil, nor do good.

But I saw God breathe across the palm of His right hand, and His breath became the soul of a man. And He breathed across the palm of His left hand, and His breath became the soul of a woman. The souls stood before Him, and because they were made of the breath of God they were glorious and sinless, and one was not more beautiful than the other, nor was one stronger than the other, but they were

different, because God had made them so. And the souls praised God, and knew Him.

God called to Him two of the beasts that were to be men, a male beast and a female, and they were like a man and a woman, but exceedingly ugly and ill-favoured. But they were still beasts, and stood before God without shame or fear or worship, for they were sinless and could do no good nor evil, neither praise God. So the souls stood, and the bodies of the beasts stood, and God bade the souls enter the bodies of the beasts and make them men. The souls entered in, the woman soul into the female, and the man soul into the male, and the glory and height and strength of the soul departed as the bodies touched them, and the souls were quenched to a small glimmering spark made of the breath of God. And now stood before God neither beasts nor souls, but a man and a woman, who were afraid, and fell down on their faces before Him.

"See," said the Child. "Fear has entered with the soul, where before there was none, and they are afraid of God, yet they do not know Him."

And that vision passed, and I was back in my cell with the Child. I said :

"Will He give their children souls?"

"Yes. But for the others they shall remain beasts for ever, for of all animals man is the only one who is to have a soul and to praise God. Now come with me again upon the earth, and see the man and the woman whom God hath made."

The Child made the vision of earth, and we walked on the earth and found the man and the woman living very miserably in fear of wild beasts and hunger. The woman was with child, heavy and weak, and as we watched them the man sprang upon her for a trivial fault, or no fault, and beat her, and

cruelly ill-used her. His strength was whole, but she, because she was with child, was heavy and weak.

"Ah, Child of God!" I cried. "This soul that God has given him has made him worse than a beast, for a beast will not so ill-use his mate for no fault."

"Whatever is, is God," said the Child. "God has made sin with the union of the soul and the body. Now man can sin, where before he was a beast and could not. But can a beast praise God?"

"No. But a wild goose will stay unmated always if her mate is killed, and this man is worse than a beast."

"But not even the wild goose can know God and praise Him, yet these men that God has made so that they can be lower than the beasts if they will, can also be far higher, for the spark of God's breath is in them. He has given them free-will and the power to do good and evil, and with the union of soul and body God has made sin and He has made virtue, where before there was neither. Whatever is, is God."

"Ah, Child! Is cruelty God, then? For this man is cruel to the weak, not with the sinless cruelty of a beast. God has sent cruelty upon the earth."

"It is man's first sin. And every other sin that the heart of man can devise will come upon the earth, and every man that has the spark of God's breath in him can sin, but the beasts that have it not cannot sin, and God loves the beasts, but not as He loves this man He has made."

"But must sin continue always?"

"It must continue till the soul of man has grown from that little feeble spark until it is the size of the man's body. Then will man be made perfect, and sin will cease off the earth. Man has it in his own

power to make his soul grow, even these two that such little time ago were beasts have the power to grow their souls and raise man by a little, nearer his perfection. But until man has conquered his first sin, which is the worst of all the evil he can do, he will not be able to grow his soul by much. Now see again."

The Child changed the vision of earth, and the world had moved on in time—a thousand years, or ten thousand—I could not tell. We went down on to this new earth and walked upon it, and found a man and a woman with the spark of God's breath in them, living in a dry cave by the side of a river. They were not yet beautiful, but less like beasts by far than the first man and the first woman, and because by the virtue of the Child my eyes were open, I could see the breath of God in them, and the spark was a little larger and brighter, and the glory of the soul by a little less diminished with the touch of the body. They could laugh and use many words, and hold kindly converse together.

The man was drawing pictures on the walls of the cave that was his house, and though they were rude yet they were boldly drawn and clearly recognizable as deer and fish and other beasts. The woman was dressing a hide, scraping it lustily with a sharp stone. There were two children of walking age, and presently one, watching the man draw his pictures, by mischance knocked his father's arm and caused him to make an ill stroke. But kindness and a certain measure of understanding of another's mind had come with the growing of man's soul, and he did not hurt the child, but pushed him gently so that he stood further off. I saw another child, too, so young that it could not walk, and in a little while it left its mother's side and began crawling boldly to

the cave's mouth. The woman did not see it leave her as she was busy with her stone scraping the under side of the hide, but a great wolfish bitch-dog rose from a corner in the cave, and turned the child back with nudges of her nose.

"See!" I said to the Child. "The man has a Dog, and it cares for his children, and is his friend."

The Child laughed, and he touched the wolfish bitch with the tips of his fingers. Her eyes were opened and she saw us, yet did not growl or spring on us as intruders into the life of the man and the woman, but stood with her tail waving, looking gently at us. I was reminded of my great hound Lett, who had been with me at my father's castle, and how, but for my twin-sister, I had missed her more than any other living creature when I was driven out and sent away to the monastery. She had been mine from a puppy, and I had never allowed her to go hunting with the other hounds, but had taught her to be gentle and not blood-guilty. And for her great love for me she had restrained her nature, and ceased from killing, and we had much delightful converse together so that I missed her sorely for a little while. The Child saw me looking at this great wolf-creature, and he laughed again, and said :

"Giraldus, will you talk with the Man and the Woman? I will take fear from them, and open their eyes, and you shall understand and say their words."

"Child, I would rather play with the bitch who makes me think of Lett. If it be not a sin to think more of a beast than a man with the breath of God in him?"

The Child laughed, and said: "There is no sin."

So we went from the cave and the bitch followed us. And by the great river on a little sandy beach

in the sunlight I played with her and thought of Lett, the hound, that I supposed would be in a manner a descendant of this creature that was more like a wolf than a dog. But the wolfish bitch was very gentle with me and kindly, and she swam forth into the river and fetched out bits of wood I threw into the water, and then shook herself so that the drops flew off her shaggy coat, sparkling in the sun like a fountain. After a while she went back into the cave, and I thought she was tired of play and would return no more. But she came back to us, carrying in her mouth one of her pups which she desired to show me. I took it as very pleasant and kindly of her, knowing how jealous the female beasts are of their young, and I praised the little whelp and admired it. Then they two, the pup and the bitch, started playing together, and at their antics the Child of God laughed till the air rang with the sweet sound of it. And I laughed also, for this vision the Child showed me was not tremendous and awesome as had been the making of the earth and the making of man, nor ghastly and sorrowful like the vision of man's first sinful cruelty. It was a simple and pleasant vision, of sunlight and sweet air and the blessed water of the river, and the kindly play of beasts together in friendship, and the Man and the Woman doing no cruelty but quietly going about their work and their pleasure. So my heart was eased as is the string of a bow let down, and I caressed the bitch who made me think of Lett, and caressed her puppy, and gave thanks to God. In a while the Child said :

"Giraldus, take off thy monk's habit and swim into the river with the dog."

Now I had desired in my heart to do that very thing, for the sun was hot and the water a tempta-

tion, and I a strong swimmer in my youth. But I thought it unseemly to take any pleasure of the senses in a vision sent by God, and I told the Child my doubt. He laughed.

"When thou hast a swimming dream dost thou confess it as a sin?" he asked, for he knew in his wisdom that I was used to have many such dreams of swimming, either in lake, river or the sea.

"No, Child. I never thought it a sinful dream."

"Neither is it a sin to swim in this dream God has sent you. So take off thy monk's habit and swim into the river. And thou, bitch, take thy pup back to the cave and go into the river with Giraldus."

The bitch obeyed him, and I did also, and for a long while I swam in the river, and the bitch with me until she grew tired with the weight of her wet fur and went to sit with the Child of God on the little sandy beach. The delight of that swimming I cannot tell, no, nor could any man understand it unless he had been a swimmer and without means of swimming for sixteen years. There is the feeling of the water on the skin, and the way the sunshine looks when there is water in the eyes, and the cleaving of the water with the limbs, and floating on the back with the arms stretched out, and letting the body sink till the water closes overhead and then looking upwards with open eyes through the dim greenness. And then the rushing upwards with the heart thundering and lungs bursting, and taking great breaths of the sweet air. When I came out of the river I threw myself down on my knees all naked as a needle, and with ecstasy and thankfulness the tears mingled with the drops that hung on my eyelashes. The Child said :

"Water is a holy thing. Did not our Lord Christ say that man should be born again of water and the

Spirit? And did not He enter into the river Himself? If a man bathe his body in the water of a river, or a lake, or in the sea, and remember his Creator and give thanks for it, he has received a sacrament. Surely water is a blessed and a holy thing."

And as the Child said this I understood it, but when the vision had passed and I was back in my cell and he had left me, I was perplexed. For neither our Abbot nor any other would think it a seemly or a convenient thing that his monks should go swimming naked into the rivers or the sea, and how should the water be a Sacrament unless it had first been blessed by a priest and signed with the Cross? Yet I remembered that as I kneeled naked by the shore of the river in the vision, I felt as if I had received a sacrament and been bathed indeed in the Water of Life. So finding this matter too hard for me, I gave thanks again to God for the easing of my heart and the pleasant, kindly vision, and for the delight of the swimming, and then I fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV

THE Child came on the fourth night after, and he said he would show me no more barbarous men and women, but that I should see a people grown to the full stature of man's brain, and exceedingly wise. He raised his hand to make the vision but I spoke and he stopped.

"Are they then made perfect and sin vanished?" I asked.

"Giraldus, you are a babe and have little understanding. Man's brain is not his soul, and a man may be the wisest on the earth, and yet the spark of the breath of God in him be small and puny. Neither will women's brains ever be quite equal to men's in strength and capacity of learning, yet you of all men know that the soul of a woman is equal in strength and beauty to the soul of a man, for you saw them standing naked and without body at the feet of God. Do not confound man's brain with the breath of God that dwells in him, for thereby arise monstrous errors."

I was abashed, and said nothing, and the Child made the vision on the wall of my cell. Out of the darkness grew a vision of a people that lived on the banks of a great river, and either side of the river was a sandy desert, but near the water the country was green and fertile so that the people might get their bread.

"Let us go down into that country," said the

Child, "and by my virtue you shall see into the minds of the people and know their laws."

We went down into the vision and walked among the people who lived on the great river, and they had law, and bounds that might not be broken, and they had writing, and drew pictures for their writing which was a thing I had never seen. Also they were sculptors and could work marvellously in stone, and some of the figures I saw that they had made caused my heart to knock against my ribs, they were so full of dignity and awful power. They had raised great temples and wonderful tombs in the desert, and I asked the Child whether this people knew God.

"They worship their Creator, but under divers names and in divers forms. This people does not know that there is but one God, yet they are very wise, and the wisest of all of them are the priests and priestesses who serve their gods."

I looked at the people and saw that they were well-favoured, and very far beyond the first man and the first woman, and very far, too, from the man and the woman who had tamed the dog. Yet their souls for the most part were not in any great measure brighter or larger, and I was perplexed and sorrowful, for it seemed to me that man's brain had altogether outpaced his soul and that now there was little hope he would ever reach his perfection.

"Are these people as wise as any that shall be?"

"They have reached the full stature of man's brain."

"Then will their souls grow also?"

"The souls of this people cannot grow, because their hearts are pitiless and they have not conquered man's first sin. Their temples and their tombs are built on the bones and the blood of

slaves, and cruelty is over all this land. Come now, and I will show you a people who worship one God."

The Child led me, and we came to a great tomb in the desert that was still in the building. Under the burning sun slaves sweated and toiled, and if they faltered they were beaten, and their blood fell on the huge stones they moved.

"See!" said the Child. "Their blood is on the stones. No power and no beauty that is built on slavery will help man's soul to grow, for it is a sin, and a sin of cruelty. This people is little better than the First Man who sprang upon his mate and beat her when she was weak and heavy with child. Giraldus, look at the slaves."

I had turned my eyes away, but at his bidding I looked again at the slaves and saw that they were of a different race from their masters. The Child said:

"They worship one God. These are the Children of Israel, and the people that raise these mighty tombs are the Egyptians."

At this I cried out and fell on my face in the sand, for the wonder and awe that I should see in a vision the Children of Israel in Egypt. The Child raised me up, and bade me not to be afraid but to look at the souls of the slaves. And for all that they worshipped the true God and were the Chosen, and our Lord Christ was to be born of Mary, a Jewess, and for all that they had not yet sinned in casting Him out, their souls were no brighter and no larger than the souls of the Egyptians. Which was a grievous puzzle to me, and I could not understand it. But the Child said:

"They are as cruel as the others, and pity is not yet born on the earth, save here and there. Till pity is in every man's heart the souls cannot grow large and bright. But come, and I will show you the

wisdom of this people that is beyond their temples and their tombs and their hewing in stone."

He took me to a great temple in a city, and we went through the outer courts and passed by a secret dark passage to an inner room. There was a man with shaven head, wearing a white robe, and his face was beautiful and very wise, but his soul was so nearly dead within him that it was not so large nor so bright as the soul of the First Man. I cried out to him that his soul was on the point of death, but he did not hear me, his ears being closed and his eyes also, so that he saw neither me nor the Child. He had a brazier burning before him, and he was standing in a circle marked with many heathenish and evil marks. With him inside the circle was also a bier with upon it the naked body of a dead woman. At least there was no movement in her nor any sign of breathing. The man cast something into the brazier and a great smoke arose which took the form of a whirl of wind or water, narrow at the bottom and spreading out at the top. The smoke had life of itself apart from the fire out of which it was born, and it left the fire and I saw it pass into the body of the dead woman. The hair round my tonsure prickled and rose on my scalp, and I crossed myself and tried to pray to God, but could get no words out nor even think of any for the horror of this black magic. For I knew the man had called to him an evil spirit and sent it into the body of the dead. The man lay down on the bier by the dead woman and three times he kissed her lips. The third time she lifted her arms and put them about him. The sorcerer laughed, and kissed her again and fondled her. So I prayed the Child to take me away quickly from the place, for the half of the deadly sin I had seen had turned the

marrow in my bones, and I knew I could bear no more.

The Child had pity on me and took me away down the dark secret passage, and through the body of the temple, and out into the sweet air and sun, and despite the heat of the sun I shivered and a cold sweat ran down my limbs. I had never heard nor read of any lustful sin that in darkness and heaviness approached the sin of the sorcerer, and I was afraid and horribly ashamed. The Child took me to sit under a tree in the shade, out in the road where people were passing by on their occasions, and I said nothing and looked at the tree and God gave me back my peace. It was a small slender tree, naked far up its trunk, bursting out into a head of leaves at its top. It was not to compare in beauty with a beech tree or an oak or an elm, but its leaves were green and the shade of it grateful in that hot, sun-scorched land.

"Giraldus," said the Child, "is not this a wise people than can raise the dead for their pleasure? But they shall perish and their wisdom with them, and only little broken pieces remain like the fragments of a vase which is cast abroad on a heap. Nor must you think that they use their wisdom for nothing but evil, for many of the things they do are right and lawful. But every invention and wisdom of man can be used either for good or for evil, and God has given him the power to choose which he shall do."

"It was an evil spirit the man raised up to pass into the body of the woman."

"It was a spirit. But whatever is, is God. There is no sin in the world save in the heart of man, and the spirit was without sin, and the body of the woman was without sin, being dead, and there was

no evil save in the heart of the priest who raises the dead to be his lovers."

"What was the spirit?"

The Child laughed.

"What am I, Giraldus?"

But I could not answer him.

"These are things you cannot understand, but there are spirits who are of God, and yet are not the souls of men."

"Can a soul die in the body of a man?" I asked him, remembering how small and wavering had been the soul of the priest.

"Can the breath of God die?"

I said: "'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.'"

"No. But it shall come to judgment. When that priest comes to his death his soul shall leap from his body as glorious and sinless as the soul of the man you saw standing at the feet of God. And to God it shall account for all the priest's sins done in the body, and God shall send it to its purifying, though it is already perfect and sinless. Yet it shall suffer for the sins unrepented which were done in the body. Now that is too hard for thee, Giraldus. But pain for sin there must be, and if the pain come not with repentance on earth then it must come hereafter. Now see, look at this man who comes led by two others."

I saw a man led by two others, but he was not blind. The men that led him had in them the spark of the breath of God, but he that was led had no soul and his eyes were empty and staring.

"Then the soul can die and the body be yet alive."

"No. His soul has gone back to God, or it may be God never gave him one. He is without soul, sinless as the beasts are sinless, and if he turn and

rend the men that lead him he is without fault in God's eyes. He is mad. And so are many that suffer the judgment of men, but God does not judge them."

"And will men always judge them?"

"Why, no. When men are pitiful they will not judge them, but care for them, and understand better when a man has lost his soul and is sinless."

"Ah, Child, why should God take a man's soul away from him or let him live always without one?"

"Their souls are in His keeping, and surely they are happier than in the body of a beast which is man's body. Giraldus, how does this people please thee?"

"Child, I am oppressed by their wisdom and dignity and power, and by their cruelty and the sin of the priest. Neither do I like their hot land as well as my own, and though I am a barbarian before them yet they do not please me."

"Then I will send thee back to thine own time, and the little cell in Glastonbury."

So he sent me back, and alone in my cell I prayed for the soul of the priest of Egypt, for I thought that even yet it might be in the purifying torment for the sins he had done in his secret room in the great temple. I gave thanks to God also that the wisdom of the Egyptians was lost from earth, and remained only in broken fragments, and I thanked Him for the marvels He showed me by the virtue of the Child, and then I went to sleep.

CHAPTER V

FOR three days I did my daily work of writing, and began a new great first letter which I should limn in blue and red and gold, and I prayed and sang with the others in the church, and walked with Brother Martin in the Cloister Garth, ordering my life as usual. But all the while my mind was on the visions, and I did a pattern for the great first letter which was like a design I had seen on the hem of the priest's white robe, and then I scraped it out again with a sharp knife, for it seemed to me blasphemous to copy anything from that evil man into a Mass Book. The scraping made a rough place in the parchment and it would not well take the paint after. The Abbot came to me while I was working and asked me what I had done ill that I had to scrape it out. I told him I had drawn a pattern which did not please me.

" You should have asked whether it pleased me, before you took it out and spoiled the parchment. Now that letter will never be so good as the others. And why, Giraldus, are you so silent, and forget to eat your food in the refectory ? Are you sick again, as you were three days after the man came to the Abbey with his tale ? "

Now I did not know what to answer, as I did not wish to tell the Abbot of my visions. They were of God, and the Child was the Child of God, but heresies swarmed in them, and often my head whirled with trying to understand how a heresy

could be of God. But I did not want to ask the Abbot that question, for he would have denied the visions, or have said they were evil. That I could not have endured. So after a while I told him that with God's help I was trying to understand why there was cruelty in the world, and that I was silent and distracted because I was thinking deeply, and I asked him to excuse me as I had no feeling that my thoughts were sinful. And I prayed in myself to be forgiven if I had told a lie. The Abbot was satisfied with that, and he left me. But Martin asked me the same question when I was walking with him in the garden, and to him I let out the truth, for I loved him, and it was not possible for me to tell him even half a lie. I said :

"God is sending me visions and they are heretical."

"If they are of God they cannot be heretical."

"But they are. If you say no soul is utterly cast away that is a heresy."

"A pleasant one," said Martin, and then he looked behind him to see if anyone were listening.

"And that the Mass should pass away from Glastonbury, and yet Christ still be there, which is to say that a man can worship Christ without the Mass."

"Well, that is a heresy. But, Giraldus, I will never believe that any visions you could have could be otherwise than from God, and you must have mistaken your vision."

But I had not, for the Child's words were always as plain and clear as crystal, and he had said Christ was above the Mass. And I began to think that in my heart I had always been a heretic, because it was no grief to me to think that Christ was above the Mass, neither to think that all souls must in the end

be saved by purifying. Yet how should God show His visions to a heretic who lifted up his heel against the spiritual teaching and authority of his own Church, and how, if they were heresies should the Child of God utter them, and how, if they were not, could the whole Church and our Holy Father at Rome be wrong? So my head began to whirl again, and when the Child came to me that night I asked him to help me. He said :

"Who would say, if you told your visions, that they were heretical?"

"Why, the Abbot and all priests and Bishops and our Holy Father at Rome."

"Yet all these are men?"

"Yes, they are men."

"Then they can be in error sinlessly, and because they know no better?"

"They can be. But it seems not possible that I should be right, and they wrong."

"No, it is not you who are right and they wrong. It is God, Whose mind no man can understand, that is right, and if men in striving to understand Him make errors, He will forgive them. But if men say that others, who are also striving to understand God, are in error, then He will not hold them guiltless. Is that too hard for thee, Giraldus?"

"Then would God have all men worship Him in their own way, so long as they meekly and humbly do worship?"

"He would never cast away from Him a man who meekly and humbly worshipped."

"Then of what use is the Church?" I asked, and again my head began to whirl.

"A man might have a fruit tree on which the fruit hung, ripe and pleasant, fit for the eating. And if he could not reach the lowest branch to climb into

the tree he would get a ladder and set it against the trunk and so reach the lowest branch. But his brother might come, and he, being more light and strong, might leap straight up at the lowest branch and catch it with his hands, and so climb into the tree and eat the fruit. But the ladder is not the tree, neither is it the fruit. It is the means by which the first man came to the fruit, and by no other way could he have come. And very many go up the ladder into the Tree of Life, but very few leap straight into it from the ground. Yet still the ladder is not the tree, and the tree is greater than it."

"And what manner of man would he be, who could leap straight into the tree?"

"He would be a man who could read the Word of God with understanding, and pray."

"Then there will never be many, for how can more than a few men ever learn to read?"

The Child laughed, and because I had not heard him laugh yet that night I rejoiced in the sound and forgot my perplexities. Then he said:

"I will show you another people who reached the full stature of man's brain, and this time you will be able to understand their tongue without help, for I will show you the Greeks."

I was abashed at this, because though I was a monk and could read Latin I had never been able to come to any understanding of Greek, and the only tongues I could speak were Latin, Norman, and some Saxon. I was not able for study and learning, only to write, and draw pictures for my first letters. So I told the Child I was an ignorant and unlettered monk, and he laughed, and said that he would help me.

He made the vision of a fair city, set by the sea,

and he said that it was Athens in the day of her power, and that we would walk there and see the souls of the people and their minds and their laws. So we went down into the vision, and the wonders I saw in Athens I cannot write, for my pen fails, and it would take all the years of my life that have been to describe all I saw.

But their buildings were splendid and noble, and their sculpture was so glorious and so far beyond anything I had seen that it made my heart faint and my eyes prickle with tears of joy. The Child touched my ears so that I should understand their speech, and I heard one of their wise men reasoning in a great hall, and I knew that before him I was like a child of five years old. But the power and the beauty of Greece was built up on the blood and the tears of slaves, and the people were not pitiful, neither were their souls any larger than the Egyptians' souls, nor any brighter. They oppressed their women and kept them shut up without joy in the houses and the men made companionship with harlots. I said to the Child :

" Why do they not rather make companionship with their wives and daughters, and shut up the harlots within the houses ? "

" We will ask them," said the Child. He made me to be in the likeness of the Greeks that were in Athens, and in habit like to them, and we went down into the market-place, and there the Child opened a man's eyes so that he could hear me and speak with me.

So I said : " Why do you shut up your wives without joy and make companionship with harlots ? "

The man answered me without faltering or shame :
" If we let our wives and daughters live with us and

make companionship with us other men would lust after them, and so we should be shamed. As to the harlots that is no matter, and if a man lose his harlot to another his face is not blackened."

"The shame is that there should be any harlots, and that your men should lust after other men's wives. Surely without the desire of men there could be no harlots, and for every adultery that is done it is a man who is in the first fault. It is not right to oppress the wives for the faults of the men.

"But women will tempt men to adultery."

"So they may ; but a woman cannot force a man, and he can keep away from her if he will."

"Stranger," said the Greek, "you would alter the whole nature of man, and have him treat women as if they were not contemptible, and have all young men chaste until they marry, and have a man make companionship with his wife who is nothing but a vessel and to bear him children. Perhaps you would also say that when we take women in war they are not to be our slaves ? "

"I would say that."

"Stranger, you speak unadvisedly in Athens," said the Greek, and then the Child touched me and made me as I was before, not to be seen nor spoken with. He said :

"Giraldus, it is useless speaking to these people, for they cannot understand. They have not seen, as you have, that the soul of the woman is as strong and glorious as the soul of the man, and they have not felt, as you have, the sorrows of women in their own hearts. But come, and I will show you a man whose soul has grown far beyond these others. In an unpitiful time I will show you a man who has pity."

The Child led me, and took me into a house, and

into a chamber where a man sat writing. His face was noble and grave, and his soul was no small spark or flickering flame, but a great fire within him, half as large as his body and of an exceeding brightness. The Child said :

“ See how this soul has grown from the spark that was in the body of the beast. But this man is like the voice crying in the wilderness, and his own people are against him, and in the end they will drive him out by their scorn to die in exile from the city.”

“ Who is it ? ”

“ His name is Euripides, and in his own heart he bears the sorrows of women, and he is pitiful. Listen, Giraldus, he will read what he has written.”

The Greek began to read, and as I sat listening in the vision my tears fell down. Of all the tongues I heard spoken in my visions the Greek was the most beautiful and noble, and the music of the sound alone might have made the tears come. But this Greek had written down everything that had burned in my heart when I had seen the churl woman tormented by my brother, for this was of the sorrow and the fear of women taken in war. So I sat and listened, and my tears fell down.

But when the voice ceased and I looked up I was not in the house at Athens, but in my own cell, and the Child was with me. I cried out :

“ Oh, Child ! Why will they not listen to him ? Why is the world still pitiless when what he has written is in it ? Is it lost, that book of the sorrows of women ? ”

“ It is not lost. But he was born out of due time, and the world was not ready for him. His soul indeed was grown, but the souls of the others were small and dull, and they would not listen to

him. The minds of men are not yet ready to stop the making of war. That cannot come till more hearts are pitiful than pitiless, and that time is not yet."

"Will it come?"

"Surely it will come."

"And that there will be no slaves or serfs or churls?"

"That will come."

"And no harlots?"

"That will come."

"Ah, Child, show me that time!"

The Child laughed.

"There is much to be shown first. Sleep, Giraldus, and forget the sorrow of the women of Troy, for it is but a legend of old time."

"It is the sorrow of all women in all wars."

"Why, so it is," said the Child, and he left me.

CHAPTER VI

THREE more days passed, and I wrote in my Mass Book, and prayed and praised God, and walked with John de Crespigny in the Cloister Garth. And again the Abbot would have been dismayed had he known what were my thoughts, for my mind dwelt unceasingly on the Greek poet, Euripides, who was a heathen and knew not the one God. Yet I had seen that he was the first man who for pity's sake would go clean contrary to his fellows and endure their enmity, and it seemed to me that this heathen was a fore-runner of Christ, even of our Lord Christ the pitiful, and what would the Abbot have said to that? And though I could not remember the Greek tongue, for the tongues which I understood in the vision by virtue of the Child I forgot afterwards, and not a word of them stayed with me—yet the spirit of the poem was with me, the splendour of it, the dignity, and the great strength, like the strength of a rock which withstands the roaring and beating of the sea.

On the fourth night the Child came, and this night he kneeled down without a word on the floor of my cell, and prayed, but no sound came from his lips. I began to tremble, and wonder fearfully what he would show me, for all time was in his hands.

He rose up, and said :

“Giraldus, I will show you a Man whose heart is pitiful, and whose Soul is whole and perfect.”

So I knew he would show me our Lord Christ,

walking upon earth, and I cast myself down at his feet and cried that I was not worthy.

"Many saw Him that were not worthy, and Judas was one of the twelve. Come, Giraldus, and be not afraid for He loves thee well. Hast thou not walked with Him in Glastonbury? Come, take my hand."

I took his hand, and of the vision he made and of our walking in the Holy Land I know nothing, for I was in a moving sleep and did not see, neither hear, but the Child led me.

Then we were in an open place in a city with many people standing round, leaving a clear space among them. In this space I saw a woman, very beautiful, and some men, and near to the woman a blinding white flame, so bright that I could look at it no more than at the sun at mid-day, but must turn my eyes away.

"What is the light?" I asked the Child.

"It is the Soul of Christ."

I kneeled down, and the Child also, and he passed his hand once across my face, so that as it were a half darkness came over my eyes, and I could look at the white flame. And in this vision with my own eyes I saw our Lord Christ, and His soul was whole and perfect in His body, from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, and from the tips of the fingers of one hand to the other hand, even to the tips of the fingers. His soul was whole and perfect and larger even than His body, for the edges of His form were outlined in the white fire of His soul. Then the Child touched my eyes with his finger, and the vision of the Soul of Christ passed away altogether, and I saw Him as did the others, a Man in His body, with His soul hidden as are the souls of men. Of His body I cannot write, save that it was perfect and whole and surpassingly beautiful, nor of His

eyes, save that they looked gently on the woman, but sternly on the men. For the woman who stood by His side was she who was taken in adultery, and the men were those who would have stoned her. But because His heart was pitiful He shamed the men so that they departed, and the woman He did not condemn, and she left Him with her head bowed down, weeping for her sin and His gentleness.

Our Lord Christ looked after her, and then He turned him about and saw me and the Child kneeling. No others could see us, and of all those I saw in my visions none but Christ could see me without aid of the Child. But He saw me kneeling, and came to me, and bade me look at Him. So I did, though my sinfulness and unworthiness were like a sore burden bowing down my head. And He said :

“Giraldus, my brother, I love thee. And as thou hast been with Me on the cross of thy pity, so shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”

With the tips of two fingers He touched the back of my right hand, and it was like a sweet fire burning in my hand and in my heart. Then He blessed the Child also, and the vision passed, and I was alone in my cell, on my knees, with tears on my face. The back of my hand was scarred with two white marks like the imprint of two fingers. These scars of the touch of our Lord Christ were the only bodily things I ever carried out of my visions, and as I write they are on my hand.

CHAPTER VII

THE next vision the Child showed me was of the Romans at the time of the coming of Christ, and we walked in the streets of Rome and saw their mighty palaces and temples, and the great place where they played their games. And by the virtue of the Child I understood their laws, and they were the laws of a people grown to the full stature of man's brain, wise and far-seeing, and as between Roman and Roman, just. The civilization of this people was not, like the Egyptians', strange and of a mysterious and awful dignity, nor was it like the Greeks', the pure soul of beauty and wisdom, but it was strong—strong, and the marching of their legions shook the earth. Their buildings were strong, and their laws and their writings and their sculptures, and the faces of the people, and the iron hand of the legions. But with their strength they were exceedingly cruel, and they held slaves and destroyed men for their sport, and there were harlots in their streets. Their hearts were not pitiful, nor, save here and there, had their souls grown greatly beyond the spark of the breath of God that was in the First Man. The Child said :

“Giraldus, now thou hast seen three of the greatest civilizations of the world, and three nations which have grown to the full stature of man's brain. But these powers that are built on the bones and blood of slaves are not pleasing to God, for they are like a fruit that is fair outside and within

is rotten and crawling. So neither the wisdom and dignity of the Egyptians, nor the beauty of the Greeks, nor the strength of the Romans availed to keep them their power, for God has destroyed them all, and they are utterly passed away. But when men's hearts are pitiful, and their souls grown large, and they build up a power that has not cruelty as its foundation, then those nations shall not be displeasing to God, nor their power, and he will not destroy it but it shall endure. No man in later days who has pity in his heart will desire to be like these Egyptians, or these Greeks, or these Romans, for he will know then that there is a civilization which is worse than barbarism, and that man's face is blackened with shame while he has a slave in his house or a harlot in his streets. For the wisdom of the Egyptians—it is nothing. For the beauty of the Greeks—it is nothing. For the strength of the Romans—it is nothing. The fruit is rotten within, and it has perished. See, Giraldus, I will show you the fall of Rome."

The Child made a vision on the wall of the cell, but we did not go down into it. I saw the barbarians rushing in from the east and the north, and their numbers were like grains of sand on the sea-shore, and their strength like the rising of the tide that cannot be stayed. I saw the power of Rome crumble and fall, and a terrible chaos of darkness came over the world, with war everywhere, and kingdoms rising and falling, and no law, and many hideous cruelties. Yet through it all moved the spirit of Christ ascended and come into His glory, and many turned to Him and believed, and into their hearts came a little pity.

The Child made that vision to cease, and he said, "Come, Giraldus, and I will show you a follower of

Christ, and one that would go to the fire for his Master as readily as to his bed, and yet he has no pity in him, and he has done the helpless much evil that cannot be remedied for hundreds upon hundreds of years."

I was amazed, and did not see how such a thing could be, and the Child made a vision of a chamber, wherein sat an old monk, writing. He had a noble and powerful face, and bitter, burning eyes, but his mouth I could not see, it being hidden in a beard. And his soul was small and dull, for he had no pity.

"Read what he writes, Giraldus," said the Child.

So I did, and I saw pouring forth from his pen bitter, scornful, fiery words—yes, it was like a stream of fire coming from his pen, that must burn up all it touches. It was an accusation of women, and if they had been fiends of hell he could scarcely have belaboured them more harshly. He said man was of God, but woman of the devil, that woman went about to do evil, that there was no good in her—unchaste, vain, deceitful, contemptible, a snare and a peril, and to be utterly avoided if a man would save his own soul. And much more than that, and more bitter, but at last I could read no longer, as I had seen the soul of the woman standing strong and glorious like the man's at the feet of God.

"Why does he not know that her soul is equal to his?" I asked the Child.

"He has never seen what you saw. But why does he not read the Life of Christ, and understand it? For our Lord Christ was ever pitiful for women, and He loved them. Giraldus, this man is a Father of the Church, and he loves Christ as he loves his own soul, but he has done a great sin which will have very evil results, and yet he does not know it is sin. He who should have clear sight is blind, and he

cannot see that the measure of a man's hatred for women is sometimes the measure of the lust he has in his own heart. If a man see a woman's body and it is fair, and he lusts for it, then he is in peril of sin and must shun her. But that is not to say that the woman's body is evil, nor her soul, and if she desire him not again she is utterly without sin. But this monk will say that women of themselves are more wretched and sinful than men, and that men must avoid them because they are evil, and not because man's lust is evil. His heart is not right with God, and whereas our Lord Christ would have raised women up, and delivered them from their oppressions, this man is without pity and he has cast them down, and lower than they were, in many places, than before Christ came. The women are helpless before him and have no remedy, and it would have been a far less cruelty had he bound thousands of them with cords and scourged them to a death of the body. This stain he has put on them will endure for hundreds upon hundreds of years."

"Who is he?" I asked.

"It is Jerome, and there are others like him. And thou, Giraldus, hast heard his words read in the Refectory."

The Child laughed, for by his virtue he knew that the sin I had most often to confess was that I had heard nothing of the reading in the Refectory, my thoughts being elsewhere. And to the warnings given about this matter of lusting after women I paid no heed, either, for by my nature I was delivered from the possibility of that sin. But it seemed to me a grievous thing that a true lover of Christ should be cruel and oppress the weak where Christ would have raised them up, and so I told the Child. But he said :

“ The cruelties that shall be done in the name of our Lord Christ are in number like the hordes of the barbarians you saw rushing in upon Rome, but that also, in due time, shall cease. Jerome’s cruelty is not the first, neither is it by far and far the last. Yet he is like a man who casts a stone in a pond, and the ripples must continue until they reach the side. He will soon come to judgment for his blindness, who should have seen clearly, but this troubling of the waters he has caused will not be quiet again for countless generations of men. Come, we will leave him to his writing.”

So we left him and the vision passed. I grieved in my cell for the pitilessness of man, for it seemed to be of so many kinds that never could we come to the end of them.

CHAPTER VIII

ON the fourth day after, the Child came again, and the vision he showed me on this night was so marvellously strange that I could scarcely believe afterwards that I had seen the things I had seen. And in this vision I committed a sin, and though the Child said it was forgiven me, yet it will weigh upon me till the day of my death, and never can I forget it.

He made a vision of a room I knew very well, for it was a chamber in my father's castle where I was born. We went down into the vision and it was night in the room, but the lamps were burning. On a great bed in the corner lay a woman, and leather curtains were hung over the window-slits to keep out the air, so that the room felt hot and oppressive.

"Go to the bed and see who lies there," said the Child.

I went to the bed and looked, and on it lay my mother, very white and still, but she was sleeping and not dead. As I looked at her I had not seen for sixteen years my throat swelled and my heart knocked fiercely on my ribs, for when I was a little child and not yet proved to be a wooden sword she had loved me tenderly and my sister also. Yet later she had turned against both of us, and I wondered what she would say if she opened her eyes and saw the dark monk Giraldus standing by her bed. Though I knew that except the Child willed it she could not see me.

The Child called me, and I left my mother, going

to him in another corner of the room. There sat an old woman whose face I dimly remembered, and in each arm she held a tiny weak babe, so small they seemed more like dolls than human children. So I knew that now I was looking at myself, but which one was I, I could not tell, as both children were washed and swaddled.

"That on her left arm is the boy," said the Child, and in the silence of the room his voice sounded thunderously loud. For there was a breathless, still, heavy silence, so that it seemed we were all dead. My mother was sleeping, the old nurse was as quiet as a stone image, and neither child was crying or moving in any sort. I stood, how long I could not tell, a little way off from the children, looking at myself. Then a wind blew in the room, breaking the silence, and the Child fell to his knees. But I stood stark and rigid against the wall, and moved no more than the babe that was myself which had heard nothing, and felt nothing. The Spirit of God stood before the old nurse, and He was not splendid and mighty as He had been on the mountain-top when He had made the souls, but He was in the likeness of a small grey child. His hands and face and hair and raiment and feet were all grey like stone, and His eyes were blind like a statue's eyes. But I knew it was the Spirit of God, and I neither fell to my knees nor my face, but stood stark and rigid against the wall.

The boy was on the right hand of God, and the girl on the left. He crossed His hands, and breathed across His right hand towards the girl, and across His left hand towards the boy that was myself. The souls shot up glorious and strong for an instant, then passed into the children and died down to the little spark. So was I given a woman's soul and my

sister the soul of a man. The wind blew, and the Spirit of God was not, and still I stood stark and rigid against the wall.

Though I had been shown marvels past telling, and had been blessed by God beyond all other men, though I had seen our Lord Christ in His own time on earth, and He had told me He loved me, though I bore on my hand the white scars of His finger tips—yet I was angry with the Spirit of God for this thing He had done to the two children by the crossing of His hands. I thought of the bitterness of our childhood, and the incessant warfare and struggle there is between the soul and the body that is not fitting for it, the body it hates. I thought of the scorn and the mocking, the loneliness and the hell of misunderstanding. I thought of the temptations to black error which had been mine. I thought of the hardness of the world towards us which had forced me, because I would not fight, to become a monk despite my will, and had forced her, because she would not marry, to go into a convent. I thought of both of us cut off from our home, the hills and fields and forests, cut off from the sea, and separated from each other. I forgot all that Christ had done for me in Glastonbury, and I was angry with God.

It passed. I remembered the way our Lord Christ had looked at me, and in the light of the lamp I saw the white marks on the back of my hand. With that I fell into a passion of penitence and sorrow for my ingratitude and loathsome sinfulness, and I fell on my knees and knocked my evil head soundly against the stones of the wall. And indeed I might have beaten my brains out in that vision, for I was in despair with myself and saw no use in keeping such a thing alive, but that the Child took me and raised me up, and led me by the hand out of

the room. His voice when he spoke was as gentle and quiet as if he had not seen God insulted before his face.

"Come, Giraldus. We will go up into the hills where the heather is."

We left the castle, and it was a fine June night and warm, as my sister and I had been born not long before the feast of St. John, in the height of summer. There was a great full moon, round as a penny and silver-white, and the air smelt of the ripe hay-grass in the meadows near the castle. It was an early season and the churls had scythed one field. I remember I thought of my mother lying in that hot room with the curtains hung over the window-slits, and I made as if to go back into the castle to take away the hangings and let in the sweet summer-night air. But then I remembered that all this happened years and years ago, and that the child within the room was now a man of thirty-four years who was walking in these meadows in a vision sent him by God. I asked the Child to take my hand again, for I was in a confusion and my head whirled and I could not see where I was setting down my feet. So he led me, and we passed through the meadows and the cornland and the rich pasturage where the cattle lay, and crossed the stream and up through a small piece of forest, and then we were out on the heather hills where the sheep grazed. Up and up we climbed till we were on the top of a shoulder and I knew that there was no hill between me and the sea on the right hand, and if the wind had been that way we could have smelled it. But the wind was setting from the north-west, a fine quarter for summer, and I thought that they would get all the hay in dry if God let it stay there. On our left hands we could see the forest below us

stretching away down the valley and up the valley, and the cornlands and the pasturage and the hay meadows, and the great grey Norman castle frowning black in the moonlight.

And with all that had happened—the sight of my mother who did once love me, and the sight of the child that was myself, and my calamitous sin in the castle, and this being back again in my own home and country—I wept with my head in the heather stalks. And at weeping, once I was fairly started and left hold on myself, no woman could surpass me in wealth of tears or in time of continuing. It was as if I had all my life a great fountain of tears within me, and either it must sometimes burst up and come pouring through my eyes, or I be wrenched asunder by force of keeping it dammed up. So I lay in the heather and wept sore, and the Child watched me silently until I had finished. Then he said :

“ Giraldus, your sin that you did in being angry with God He has forgiven. He understands. But is it not truth that He has blessed you, and that His blessing has been greater than your sorrow ? ”

“ Oh, Child, it is truth, and I am of all men in the world the most vilely ungrateful. But my heart is heavy for the others, for now I know in myself that there are others like me, and like my sister.”

“ There are. There always have been, and there always will be, for it is the will of God. And why should your heart not be heavy for them, seeing you are a pitiful man ? ”

“ And must they always be put into monasteries if they will not fight, and into convents if they will not marry ? ”

“ Why, no. But for long after the world ceases to force them into monasteries and convents it shall

despise them and reject them, and judge them harshly for their sins."

"How long?"

"A thousand years, and Christians will begin to understand. Two thousand years, and they shall know them for what they are."

"What are they?"

"The chosen servants of Christ, His particular ones, very near to Him, and very dear."

"And what shall they do?"

"They shall be strong and pure and pitiful, and they shall understand men and women both, by virtue of the nature God has given them. They shall be the priests."

"But they will be lonely and without love?"

"Christ never denies them love. Why, Giraldus, do you deem it a sin to walk in the Cloister Garth with Brother Martin, who was John de Crespigny, the wild fighter?"

"No, Child. I know it is no sin. But I am a monk and live in Glastonbury, where even Lucifer cannot come unless he be conveyed and carried over the threshold, and John is a man Christ has touched. But were I in the world, and John other than he is, and yet the same—why, then, matters might be different. Child, what of the others?"

"Giraldus, God has made a sweet apple that all men and all women desire, and the apple is the pleasure of the body in its wildest form. And He has granted that the apple may be eaten without sin, and with His blessing and the blessing of His Son, in one way only, and that is in marriage. Will God change His laws for the sake of one or two in every hundred? Surely He will not. So there will always be some who cannot eat the sweet apple without sin, no, not ever in all their lives. It is forbidden

to them. But our Lord Christ is pitiful and wise, and He will not judge after the manner of men, who say, 'This way of eating the apple unblessed is a little thing, but that way is a deadly crime.' No, for He knows every man's heart, and his nature, and his desires, and to Him all the ways are the same, except there be cruelty or deceit added to the other sin. He blames His chosen ones no more for their failures than He blames other men and women, yet perhaps He is a little more sad. And He is wise and pitiful, and He knows that while men judge harshly and confuse temptation, which is not wrong, with sin, and say to these—'Away from us, unclean'—so long will they, the most of them, in despair do ill, and not well. But to those who in an unpitiful and ignorant time, like you, Giraldus, and your sister, have endured from the beginning without any failure He sends such blessing and such measure of love as passes understanding, even mine."

Never before had I heard the Child say that there was anything he could not understand or know, and I felt abashed and humbled and utterly unworthy, and grateful beyond belief to our Lord Christ for His mercy towards me. The Child spoke again :

"And there is more yet. To every man is allotted a certain power of mind and body which can be used in divers ways, or left unused, like the talent in the parable of our Lord Christ. If a man use it for his daily work and the comfort and cherishing of his wife and children he is guiltless ; he has the blessing of God. And if a woman use it for her daily work and the comfort and cherishing of her husband and children she is guiltless ; she has the blessing of God. But for His chosen ones

His desire is ever that they should use the whole power of mind and body in His service, and for the comforting and cherishing of all the world, and to bring health and strength to all they meet, nor give it to a few only. They are to be poured out like precious balm, and keep nothing back. They are not to be tempted, as other men and women are, to take wife or husband and so cumber themselves with the care of a household. No, they are God's natural priests, to serve Him and the world. Neither are they deficient in power and strength of mind, but have it in good measure, according to the will of God. Think you not that the monks in Glastonbury are more happy for having you among them? To whom do they go in perplexity and distress? To Brother Giraldus, and he a young monk not yet thirty-five years old. It is because you have the understanding, the knowledge not only of men but of all humanity, which is part of your nature that is both man and woman. And the nuns in the convent where your sister is, they confess indeed to the priest, and they hear his counsel, and then they go to your sister to ask what they shall do. She comforts them and gives them wise rede out of the love and understanding of her heart. And later she will be the best Abbess who ever ruled a convent, but you, Giraldus, will never be Abbot."

"No, God forbid!" I said, for I had no desire at all to be Abbot. "But it seems that we are better in the monasteries and convents than out in the world. Or just as well, not for our own sakes, but for others."

"Not as well, even for others' sakes. Not monks nor nuns, but priests shall ye be, in the world and working for all. And to those that are faithful priests our Lord Christ will give a reward unat-

tainable by others, for truly ye are tried in a fierce fire."

"Child, we could bear our lives more easily if we were understood."

"In a thousand years ye shall be understood by all."

"A thousand years ! Child, it is an eternity."

"No, it is but a minute. What is time ? "

"I do not know, now, what it is."

"It is an illusion, a fancy. I have shown you your birth. Shall I show you now your death ? "

"No, Child, unless it be God's will."

For I felt that if I were to see myself lying dead my head would fly asunder with confusion.

"It is not God's will, and on this night I will show you nothing more. Go to sleep in the heather, Giraldus."

"But then how shall I come out of the vision and back into the cell at Glastonbury ? "

"Why, I will carry you back in your sleep," said the Child, and he laughed.

With that a sudden heaviness of slumber fell on me, and I went to sleep hearing the small wind in the heather-stalks and the Child's laughter mingling pleasantly, but when I waked I was back again in my cell.

CHAPTER IX

NOW in three days after this vision I meditated much on what the Child had told me of my own people, those wretched ones, and how in a thousand years they should be understood by all, and how in yet another thousand they should be doing the work God has appointed for them. Sometimes it seemed that two thousand years was all too long, and a time insupportable for the generations, and that patience must fail and they be cast into despair. And at other times my mind spread out like a flower that will open only in the sun, and I saw that two thousand years was all too short for men to overcome their natural fear and shrinking from what to them must be strange and dreadful, apart from any question of sin. I saw that it could only come about by a great growth of pity, and that ability to envisage something we can neither see nor feel ourselves which is called imagination. Now I believe that I and all men like me, and the women like my sister, have to a large extent this quality of the mind, but there are many happier men and women who have very little of it, and God cannot hold them sinful for not possessing what He has not seen fit to give them. And I, who had seen how slow a thing is change, and how many generations of beasts there had been before he grew enough like a man to have a soul, saw that a thousand years or even two thousand was a very little time for the mass of the people to tend and grow this quality,

and their pity, and that it was noble of them to be able to do it in such a short space. Very clearly I saw, too, that I had erred in blaming, as I often had, my father and others for their harshness towards me, and that I had failed in pity and understanding. For if men have not imagination, which is a heavenly gift (though it may be turned to ill uses) they are to be pitied and not blamed. But I had blamed my father and kept all my pity for myself, and that was evil and displeasing to God, besides being foolish.

And at other times when this opening of the mind was upon me (I believed always that it was some invisible presence of the Child that he left with me) I would think about time and try to understand what he meant when he said it was an illusion. I knew that to God time was not, and that while He made life to crawl in the slime of the earth, so at that same time was He seeing man in his perfection. I knew that to Him space was not, so that while in the likeness of the small, grey, blind child He was giving to me and my sister our souls from His crossed hands, He could have been giving to thousands of other infants their souls in divers places of the world, and giving His justice in heaven. Then, I thought, why should not man, by virtue of the breath of God in him, also overcome time and space and see all times together, past, present and future, and all places together also? Yet I feared that his body must always hold him back, until his soul was large and perfect. And when man was perfected, was then the circle complete from the slime creatures to the perfect man, and that part of the creations of God vanish altogether, or what would God do with men if they did not vanish? I knew that the creations of God are enormous and immeasurable, and that life, and man, are but a little part. But

that I knew only at the opening of my mind, for at other times man seemed of all importance and the other creations of God nothing in comparison because they have no life (or so I thought) and man can know them by virtue of his mind and life, and they cannot know man. Therefore, man is the greater, and the universe is the less. But that way of thinking is the sign of a small shut mind on which the sun has not shone, to open it. Another thought I had, which was awesome and frightened me, and it came through thinking of music. For by the virtue of the Child and my visions I knew that music grows from silence, through sound, becoming greater and more harmonious and splendid, until when it is perfected it is again silence, like the silence of the music of the spheres. So I thought what if God, having perfected man, sends him back again to live in the slime whence He raised him, and so man's struggle and sorrow must go on, round and round the circle, for ever and ever. Then I had comfort again from the thought of the music, for the silence it comes to is not the same as the silence where it began, though both are silence. But one is the silence of negation and blankness, and the other the silence of perfection and fulfilment. In the circle they join, but they are not the same. So in man's circle the slime creatures and his perfection join, but they are not the same, and surely God will never make him pass the point where they meet, and cast him back again into the slime.

Now if the Abbot come in and read what I have written here, I am a lost man. For my visions as far as I have written them he must burn, and for the Church's sake he must send me up to judgment by the Courts, and I might burn too. But we are all in God's hands, and as the Child gave me to

think so must I write it down, even I, the unlearned monk, Giraldus. And I wish often God had given me such a mind as had the Greek I heard reasoning in Athens, for then I believe I might come with the virtue of the Child to help me to a real comprehension. As it is I grope in a thick sea-fog, with a lantern light showing here and there on the moors like the lanterns of the shepherds tending the ewes in the lambing. Then again rather would I have the mind of Euripides who wrote the sorrows of women in war, for he was pitiful, and if he did not much with his pity (the world not being ready for him) yet he did his best, and so would I do, but not knowing how to set about it. I am shut in a monastery, if I show my visions they will be burnt, and I have no skill to write save the words of other men, and my visions. So what shall I do? God knows, and I will pray for guidance.

On the fourth night after, the Child came, and he said he would now show me visions of future time which should be later than the seventh year of the reign of King Stephen. This one, he said, should not be very far off, and the men he would show me were already on the earth.

He made a vision of a splendid place in a city which I knew must be a king's palace. We went down into the vision, and the Child led me through the palace till we came to an inner room. At the door the Child touched my eyes, so I knew he did not desire me to see souls, but men as they are in ordinary. We went in, and I thought that kings lived meanly, as the room was small, the tapestries were dirty and old and torn, and there was no kind of comfort anywhere. A table there was, and two chairs, and on the table some books and parchments and pens, and a horn of ink. I did not look long at

the room or the furnishings for there were two men sitting at the table, and without seeing their souls or being able by virtue of the Child to read their minds I knew they were two strong men. It was by a power I have in myself I knew this, and the Child has told me that men such as I am often have it. For I felt their mental stature and strength to be such that it filled the whole room, though their bodies took up but a little space, and it seemed that I must be crushed against the wall. Also I knew that their fierce wills (whether they knew it themselves or not) were in conflict, and it was like a battle of giants that takes place in the presence of a child. I was the child, and very thankful that neither of them could see me.

One was a priest with a noble countenance and great eyes burning, and the other was a squat short-legged ill-favoured man, with bright, fierce, small eyes and a red face. His clothes were frayed and dirty, and his face was seamed with the marks of an evil and impure life. The priest looked good, and this other man looked bad, yet I was by far more drawn to the man in dirty clothes, and I never saw any other in a vision whom I loved, all at once and on one stroke, as I did him.

"Who is he?" I asked the Child.

"He is a king."

"He is a strange looking king," I said, but I had known since I came into the room that he must be a leader of men and in authority.

"It is the king that is to come after Stephen is dead," said the Child.

"Is this then Eustace?" I asked, in amazement. Yet I could not have told why I was surprised, for I had never seen the boy Eustace, nor knew anything about him.

"No. Eustace is dead, and he never reigned."

Then I felt as if I should go back to my cell in Glastonbury, and to my own time, and ride until I found King Stephen to tell him his son would die and not reign. But the Abbot would not let me go, neither would King Stephen take it thankfully.

"Who is this, then?" I asked.

"Henry of Anjou."

Now among all Normans, and God have pity! the Saxons will have cause to know it too, there is a tale that the Angevins are descended from the devil, and that at certain times their ancestor possesses them and they are not men, but fiends. I never saw a man who looked more likely to be possessed with the devil than this short man with the wild fierce eyes, and yet I loved him, and not even the hearing that he was an Angevin stopped me. He drew love out of men and women as naturally as he breathed in air, and though he does not know it he has been loved even in a vision.

"Which of these two, Giraldus, is the better man?" the Child asked, as the King sat writing, and the Priest watching him.

"Why, the Priest, as I suppose, is a man of pure life, and though he has by his eyes a strong hot temper, yet he is more likely than any Angevin to be able to hold it. But as to saying which is the better man, considering all things, and that one is an Angevin and cursed from his birth, that I cannot do, Child, and only God knoweth."

"Thou art wise," said the Child, and he touched my eyes so that I saw both their souls. And the King's soul was bright and large, a good fire within him, but the Priest's was not very large nor very brilliant.

"Thou seest this man, Henry of Anjou, Henry

the Second of England. He is of evil life, he is of a violent and murderous temper, in hot blood he is cruel, and he makes unjust wars and brings much misery. Yet with all that he has pity in his heart and mercy, and his desire is to help the oppressed in England, and to cast down the oppressors. He will stand back to back with his common people against this Priest, and against the whole Church, because the Church deals unjustly with them and this King is pitiful of his people, and he will not endure it. There has been love between these two you see here, and the bond is not yet broken. But it is wearing thin, for their wills are in conflict and neither will give way."

As the Child spoke, the King ceased his writing and yawned cavernously, scratching his head the while with the quill end of his pen. Then he rose up and went to the Priest, and for a moment he laid his hand on the dark shoulder. The Priest smiled at him. The King sat down and began to talk, but in a moment or two he was up again, striding up and down the small chamber, and being more and more eager and quick in his speech as he grew excited. This time I needed no gift of tongues from the Child, for he spoke in Norman French. The Priest did not walk with him, but sat quietly at the table with his chin in his hands, watching and listening. The King was telling of all he had done and would continue to do in England. How he would keep the Barons on a tight rein (the Priest nodded to that as if he were in full agreement) and how he would have never any more Barons' justice such as there had been all King Stephen's reign, but that the King's justice should rule everywhere, over Barons, Knights, Freedmen and Churls. And how that even the Churls should receive no more harsh treat-

ment than the law allowed, and that he would call the Barons to a strict accounting for their justices, and that the King's ear should ever be open to his people. And to this the Priest nodded and made no argument. But then the King, being in a heat of eagerness and excitement, stamped his foot on the floor and swore that he would have all wicked clerks under the King's justice also, if so be that they offended against the common laws of England. This was astonishing to me, for a clerk is part of a priest, and how can a priest be haled by common hands before the King's judges? They are tried in the Courts of the Church and there judged by their peers. So when I saw plainly that the Priest would say no to this, though he made no sign either way, I felt he was right and the King wrong, and suddenly the Child laughed. But as the King went on with his argument I began to falter and waver, and be not so certain he was wrong. For he told such tales of cruelty and ill-deeds done by the clerks under the protection of the Church, and such tales of the corruption and utter uselessness of the Church Courts that my ears tingled to hear these things said of priests with a Priest sitting there listening. And though he denied some things yet he could not deny all, and it was clear that in the main what the King said was true and the Priest knew it. I began to wonder if it would not be better that these wicked clerks should lose the protection of the Church they had shamed, even if they were part priests. And from there I went on to wonder whether a cruel and impure priest was a priest at all. So was I deep in the pit of yet another heresy and the Child laughed.

But the King went raving and stamping up and down the room, so hot was his heart with pity and

fury with the oppressors, then suddenly he swung round on his heel and asked the Priest if he would help him in this change of justice he had set his mind on. He cried out :

"Thou and I together, Thomas, can do anything we set our minds to. With the Church and the King working in accordance we will make our England a place for all to live in. And we will have these clerks quick to hell and give them a foretaste."

But the Priest said he must take time to think, and that it was not a light matter, wherein he was right.

"We have been thinking this long time past, and thou art as slow as a baggage-wain. Yet I know that I shall work thee round, and indeed thou canst not take the side of these godless clerks."

"I do not take their side."

"Then mine—mine, Thomas?" said the King, very quick and eager.

"I must think. It is a grave question and not to be decided suddenly."

"Suddenly! Suddenly!" shouted the King. Then just as I thought he would fall into a true Angevin rage with the Priest for his hesitance, he began to laugh and said he would torment him no more for that time, and that they would go out and breathe the air. So they went, and the King drew him along kindly, by the hand.

Then the vision passed and I was back in my cell, but the Child was still with me, and he said he would stay yet for a time.

"Which of those two is in the right, Giraldus? Or do you think the Priest will come round to the King's way of thinking?"

"He will never," I said, for I knew that whether

the Priest would say so or not he had made up his mind, and it was against the King.

"Thou art right. Which, then, has justice and right on his side? For on a question like that there can be no half-way."

I pondered and mused, but could not come to any decision. It must be a sin and displeasing to God that the people be oppressed and cruelly treated by the clerks without remedy, yet if it were admitted that a clerk could be haled to the common judges, it is admitted that a bad priest is no more holy than a common man. That is to say that there is no virtue in the office of a priest, but only in the man himself, if he be a good one. And I would not say that. Again, if the Church herself would not purge the Courts and administer pure justice, and punish the erring clerks, that was a sin and a laxity, and a cruelty in the end to the King's common people. But if the King, to remedy this ill, purged the Courts himself, and ordered them as he would, that was perilously like the King's justice coming on the priests, but in a more subtle way. My heart inclined me to the King, for he was in a very rage of pity, and then I must put myself more on the Priest's side lest my heart should corrupt my judgment. But to decide for the Priest and say that cruelty should go on unchecked, I would not, and I would not say the King was in the right. So I told the Child I could not say which was right, and he laughed, and said the question should occupy me in my leisure hours. He would not help me to a decision, and to this day I have never made up my mind, for the heresy that a priest can be a common man I cannot accept with my whole heart. I waver and falter, and sometimes I could find it in my heart to pray to God to be made a stalwart and sturdy

heretic on this and on other points, for truly I swing up and down like a child on the end of a see-saw, and if the Abbot knew what I was thinking of in the Refectory when I am not listening to the reading, the hair round his tonsure would rise and stand like uncut hay round the mown piece.

Then the Child said :

“ Even if the King’s head be wrong, his heart is right ? ”

“ Ah, yes, Child. His heart is full of pity and indignation.”

“ And is the Priest’s heart right ? ”

“ Why, so I suppose,” I said, but I could not help saying it coldly. I had not loved the Priest, and where the King was open and gracious, he had been secret and subtle, not telling his friend what was in his mind.

“ In a little while the King will make him Archbishop, and then he will come openly against Henry to thwart him, nor be stayed by any feeling of gratitude.”

“ He cannot think of his gratitude if he be convinced the King is wrong, and that it is his duty to the Church to thwart him. And if he can thwart him better by being made Archbishop, why then, Archbishop he must be made.”

“ Well, that is just, Giraldus. And I know you did not love the Priest, and did love the King.”

“ I did, and I would much like to see the end of it, if thou wouldst show me, Child.”

“ The end is the bitterest, saddest quarrel between friends that was ever in the world, and yet it would have been bound to come, if not on this point, then on some other. England is too small to hold two such men living in peacefulness. Their hearts

are too high, and their wills too strong. One must break the other, for neither will bend."

"What is the name of the Priest?"

"Thomas of London they call him now. He will be called Thomas Becket. And he will be called Saint Thomas. See now, the latter end of this quarrel between friends."

He made me a vision, and it was small and clear like the vision of the barbarians rushing upon Rome, and we did not go down into it. But we saw Henry of Anjou in one of his devilish rages, and we heard him speak wild hasty words of Thomas the Archbishop, and ask who would rid him of the Turbulent Priest. We saw four men ride away, and they murdered the Archbishop in the Great Church of Canterbury, and nobly did he die. I was aghast, but all the time I was sure in my mind that the King in his devilish rage had not meant his words, and my heart was wrung more for him than for the Priest who had died nobly and whose soul was with God. I was right, the Child said, and he made another vision. This was of the King, in a miserable repentance like the repentance of John de Crespigny, creeping barefoot to Canterbury, lashed with a scourge. I could have wept for him, and readily would I have taken his blows upon my own back and his sorrow into my own heart, but then I remembered that this was in the future time and that he had all to do—all to do.

"Wouldst thou see his death, Giraldus?" the Child asked softly.

"Yes, Child," I said, but I had little hope it would be a happy one.

So the Child made the vision of this King's death, and of that I cannot write much, for it was the most sorrowful death I ever saw, and to me doubly, be-

cause I loved him. His sons all turned against him in the right Angevin manner, they ran him down like hounds after an old, brave stag, and when he heard his youngest son John had betrayed him with the others, he broke his heart and died in despair, without the comfort of God.

"Child," I said, when this unhappy vision was ended, "is this John to come to the throne of England? For likely enough the other brothers will kill each other and their issue and only he be left. The Angevin family should always be a large one."

"John shall reign, but first Richard."

"Child of God, I have feelings of hatred for these men yet unborn for what they did to their father."

"Hate none, Giraldus, for there is no pity in hate. And if ever a man was to be pitied in all the world it is this king that is to come, this John of England."

"Why, then? Will he be good and unfortunate?"

But I could not believe that any Angevin could be good in the ordinary way, though he might be unfortunate.

"No, he is bad and unfortunate, and a cruel man."

"Then I will pity his victims."

"Giraldus, you must learn to pity both, the cruel and the victims, and of the two the cruel needs it the most."

"Child, that is too hard for me, and above all I will not pity this man, John of Anjou."

The Child laughed, and said:

"Not yet art thou a saint. Well, pray God to bless Henry and curse John."

"I would pray for a curse on no man, and as to praying for Henry, how shall I pray? What will befall him must befall him, and how can I make his

cup pass from him—that bitter repentance and his grievous death? Neither can I pray for his soul in its purifying, for it is as I suppose in the body of the child Henry of Anjou that is now alive, and it is not yet come to judgment.”

“Beware, Giraldus, for on the edge of yet another heresy thou standest, one more step and thou wilt be over the brink. If God knoweth all that is to come, where then is man’s free-will? Surely this Henry that thou lovest can help nothing that he does either of good or evil, for thou hast seen what he is to do, and thou knowest he must do it. Where then is man’s free-will?”

“Child, I do not know where it is, but doubtless it is there, and if I had the mind of the Greek we heard reasoning in Athens, matters would become clearer to me. It is the strong mind I lack, not the will to understand.”

“God will forgive it thee,” said the Child, and he left me.

When he was gone I did kneel down and pray our Lord Christ to bless the child, Henry of Anjou, for though I could not turn away his heavy misfortunes, yet he was alive and on earth with me, with the monk Giraldus of Glastonbury, who had had a vision concerning him. It was ordained that this monk Giraldus should pray for the child he never saw, except as a man grown in the vision, and I hoped that he might feel the blessing like a breath of sweet smell coming out of a furze bush in the sunshine. Surely it was well meant and most earnestly asked. Ever since that night I have prayed for him in the Mass, and often this love I found in a vision amazes me. For all Normans know that the Angevins are false, cruel, lustful beyond ordinary, with the black rages of the fiend, and no more

meet to be loved than a distempered wild-cat. Yet was this one, Henry, though burdened with all the faults of his race, meet to be loved, and a man with pity for his common people, and a King, as the Child often told me, for whom England had need to thank God.

CHAPTER X

IN the three days following this vision of the King and the Priest I thought very much on Henry of Anjou, wondering what manner of child he was, and where living now in this reign of King Stephen, but, as I supposed, he would be in France or Normandy, for in England there was as yet no place for him. And I thought that some day I would ask the Child of God to show me this boy, Henry, in a vision, and as I meditated thus one morning at my writing in the Mass Book, the Abbot came upon me suddenly, and I heard neither his sandals on the stones nor the rustle of his gown.

Ever since the vision the Child showed me of our Lord Christ walking in His own time upon earth I had hidden the back of my right hand with the other at my prayers in the church, and in my movements about the Abbey, or had thrust it up my other gown sleeve, and in the Refectory I had eaten as a one-handed man must. None had questioned me, not even Martin, so I thought none had taken notice. And when the Abbot had come to see my writing, as he often did, I stood or sat with one hand hidden behind the other. He knew that I would not work while he was there, for it cast me into a fretting that any should watch me at my writing, and I made ill letters or the brush slipped in the limning. This weakness he had always forgiven me. But on this morning I heard him not, and he saw plainly the back of my right hand. Before I

could hide it he took it, with the pen in it as it was, and he looked at it. Then he said :

“ Giraldus, what are these white scars on thy hand ? ”

I was troubled, and I knew not what to say. I would not deny the touch of our Lord Christ, and I would not tell the Abbot of my visions. So I said nothing, and prayed for guidance, and would ask him with my eyes not to press me any further. He looked at me again and then, all in a moment, he went down on his knees before me and asked me to bless him. It was winter-time and the Cloisters were too cold to work in because of the numbing of the hands, and I had my writing in a little room. So there was no other there, but even so I was abashed that the Abbot should kneel before one of his monks, and I tried to raise him. But still he asked me to bless him, so I did, with all my soul in it, and he thanked me and without more words he left me. Neither did he say ever any more of the marks on my hand, so I took no pains to hide them as no man might question me if the Abbot did not. I showed them to John, and to him only did I say what they were. He said :

“ I knew it, and I saw them days past. Giraldus, none of the brethren, save only the Abbot, would have the boldness to question you on any matter at all. We all know you are a man set apart, and how I dare to walk with you I know not.”

He looked at me a little sorrowfully as if he felt a gulf between us that had not been there before, and yet was ashamed of this thought, or rather the sorrow of it. But I comforted him, and told him that nothing but death could part me from him, and that even then, while one was alive and the other dead, we should be together in God. I told

him that it grieved me not to be able to tell him all my visions, but that my will was set to tell no one, not the Abbot, nor even him, John de Crespigny, my friend. He said :

“ The Abbot knows you are a saint. He told me he knew.”

“ No, there he is in error, for I am not to be a saint until I have learned to pity John, the son of Henry the Second of England, and that shall I never.”

John was all amazed at this, for there had been no second Henry, and Stephen's son Eustace was still alive. And while he was still abroad in his wits, wondering who this second Henry should be, I spoke again.

“ It is thus, John. If I tell the Abbot my visions, while he could see the scars on my hand, and while he was with me he might perhaps still believe that in spite of all they are of God. But when he was away from me he would begin to doubt, because of the many heresies, and for his love for me he would only doubt the more, as he would think his heart had been corrupting his judgment, and that always in me he had been deceived. And even if he did not think it his duty to send me up to the Courts for judgment as a heretic, yet a cloud and a trouble would be cast over his life, and I will not do it. He shall build the Abbey in peace. And for those same reasons I will not tell you my visions, nor bring a cloud into your life.”

“ I know I am a sinful man and not fit to hear your visions, but never—never would I think they were of any but God.”

“ Wouldst thou not, John ? I will try thee with something that I do not know to be a heresy, though it may be. What will you say if I tell you that the

earth spins round the sun, and does not, as we all think, stand still and let the sun pass round it ? ”

Martin considered this, and I saw that the more he pondered the less he believed it possible.

“ Any man can see with his eyes that the earth is still and that the sun passes over it.”

“ Yes. But I have seen with my eyes in a vision sent from God, the sun standing still and the earth moving round it and with her seven others. So now what wilt thou say, and what would the Abbot say ? ”

He mused and considered, and at last he burst out :

“ On my faith, Giraldus, I know not, and now I pray you not to tell the Abbot of your visions. It is a thing too hard for me, seeing I know the sun *must* go round the earth, and it would be a thing too hard for him. I wonder almost it is not too hard for you, though you see the visions.”

“ Some things are—almost. Not that, for I do not know it to be a heresy, but there are other hard things. John, there are two of Giraldus, and he is in two separate halves. One of him strives to be a faithful, meek and obedient son of the Holy Church, and does not find it difficult. But the other is a wild, free spirit, accepting no man’s word for anything he has not seen or felt himself. And this Giraldus believes in nothing for certain except in God who made heaven and earth and in His son our Lord Jesus Christ. The two parts of Giraldus balance each other, and sometimes one is up and sometimes the other, with the balance swinging. Obedience to the Church is part of my mind, and yet often I do not know what I believe, save that the visions are of God and all will be plain some day. But you see now that I cannot tell them.”

“ I do see,” he said, and I knew that he was still

troubled over the matter of the earth and the sun. Yet when he caught sight of the marks on my hand his face grew happy again, and he told me that though it was too hard for him and he feared to hear any more, yet he would always believe my visions were of God. So I told him no more.

That night the Child came, and when he appeared he was laughing, and he told me that the vision was to be of the time of the reign of this John whom I would not pity. I said :

“ Is it the will of God that we see him ? ”

“ No, it is not. *He* is not all over England, but the curse he brought on it is over all the land.”

The Child made a vision of the whole of England, and it was as if all the country was in a sunshine. Then a black blight fell over it, and so grim was this darkness that it made me shudder.

“ Child, is it a plague ? ”

“ No. It is the misery in the hearts of the people that hath blotted out the sun. Yet it is a false misery and only there because they think it is there. Come, let us walk in this dolorous England.”

“ It burns my heart to see it.”

“ Nevertheless, we must go down. There is a new hard thing for you to ponder.”

We went down into the vision and walked in England, and when we were in the vision the outward sign of the misery, the black grim blight, was not there, and the sun was shining. But save for baptism and the last rites for the passing soul, and marriages without the walls of a church, the people had no service or blessing from Holy Church, and they lived in an extremity of spiritual wretchedness. The Child told me that our Holy Father at Rome had laid England under his ban, for the sins and stubbornness of King John, and that there were

few priests who for the fear of John would act contrary to the excommunication. The Child said :

" Have they sinned, or has John sinned ? "

" John has sinned."

" Then is it not a cruelty that they, helpless, should be thus sorely hurt for the sin of their ruler?"

But I could not answer that, for the curse was from Rome, only my heart was wrung for the sad faces of the people.

" Were they unbelievers would they grieve thus bitterly ? " said the Child.

" They would not."

" They suffer for the liveliness of their faith. Is that right, Giraldus ? "

" Child of God, it seems not right, and I know not what to say, except that this John spreads misery wherever he goes, and all his life days. Was it not enough for him to betray the father who loved him better than all ? "

" Not near enough."

The Child led me, and we came to the bank of a stream where grew hazel-nut trees, and under one of these trees sat a Saxon herd, staring at the water.

" Look on the face of this Saxon, Giraldus."

So I looked.

" Child, he is in despair. What shall we do ? Oh, what shall we do ? His face torments my heart."

" Yes, Giraldus, now art thou again on the cross of thy pity, for this Saxon herd who is in despair. He has committed a sin of sacrilege, he has repented him most bitterly, but where will he find a priest to shrive him ? He lives in a horrible fear of sudden death and of hell. So he is in despair."

" Child, thou hast said there are some few priests who disobey our Holy Father, and obey the King."

" Yes, there are some few. There are some few,

also, who for pity will shrive and bless the people, and not from fear of the King. But there are none in this place, and if the Saxon go forth to look for one he will be straightway taken as a masterless man, and haled back to the land where he is bound. So what shall he do ? ”

“ Alas, poor soul ! ” I cried, for the Saxon, a strong, rough fellow with no tears, as one would guess, in him, bowed his head on his hands and wept sore.

“ Look into his heart,” the Child said.

By his virtue I looked into the man’s heart and it was clean as a little child’s.

“ Are not his sins forgiven him for his bitter repentance ? ”

“ Child, they are forgiven.”

“ But how shall he know it ? And if he know it not, he must continue in his despair. He has been told that Christ has left England, except at baptism and the last rites for the dying, and he does not understand that Christ will not go here and go there at the command of a man. But if a man pray humbly, then Christ will come to him and forgive him his sins and comfort him. Our Lord Christ is above every blessing and service of Holy Church, and He walks with those who ask Him with penitence and faith in their hearts.”

“ Child, this is a thing too hard for me, and I must ponder it well. But what can I do to ease this Saxon of his grief ? ”

“ I will ease him,” said the Child.

He made himself in the likeness of a priest, and he touched the Saxon’s eyes. So the herd left weeping and staring at the water in the stream, and he threw himself down at the feet of the Child, and clutching his priest’s robe he prayed him for love of the Trinity

to hear his sins and shrive him. The Child heard his sins and absolved him and blessed him, and the herd rose up thankfully, calling down every blessing of God upon this priest who had so suddenly and marvellously come to him. And presently he went away joyful, and we heard him whistling and calling to his beasts. The Child said :

"Giraldus, if this had been thy time, and thou a priest, wouldst thou fear King John?"

I said no to that, as I thought it not probable that I should fear Henry's evil son.

"But for pity wouldst thou shrive and bless the people?"

"Child, I doubt not that I should do so, if they looked like the Saxon herd."

"Then you would be a disobedient son of the Holy Church. Yet you would be pitiful, and the cruelty lies with him who cursed the people for the sins of John, their King."

"Child!" I cried out in perplexity. "Cruel it is, and I see it well. But our Holy Father cannot be deliberately cruel, neither can he err."

"No, he is not deliberately cruel, but he can err, and shall in this time coming. For where our Lord God would save the city for the sake of five just men, the Holy Father shall curse the country for the sins of one man. Now, Giraldus, thou shalt ponder this new heresy in thy cell."

So this vision of England under the grim black blight passed, yet the Child was with me in my cell, and I said :

"Child, John de Crespigny repented sorely of his sin, yet he had no peace until he came to Glasto-bury to touch the Holy Thorn. Yet thou sayest that a man may be forgiven in the hour of his repentance."

“ Our Lord Christ had something for John de Crespigny in Glastonbury, and so He held back from him his knowledge of forgiveness. And for the man you saw in the far future time, when the last great church shall be a ruin, our Lord Christ had a gift, and nowhere but in Glastonbury would He give it. In all this England there is no holier place.”

CHAPTER XI

NOW on the fourth night after, the Child made me the sweetest, most pleasant vision of any I had, and it was the last, as after this night the heart within me was heavy, and pleasure passed away from me.

But he began by showing me a great battle in France which he said was to come long after the reign of John, and in the fourteenth century after Christ. In this battle the English archers shot down French knights by their hundreds, and broke the back of the army, for their arrow-flight was such that few could come up against them.

"Now, Giraldus, who, think you, has borne the burden and the heat of this day?"

So I said, "The Archers."

"It is so, and the Archers are the King's common people. The day of the Barons and Knights is passing, for the King's common people begin to know that they are men, like to the others, and not dogs to be beaten and kicked. Say is it a good thing or an evil?"

I remembered the glory of the soul and how God puts it into every man alike, and how every man alike has within him always the spark of the breath of God. So I said: "Surely, Child, it is good."

"Thou art right, for never can the hearts of all the people become pitiful while they say that a Knight in himself is better than an Archer, or a Baron a higher thing than a Serf. This is the

beginning, but the end is in the far future time. Now we will walk in this England, and thou shalt see that the King's justice has become more pitiful since Stephen's reign, though they will still flay a man for the taking of a deer."

"Child, I would ask thee not to take me to see a man condemned to his flaying."

"I will not," said the Child. So he made a vision, and we walked in England and came to a place where the people's judges held their courts. But I heard not very much of that justice, as the pleading was in a tongue I could not well understand. I asked the Child to touch my ears, so he did, and he laughed. Then I heard clearly and understood, and the tongue was a mixture of Norman and Saxon, but far more Saxon than Norman, and I was amazed.

"Child," I said, "these Saxons speak their own tongue in a court of the King's justice."

The Child laughed, and longer than I had ever heard him.

"Ah, thou Norman, Giraldus! Behold a miracle. The Saxons speak their own tongue in a court of the King's justice! This is three hundred years but four after the fight of Senlac, and for three hundred years the Normans have tried to force the Saxons to learn and speak their language. Now they have given it up, and have given leave to the Saxons to speak English in the courts. Surely they have beaten thee in the end, thou Norman!"

But all that I could understand was that if the Saxons, in three hundred years, either would not or could not learn to speak Norman, then they were exceedingly obstinate or unbelievably stupid. And this every Norman knows. But the Child laughed and laughed, and had he not been a Child of God I

could have been a little angry with him. But he said :

“ Take comfort, Giraldus, for thou art a man with a love of beauty and an ear for sound. And I tell thee that this language that the Saxons make with their own and with the Norman shall in the fulness of time be a most lovely tongue, and second only to the Greek. Yes, this English shall be a rich noble speech, with a sound of music, and very meet for the praising of God.”

“ Yet it would not be so well without the Norman in it ? ”

“ No, the Norman enriches it, for through the Norman comes the tongue of the old Romans, and so there are two words meaning one thing. But now see, Giraldus, how the stiffness of these Saxons has served them, for they have swallowed you Normans up, and yet they are a subject race. And who, the Saxons or the Normans, gave orders that a man should be flayed for stealing a deer ? ”

Then I was abashed, as I knew that the heaviness and cruelty of the forest laws was a Norman thing, and imposed in the beginning by Duke William.

“ And was it a pitiful thing to do, or a right thing, that Duke William should take this kingdom by the strong hand from Harold ? ”

“ Child, Harold was forsworn.”

“ But was it a right thing for William to do to make Harold swear by force of imprisonment ? ”

Then I must say, having no choice with it : “ Child, as I suppose it was not right in the sight of God. But it was fifty years before ever I was born an English Norman, and if they could turn us out now they would do very ill without us.”

“ Your father’s Saxon churls would do very ill without him ? ”

And to that I could make no answer at all for whatever anarchy they fell into among themselves could hardly be worse than my father's grip of them. But the Child said,

"Grieve not for the cruelty of the forest laws, for they shall presently pass away. And grieve not for the Norman oppression as thou hast seen it, for out of the evil comes much good, and the Saxons would not have been so well without you. And in thine own time there is none in England more pitiful than thee, no, not by the half so pitiful, and thou art a Norman pure, and the son of a Baron. The race is blessed in thee. Come now, we will leave this justice, and go forth."

Now before the Child had not stopped in showing me a thing until I had seen it, and I had heard none of this people's justice, being amazed with the Saxons for speaking their own language. And then I had been forced to think of Duke William which I never liked doing, as I had seen for myself that the North of England, where his hand had been the heaviest, compared very ill with the South. He was a pitiless man, and I can say no other with truth.

But the Child said : "Come forth," so I went with him, still thinking heavily about Norman cruelties of times before mine, and afterwards I understood him.

He led me, and we came to a wood by a lake, and the time was early summer. He bade me take off my monk's robe and swim into the lake, so I did, and was refreshed and gave God thanks, and praised Him. There was a fair young beech tree in the wood, a slender half-grown maid of a tree, and in her shade we lay down, and the wind blew and the leaves made moving shadows on the Child's face.

"Giraldus, has God made any more heavenly

colour than the colour of young beech leaves in the early summer when the sun shines through them ? ”

“ Child, I have never seen any, and when I was a boy I used to think it must be the colour of our Lady’s robe.”

“ Thou heretic ! Must not her robe be white like snow ? How should she go dressed in pagan fairy green ? But listen, and I will tell you a tale that has been written by a man who loved the beech tree beyond all others, even as you. A man with a bright large soul, and pitiful.”

“ Has he lived ? ” I asked, for with the Child time was not, and often when he said “ has been ” to me it should be “ will be.”

“ Not yet. In seven hundred years from Stephen’s reign he will live, and be merciful, and love the beech trees and write this tale. It is a fairy tale, and the Abbot would not allow his monks to read or hear such. But I will tell it thee.”

The Child told me this tale that the man who loved beeches should write, and my pen will not describe the pleasure there was in the tale, and the Child’s way of telling it. The story was the sweetest, the purest, the tenderest, the most beautiful—surely it came to the man straight from God. And in one part I could hear our beech tree rustling and murmuring, and saying like the tree in the tale :

“ I may love him, I may love him, for he is a man, and I am only a beech tree.”

And I could have put my arms round her trunk and kissed her for beauty’s sake, which is a thing I used to do when I was a child. Surely this Giraldus is not only part heretic, but also part pagan. Yet Christ our Lord is in the loveliness of the beech trees, and God made them.

The Child finished the tale, and I thanked him

earnestly, and would have him tell me more of the man who had written it. But he said :

“ It was morning when we came to the wood, and now it is sunset. See how the light slants in the trees. Now I will sing to thee and so shalt thou go to sleep under the beech tree.”

“ Child of God, if you sing it must be a silence, for the music will be perfect and after it for three days I shall be deaf.”

The Child laughed, and said : “ No, it shall not be silence, and thou shalt not be deaf, and my voice shall not be the music of the spheres, but like a boy’s.”

And so it was, like a boy’s, but more tender and pure than any human child’s. The notes were like sweet white flames rising, and I thought of the springing ruined arch at Glastonbury. He sang three songs, and in the last one I seemed to have come alive and in the body to heaven, but then I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XII

THE next morning, the very morning after I had been in heaven with the singing of the Child of God, Martin fell suddenly sick of a fever, and a difficulty of breathing, and a hard pain in his chest, and on the seventh night he died. And though if the choice were given me of being separated either from John de Crespigny or our Lord Christ, I must choose to lose John, yet I was glad the Child came never in this time to show me any visions. I must have seen, not the visions, but Martin's face, and it grown thinner and fallen in, and his fierce, merry, blue eyes, but not merry now, only bright, and with an anxious look. The Abbot in his kindness allowed me to be much with him, and I and the brother skilled in leech-craft did all for him we could do, and I prayed more strongly than at any time in my life except when I came crying and clamouring for understanding at the gates of heaven. But we could not save him, and he came on the seventh evening to the point of death. Then the priest shrived him and he received our Lord Christ. But when the priest would have kneeled down by the bed to pray until John's soul should be passed, the Abbot sent him away to pray in the Church, and all the others that were there, and he went away himself and left me only in the room. So I sat down by Martin on the bed and held him up in my arms, for so he seemed to breathe a little more easily. I kissed him and gave him his name, John, and he gave me mine,

which was Herluin, and he touched with his lips the scars on my hand. So we said farewell. Not long after he slipped away into a faint, but he still breathed. Some time after, I never knew how long, he fetched three groaning breaths and so died. His soul was with God, and I called one to watch the body, and went to my cell.

So I lost my first friend, and my other, Henry of Anjou, I never knew in the flesh. I never had heart after to ask the Child to let me see him as a boy, for with John's death something went from me and I have never got it back. My interest in myself and other particular men has clean passed away, and I seem to be a ghost walking in Glastonbury without body, or love, or humanity of the ordinary kind. My pity I have, but more than ever is it for the whole world, and more than ever is it an agony, as I cannot forget it in walking with John in the Cloister Garth. Many visions have I written here, and now it is nine months since he died, but as I write, it seems as if it were the same night, and the Child is not here, and I am alone. There are many visions more to write, but when I have finished them and hidden them in the secret place in the stone I shall have no force to live long after. For when John died I think my heart was broken.

The Child came to me in the cell, but he showed me no visions, neither did he speak for a long time, but sat by me silently, and I drew a little comfort from his presence. Then I said :

" Child, thou knowest all. Why has God taken John away ? "

" He wanted John."

" Yet not as much as I do."

" Giraldus, dost thou love John more than does our Lord Christ ? "

"Child, I am wayward, foolish, and wicked, but indeed it seems that even our Lord Christ could not love him as well as I."

"Yet He does more, and John is with Him, and surely even now you and John are together in God."

"It was easy for me to say that when John was alive and I could see his face and hear his voice. Now I can do neither, and I do not feel with him, and I am a sinful man and most wretched. My soul is still a little spark in my body, and John's is glorious and with God. And very like he has forgotten me already."

"Till you forget him he cannot forget you. While you love him he shall still love you, and you shall not be divided. Giraldus, a man that has a strong hot heart for pity cannot have a cold weak heart for love. As you suffer in the one torment of pity so must you suffer in the other agony of love. It is a crucifixion, and you cannot escape it any more than our Lord Christ could come down from the Cross."

"Ah, Child, why should I be thus crucified when John was a strong man and not yet passed forty-eight years of his age, and for twenty of those lived clean and quiet in Glastonbury? Why should he die now—*now*?"

"It is God's will, and further than that I will not answer you."

"Child, did you know John was going to die?"

"When earth was a flaming mass I knew that John de Crespigny, the friend of Giraldus the pitiful monk, should die on this night in Glastonbury."

"I know. I know all time is in thy hands. I am foolish. My head is empty of all save grief, and I can take no benefit from any vision thou shalt make."

"I will make none, but stay here until sleep comes."

And when I had prayed and laid me down on the pallet sleep did come very quickly, as for three days and nights I had been watching by John's bed and had not slept.

But on this night while I write, after the little bit of candle is burned out and I can go on no longer, I shall not sleep, and must lie awake and think of Brother Martin, and how he looked when I first saw him, with his eagle-hawk face flushed with anger, and his blue eyes gleaming. He had just had a quarrel with another monk, and a heavy penance came of it. But when he saw the Baron's son from the North who had come to Glastonbury to be a monk his flush died away and his eyes grew gentle, and afterwards he told me that the sadness of my face hurt him in his heart. And I shall remember how we walked in the Cloister Garth, or in the Cloisters when it was foul weather, and how one windy day he took a wild fit and began to sing a fierce old song of one of the Scalds, about Othere, and when one of the brethren rebuked him John put him in the water-pond and would do nothing for all we might say, nor let the brother come out of the pond until the Abbot came. And for that he had the heaviest penance of his Abbey life, and but for my prayers the Abbot said he would have put him out and sent him back to the world to fight and sing heathen songs as much as he would. But John did not want to leave Glastonbury, only when the wind was strong from the south-west, and not even then did he want to leave me. So he stayed, but now he has left me.

CHAPTER XIII

THE Child came no more for a week after, and John was buried, and I did my daily work of writing, and prayed and praised God, and walked alone in the Cloisters. Not yet could I bear any other with me, and one day when the Abbot out of the kindness and pity of his heart came to walk with me, and tried to comfort my loneliness, I wished him away. Then I was angry with myself and grieved at my shortcomings, for it seemed that John's death was making me bitter and ungrateful and not kind. Yet still I was happier when the Abbot left me and I could walk alone again.

When the Child did come I was glad, as I thought that in the visions I would forget my sorrow for a little time. But in a moment I saw that it was blasphemous to use a vision sent from God to ease a private grief of the heart, and I told the Child my thought and through him asked God's pardon for it.

"It is nothing," he said. "And perhaps in the vision thou shalt a little forget, and find relief. It will be one to make thee think, for I will show thee the cruelty of pity."

He made a vision, and in it I saw small and clear, and without the bonds of time as man knows it, the latter part of the fourteenth century after Christ. It was a troubled time, with first an old King on the throne, and after him a child. These were still in the direct line from Henry of Anjou, but it seemed to me that with the passing of time

the devil had died out of the dynasty, and the King that reigned from a child had pity in him, and a great desire to do right. But with the Angevin devil had passed also the Angevin fire and force of will, and this child Richard, even when he grew to be a man, was weak and unstable and pithless, and a poor wavering reed to be descended from the mighty oak that was Henry the Second.

So the people were ill ruled by the old King and by the child, and were oppressed by those who stood at the right hands of these feeble monarchs, and oppressed by wicked priests, and by their masters, so that they murmured and chafed sorely, and mightily desired to be freed from their villainage. The Child said :

“ Giraldus, is it right that a man should be bound to one piece of land, and under one master who may oppress him ? ”

I remembered that all men have within them the breath of God, and I thought of the sufferings of all the slaves and serfs and churls I had seen, and I saw also in this vision the cruelties that were done on these, the later villeins. So I said :

“ Child, it is not right.”

“ Here see a man with pity in his heart, who will tell them all it is not right.”

I saw walking through this time in England a man with a bright, large soul, and pitiful, and the people loved him.

“ Who is this man ? ” I asked.

“ He is William Langland, and he shall make them a book.”

This Langland made them a book, and from the book he read to some, and his words were passed from mouth to mouth through England.

The villeins for this chafed more sorely against

their bonds, because Langland was a pitiful man and a believer in God, and he had told them that their cause in itself was just. So they made a rebellion, and some of them marched even upon London, and came into London, and to the feet of the young King. They demanded that villeinage should cease, and every man be free to work for whom he would, and make up his villeinage with a rent of money. Neither was this far-off sprig of the old Fulke of Anjou afraid, for he put his body among the villeins and trusted them, and he said to them that he would be their master, and no other. So he granted all their demands. But then a devil of lust and revenge entered into the villeins, though they held the promise their bonds should be eased, and they rushed like wild beasts through the streets of London murdering and burning till the city was a shambles. Also they killed many innocent, who had done them no harm. Then must the young King call up men to overpower them. And some were hanged, and from all the others were their new rights taken away, so were they sent back into villeinage and lost all they had gained.

The Child made that vision to cease, and I was troubled and perplexed. He said :

"Giraldus, you have seen the cruelty of pity."

"No, Child. That was not pity, but revenge."

"Who shall say where pity ends and revenge begins? Now you are a very gentle man, and I have often seen you lift a beetle who would walk down the middle of the Cloisters and set him tenderly in the Cloister Garth so that he should not be crushed by the sandals of the brethren."

This was true, for in the last summer we had had in the Abbey a great pest of small brown field beetles, and I had spent much time in putting them

out of the way of the monks' feet. John used to be peevish with me because he said that always when he was speaking to me I would be stooping down to convey the little beetles out of the way of danger. For this memory of John and the beetles I could have wept, but I had given up weeping and the fount was sealed again.

"Child, I remember the beetles, but I knew not at that time that you were with me always."

That summer was before the man had come to the Abbey with his ghastly tale, and I was still happy and forgetting all cruelty.

"Well, thou art a man that will save a beetle from being crushed. Yet thou hast maimed a man, and he is not, because of thee, as good a man in his body as God made him."

"Child, how is this? I have never fought with the sword."

"No. Yet thy brother is deaf on one side of his head, and on that side he has never heard sound since thou didst strike him in the forest glade."

Now I never knew this till the Child told me, as my brother had ridden away to a small hold that my father had up in the hills, and would return no more to the great castle until I should be gone out of it. He could not be revenged on me, as he knew that in cold blood I would not fight him, though I were called a thousand times a coward, and he, though pitiless to beasts, women, and churls, yet would not strike me, his brother, unless I would fight. But his rage was too great to see me, and though while the meinie was preparing that was to carry me to Glastonbury I sent a churl up to the small hold to ask him to be reconciled (for I had smitten him without speech or warning of any kind) the churl came back empty of all good message and

with one ear gone. Whereat I was troubled for the churl, and greatly wishing I could have gone myself to the hold in the hills, but my father held me close prisoner in the castle. The Child spoke again :

" Yes, Giraldus, with the force of your young strength and the rage of pity in your heart that made you able to use it to the last penny-weight, you struck him such a sore blow that the drum of the ear split clean, and he is deaf for ever on that side. Had you hit him on the temple of the forehead he might have died."

" Child, I am sorry. But was I then to let him have his will with the churl woman and stand by and watch ? I could not do that."

" No. Yet were you strong enough to restrain him gently and let the woman get away. For you did not say within yourself, ' Now I will kill this man that he never do such again, either to this or any other woman.' You never meant to kill him, and yet the unbridled rage of your pity was such that you might have killed him, and did maim him, and yet you are a man who will put beetles out of the way of passing feet. Now think on that."

I thought, and I knew well that if I had held a sword in my hand at the moment I had come upon my brother and the churl woman, I might have struck him with it and killed him, and been branded for ever with the mark of Cain. I remembered, too, how Henry of Anjou had raved and stamped and sworn that he would have the wicked, cruel clerks quick to hell.

" Child, I see that even pity must be controlled, lest it become ruthlessness."

" Yes. And until men learn to pity the cruel, as well as the victim, all their hearts will not be pitiful nor their souls be grown. They must pity both,

yet never must they forget that one is guilty and the other innocent. When they can do that, then cruelty will pass away from the world. But now, as you saw in the vision pity will lead to more cruelty, and so nothing is gained. And that slaughter in the streets of London in that time I was showing you is nothing to the slaughters and cruelties that will happen through pity for bond-slaves in the later times. There will be rivers of blood and horror unnameable, and through pity will it come."

But I was still perplexed, and I said :

"Child, the force that flamed in the hearts of the villeins was revenge, and not pity."

"It was. But the force that flamed in the heart of William Langland was pity, and not revenge. All these uprisings and just rebellions are lighted by a few with pity in their hearts, but until the slaves are themselves pitiful all shall come to nothing. For the many burst through the control of the few, and the saddest sight of all the world is a pitiful man who watches the cruelties his pity has brought. He is pitiful, with a large bright soul, but they are revengeful, with small dull souls. Neither can he control them when the lust burns high, but they burst from his hands and are like ravening beasts. And they do cruelties, and either their old masters overpower them and chain them again, or they fall into new oppressions among themselves. Not till the oppressed have a certain measure of pity in their hearts for their oppressors can cruelty begin to cease."

"Child, by that it will never. Men are not dogs to take all in kindness and not bear malice."

"Yet by and by their souls shall grow, and in their hearts shall come a little measure of pity, and they shall restrain their masters gently and not pile

one cruelty on another. But that time is not yet. And thou, Brother Giraldus, hast lived for sixteen years with a sin on thy soul unrepented and unconfessed, for it was right to restrain thy brother and save the churl woman, but it was wrong to be ruthless in pity and maim him."

"I will confess it to the priest, but he will think it strange enough that I have been here all these years and never confessed it before. And I must say who it was or he will think I have been breaking the ears of one of the brethren."

The Child laughed, and said: "Because you did not know before that it was a sin you shall confess it to me, and I will absolve you in the name of our Lord Christ. But look in your heart and see whether or no you are repentant."

I saw that I was, because of the thought that I might have killed my brother, also I was sorry that he must go through life to his last days deaf on one side. I said:

"Child, I am repentant, but I make little doubt I should do it again. The sight of cruelty in the flesh, and not in a vision when thou art with me, makes me altogether mad, and so it would always."

"Ay, so it would. Thou hast broken all thy passions and chained them, but this one is beyond thee. Surely our Lord Christ will forgive thee this one failure."

So I kneeled and confessed to him the sin he knew already, and he absolved me and blessed me, and then he left me. And I am not very like to fall into that sin again, for in Glastonbury, even in Stephen's reign, there is no cruelty to see.

CHAPTER XIV

NOW came two visions which for sheer weight and darkness and troubling of my soul were not surpassed, either by those that had gone before or by those that came afterwards. For the Child showed me the thing which shall come to pass, and, thank God, I shall have been dead four hundred years and shall never see it in the flesh. In that time I could not have lived, no, but must have died from sorrow. I had seen the Mass and the Abbots passed from Glastonbury, and the last Abbot put to death like our Lord Christ on a green hill, yet I had seen also that in the far future time Christ still walked in Glastonbury, and the Child had said He should be there for ever. I had thought always that this thing had happened for some reason to Glastonbury, but never that it would happen all over England from north to south, and from east to west. For I saw the Holy Church of Christ split in sunder, and the nations utterly fallen away. I saw the monks driven out of the monasteries, and the nuns from the convents, and their lands given to courtiers, and their treasure taken, and the holy vessels defiled. And I saw some nations that held fast by the true faith and the old Church, but England, our England that we Normans had made, was one of those that fell away. And during all this vision the Child held my hand, as if he were a little sorry for me and would help me if he could.

But even the Child of God could not help me, and

there was worse to come. For there were those in England and in the other fallen nations who not only denied the authority of the Church, but they denied the Mass, and at this blasphemy I groaned in spirit. But the Child said :

“Giraldus, look into the hearts of these heretics, and see their souls.”

I looked, and very many of them were upright, pure and strong in spirit, and some had pity in their hearts and fine souls blazing.

“They are still Christians, and some of them for Christ’s sake will be burnt. Now look into the hearts of the faithful ones, and see their souls.”

I looked, and very many of them were pure and strong, and some had pity in their hearts, and their souls had grown large. But I could not see that there were any more righteous among these than among the others, and I was tormented and perplexed. The Child said :

“And these are Christians, and some for Christ’s sake will be burnt. Yet, if a man serve Christ purely and humbly, will He turn that man away? Christ is above the Mass.”

“Child, these heretics say not that only. But they deny the Real Body and the Real Blood of our Lord Christ which is in the Mass.”

“They do. And yet He will not turn them away.”

And there I fell deep into the pit of my last heresy, for it seemed the Child of God thought these as good as the others, and I could see for myself they were no worse. So my faith was shaken, because the Child said that Christ would not turn them away. My faith was shaken, and I prayed him to stop making that vision.

So he did, and on the floor of my cell I threw

myself down at his feet, and implored him to tell me what was the truth. And he said :

“ Christ is in the Mass, as He is in everything. Hast thou not worshipped Him in the lilies in the Cloister Garth ? ”

“ Ah, Child, that was here in Glastonbury, and indeed I have often felt that in Glastonbury He is on my lips with every breath I draw.”

“ If a man break bread and drink wine in his own house and at his table, and remember the death of our Lord Christ and is thankful, he will receive Christ in his heart.”

“ Child, you do not answer me, and here I kneel before you in a new agony. Is the Real Body and the Real Blood of our Lord Christ present in the Mass, or is it not ? My faith is shaken, and it is you, Child of God, who have shaken it.”

But he said : “ It is God’s will.”

“ Then you will not answer me ? ”

“ As far as I may. I will answer you in the words of a wise woman who is to be Queen of England. Listen, Giraldus :

*Christ was the word that spake it,
He took the bread and brake it,
And what His word did make it
That I believe, and take it.”*

These words I pondered, kneeling at the feet of the Child, and I could make nothing of them, nor obtain any comfort or certain knowledge. If the Queen knew what she believed and feared to say, then indeed these words proved her to be the wisest woman that ever lived, for after them none could question her any further, and yet she had neither affirmed nor denied. But if she were not afraid and spoke straight out as God gave her to speak then

she had said—"I do not know." So I told the Child my thoughts, and he said :

"We will say she was not afraid. We will say she was a woman very humble before God, yet a little stiff before men. A woman who knows that man cannot understand the mind of God, a woman who will not admit that any man can interpret exactly the words of our Lord Christ, the Son of God, at His last supper. She will not affirm and she will not deny. She will take the Bread and the Wine, in penitence, in humility, in reverence, in utter belief in the spiritual presence of Christ, and say—'As thou hast made it, so I take it.' And she will feel in her heart that by that Sacrament Christ dwells in her and she in Him. But still she will say—'I do not know.' Giraldu, in time coming there will be many like this woman I have described, and through them the wound in the Church of Christ shall be healed. Then shall men be all Christians, and pitiful, neither fighting for this Church or that Church, but live together in the love of our Lord Christ."

"Child, when shall this be?"

"In a thousand years from the time the last Abbot was hanged on the green hill there shall be many who say—'I do not know'—and the wound shall begin to heal."

"A thousand years!"

"But first pity is to leave men's hearts, and for generations there will be hangings and burnings and tormentings, and the most cruel wars that have ever been fought, because one will say—'It is there'—and another will say—'It is not there'—and neither will say—'I do not know.' And after the generations of wars are over and a little pity has come back, there will still be cruelties of the spirit, and disputes,

and anger and contempt and intolerance, and all these will last for generations and generations. Yet in the end, Giraldu, even this wound shall heal, and this cruelty be passed away, as man goes forward to his perfection. Rise now and see a vision of a thing which is to come."

I rose, and the Child made a vision of a beleaguered city, with enemies encompassing it, and I saw that the intaking was very near.

"Come, we will go down into this city," said the Child.

We went down into it, and the Child held my hand. So was I within that place at its intaking, and of the things I saw I will not write much for if I think of them long I am visited with hideous dreams. But it was as if all the cruelty in the world had been gathered into one vial and poured out upon that town at its intaking. Yet I saw a soul grow suddenly, and like a flower that opens from a bud so it suddenly opened and grew large and bright. I saw a soldier seize a woman with a child in her arms, and the child he took away from her and killed, dashing its head against a wall. Then he would have laid hands on the woman, but close by him stood one of his comrades, and he had seen the child killed. Pity came into his heart, and his soul blazed up like a fire that is fanned. To save the woman from the ghastly fore-running which must precede her death he passed his sword through her body, and his comrade, mad with the rage of war, turned upon him and killed him. So the pitiful man's soul leaped out of him and went gloriously to God. But for all others the Child had closed my eyes, so that I saw not the souls going home, only the poor bodies being horribly tormented, and shrieking and crying out so that I hear them in the

hideous dreams. And after a little while I prayed the Child to take me away.

He made the vision pass and I sat on the bed in my cell, groaning, with a difficulty in breathing. I asked him :

“ Child, what was that ? ”

“ The Sack of Magdeburg.”

“ Ah, Child, why must you show me such a vision ? ”

“ It is God’s will. For that intaking was in a religious war, and on both sides it was fought in the name of Christ our Lord. It was fought, like all the other wars, because one would say—‘ It is there ’—and another would say—‘ It is not there.’ Giraldus, does not this dispute make men cruel beyond the ordinary ? ”

And I groaned, and said, “ Yes.”

“ Might it not have been better if in the beginning of all things, and at the first Mass, they had said—‘ I do not know ’—and held to it afterwards ? ”

But to that I could make no answer. I held my head in my hands and grieved bitterly for the cruelties that must come, and for the shaking of my own faith. Presently I asked the Child if I was to see any more such visions. He said :

“ No. For in the Sack of Magdeburg you have seen all the wars, and the hangings and burnings and tormentings. So you shall see no more of any of the wicked things that were done in the name of Christ, except you shall see a man in prison, but he was happy there and had a vision. You shall not need to be sorrowful for him. Giraldus, I have a command to lay upon thee.”

“ Child, I obey.”

“ You shall not speak with the priest or the Abbot, or consult with them, or confess to them

that your faith in the Real Body and the Real Blood is shaken."

"Oh, Child of God, if I must carry this burden alone and go half faithless to the Mass, I shall die!"

"No, you shall not. You shall pray, and remember me, and if it be God's will you shall go to the Mass faithless, humble, penitent and thankful, and say—'I do not know.' Kneel down, and I will bless you."

I kneeled and he laid hands on my head and blessed me, and then he left me. And now I began to think that John had died so that he might not be with me in this trouble. For I might some day have burst out with my misery and told him that my faith was shaken, and then there would have been a cloud over our lives and over our love, for John could not have endured it. I kneeled again to pray in my cell, and wondered how many more sorrows must fall upon me before I could end my life. But I saw the white scars on my hand, and ever after that when I am in torment of doubt and grief I look at them and remember that our Lord Christ has touched me, and that my body and soul, my faith and my unwilling doubting, are in His hands. Surely some time He shall make all plain to me.

CHAPTER XV

FOR three days after these two visions, the rending of the Church and the Sack of Magdeburg, I went about the Abbey under my new sorrow with a bent head and bowed shoulders, like an old man. The Abbot was troubled for me as he thought that, after two weeks, John's death had as it were, gone through to the core of my heart, and I was suffering from a spate of grief. Often he spoke with me, though never for long at a time, and often he came for a few minutes to see my writing. And once I was in such a maze of trouble that I would gladly have thrown myself at his feet, and without telling of the visions, would have confessed my half-lapse into deadly heresy, and prayed him to have me scourged almost out of life. But the command of the Child held me, and I kept all locked in my heart.

If I thought of the Sack of Magdeburg and remembered that the Child had told me there would be generations of such cruelties, then I came almost to the point of thinking that it would have been better for men, at the beginning, to say—"I do not know." It seemed that controversy on the Mass was more displeasing to God than any other quarrel that had been in the world, and that if men would hold this controversy then He would cast them away and deliver them into the hands of Satan, to work cruelties that were above and beyond man's natural temper, which is cruel enough, as God knows, and I

know. But the soldiers who entered Magdeburg, except for the one who had pity, were like men possessed of fiends, yes, as if hell had opened and poured forth fiends upon the beleaguered city. Then I would think, why should there ever have been this bitter dispute, and why should not men have rested for ever peacefully in the old, true faith? But I would think of the clean hearts and the strong spirits and the large fiery souls of some of the heretics I had seen in the vision, and how there were as many noble men among them as among the faithful, and then I must say—"Surely these men are not blasphemers, and surely they live in our Lord Christ." Then I must doubt again, and believe that they who said—"We know the mind of our Lord Christ"—were in error, though sinlessly, from the beginning. And I myself must begin to say—"I do not know, but what thou hast made it, oh Lord, so do I take it." Then is Giraldus a black heretic and faithless, and utterly fallen away.

And of spiritual cruelties I thought also, and how the Child had said they should continue for generations and generations after a little pity had come back and the fierce wars were ended. For if I were walking in the world with John de Crespigny, and a man said to him—"It is not there, oh fool, oh idolater!"—then would John be hurt in his heart, yes, to the innermost part of his soul, and for his cruelty I would smite that man on the mouth unless God restrained me, or unless (which is more like) John had already driven his teeth out through the back of his head. But if John were controlled in his body and cried to the man again—"It is there, oh blasphemer, and in the hottest part of hell thou shalt burn for ever!"—then he would be cruel, yet not so bitterly as the first man. For his belief is a

denial, and though a man will go to the fire for a denial, yet it cannot ever be so dear to him, so wound and bound in his heart, as an affirmation. No, John's belief would be so sweet to him, so holy and sacred, that if the man should cry to him—"Idolater!"—he would feel as if his body had been pierced with a sword. So is the spiritual cruelty of the heretics more bitter than ours, but of the physical cruelties the Child had said there was no choice to make, and all equally given over to the devil.

But if one came to John de Crespigny walking in the world, humbly, and saying—"I will not say thou art right, I will not say thou art wrong. For myself I worship our Lord Christ in the Mass, yet I do not know what is there." Then there would be no cruelty, and John could but pity him and pray for him that he come to a better mind, and recover the true faith. And so, John, shouldst thou have had to pity Giraldus, and pray for him, for indeed at thy feet I must have confessed all, neither might the will of the Child nor his commandment have restrained me. Surely God knoweth best, and thou art dead, and alone I bear this sorrow. But our Lord Christ is very gentle with me, and merciful, for though I be in a maze of doubt for a whole day and night, yet in the Mass next day I have the same peace, the same great rushing of joy, the same flaming uplifting of the soul, and the same flooding of gratitude and humility that I have had all my days. Yes, all my days has the Mass been more to me than meat, sleep, work, beauty or love, neither has Christ taken my joy from me, and most humbly I pray that He will never.

On the fourth night after, the Child came again, and I asked him straitly whether John had been

taken from me to save him from the grief of my unfaith. The Child said—"It might be"—but more than that he would not say, either to deny or affirm. Then he asked me if I were happy. I said :

"I have lost my friend and my whole and perfect faith, and my soul shudders at the cruelty that is now and that shall be, and my pity is an agony always, and I am not happy. But God is very good to me and I am blessed far beyond others who are happy. Child, I pray thee that I may confess my heresy, without the visions, to the Abbot, and be scourged. For if I lift the scourge to myself either from cowardice or some other reason I cannot use it."

"It is not cowardice," said the Child. "It is that I will not have thee scourged, neither by thyself nor any other. For of all men in the world thou hast been scourged the most, even to the last drop of blood."

But he spoke of a spiritual scourging. So he refused me, and then he made a vision. It was of a man using a very curious engine, and so small is the human mind that in seeing this engine I forgot all my troubles instantly. It was an engine for writing, and the man used no pen, but he had all his letters ready on little blocks with ink on them, so that when he had his letters set up then he had nothing more to do but press the parchment or what he would write on against it, and withdraw it all covered with letters and words. The Child said :

"Giraldus, you see this man, and that he can write a thousand books while you are writing half of one."

"Child, I see. But if he writes ill books with his engine it will be as if the devil had spawned, and for every devil there had been in the world before there would now be ten thousand."

"Well, I will show you a time when two out of every four books written with this writing-engine shall be trivial, blasphemous or lustful, yet I say to you that the good of this writing-engine by far will exceed its harm, and that it is the most blessed invention of man, and will lead to a great growth of pity, and understanding, and a knowledge of man, his virtues and his imperfections. Without it, it would have been hard for men to become pitiful in ten thousand years from this time that you see."

So I asked him what the time was. He said :

"This is not long before the Rending of the Church, and the engine as you see it there is very imperfect. But it is there, and later you shall see how pity grew from it."

"Child, it is always 'later,' and you will show me always the bad times and never the good."

"Thus only can you come by a little measure of understanding. Now we will see a bad time in England."

He made another vision, and it was of the whole of England, small and clear, and it seemed that there was a blight upon the country again. Yet it was not a grim black blight like the misery in the hearts of the people at the time of King John. It was a grey cloud, very cold and dreary, and it made me think of a March east wind.

"Child, what is this unkindness that has come upon England? It makes me shiver."

"It is an unkindliness, and a joylessness, and an ingratitude to God for His wonderful world that He has made, and in the latter end it is a cruelty. So come down and I will show you this people of England who live without joy."

"Are they the heretics?"

"They are one branch of the heretics."

"Then they quarrel among themselves, besides lifting up their heel against Holy Church?"

"They do, and right bitterly, but that also shall pass."

"It is a judgment on them, that not even among themselves can they agree."

"It might be, Giraldus. But who are you to say?"

Then I was abashed, for who indeed was I, a heretic fit for the scourging, to pass judgment on others? But the Child looked kindly on me, and said:

"The heretics strive to agree among themselves, but like any people whose souls are not grown and whose hearts are not pitiful they will try to make agreement by force. They will say—'Agree with me, or I will have you to the rack and the fire.' And another will say—'Agree with me or I will pray God that He curse your soul.' And never by such means can any true accord be made, only, at times, a pretence and a hypocrisy."

At that I sighed, for one of my bitterest thoughts was that I was now a hypocrite, pretending to worship as the others when I knew not what I worshipped, save that it was Christ, pretending to be faithful and believing as the others when my whole and perfect faith was gone. But the Child said:

"Comfort thee, Giraldus, for thou wouldst have confessed, and at my command thou art a hypocrite, not of thine own will. Now come down into this sad England, and see what the heretics do."

So we went down, and the physical appearance of the grey cold cloud was gone, but as we walked in England I saw the hearts of the people and that they were joyless. They wore black clothes, and their faces were long and solemn, and they had made a

new decalogue with such multiple new sins in it that a man could hardly raise his hand to scratch his head without being accused of light-mindedness. They might not sing nor play, nor laugh, nor dance, nor have any joyful music, nor bathe in the streams and rivers, nor enjoy in un sinful idleness the flowers, the forests, the hills, and the song of birds. They must do their daily work, and read the Word of God, and pray, and think very much on the wrath of our Lord God when He is angry, and very little on the pitifulness of our Lord Christ, and His mercy, and how He said 'Consider the lilies,' and how He made wine for the marriage feast that men's hearts might be cheered. Even the little children were enjoined to be solemn and quiet, and not laugh too much, neither shout, and the nightly beds of these innocents were made a terror with thoughts of hell and burnings. Yet, because God put His breath into the body of a beast, and man must suffer under sensual desires, so there was real sin among these people of England, as there has been always. But now hypocrisy was added, and a man would in the night commit a lustful sin and in the morning rebuke the children for shouting.

"Child of God," I said, "surely these heretics have brought themselves to an evil pass."

"They have. And this grey joylessness, this sometimes hypocrisy, and as I will show thee presently, this spiritual cruelty, is the blackest streak in those who will say so furiously—'It is not there.' This time shall pass away, and quite soon, yet always the black streak is there, and it will rise and rise again, and crop out like the stones in your own hill moors, and so it shall always until they learn to say humbly—'I do not know.'"

"Child, I would know, if it please God, what is

the worst fault and the blackest streak in those who will say bitterly and passionately—‘ It is there.’ ”

“ Their blackest streak is deceit, and that shall be for thy comforting, as there is no cruelty in it as there is in these.”

The Child led me, and we came to a road, along which passed a company of soldiers.

“ See, Giraldus, the soldiers of this people of England.”

I looked at them, and most violently and suddenly I was reminded of the Roman legions. For these men were strong—strong, with grim, pitiless faces, and a look of truthfulness about them.

“ Child, they are like the Romans.”

“ They are indeed, as brave and as cruel as they, and these are the best soldiers of any at this time in Europe, and they have raised England from a pit to a hill-top in the eyes of the other nations.”

“ Surely the King sleeps easily in his bed with such men about him.”

“ There is no King.”

“ No King, Child ! Then who rules ? ”

“ An upright, pure and honest man, with a great strong spirit and a fiery faith in God, but a cruel, and a man without pity in him. This people which is now in England cast down their King for his many faults, and afterwards they killed him. Many grieve, and would have his son to rule, but the leader of those soldiers holds the country in an iron grasp, and so he shall till he be dead.”

“ What is his name ? ”

“ He is called Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector of England. He is the first man in the land, and that without a drop of royal blood in him. So thou seest, Giraldus, that with the soldiers of Rome

this people has another Roman thing, and that is a republic with one consul at the head."

I marvelled that such a thing should come to pass in England, and I asked the Child what should happen when this Oliver Cromwell came to his judgment.

"Why, the King's son shall come back and reign. and this extremity of joylessness shall pass from the country. Yet always the black streak is there, and always it shall rise in many hearts among these heretics who will say so bitterly—'It is not there.'"

The Child led me, and we came to a village with a long street and many houses standing close together, and it was night, with snow falling. In the first house of the street, as we came to it, the door stood open, and yellow lamp-light was cast abroad on the snow that was on the ground and on that which was falling. This light on the snow was lovely enough, but when I turned me about to look at the flakes falling through the radiance that poured ever from the Child of God, I could hardly take my eyes away. I had never seen him in a snowstorm. The snowflakes looked like little spirits falling gently, and they would not rest on him neither to melt nor to freeze, though my dark gown was speckled with them. They passed him always, and there in the dark night he stood radiant in a shower of snow. But he bade me leave looking at him and see what went on at the open door. There were two women, one within the door and the other without, the open door-way being between them. She who stood without in the snow was weeping, and I asked the Child why. He said :

"She has erred, and she is ashamed and very sorry, and long since God has forgiven her. But

the earthly punishment for the sin two committed one must bear alone, for she is with child."

He touched my ears and I understood the speech of her who stood within the door. It was very harsh and cold, as she had found the other out in her error, and now would put her straight forth from the house into the snow. The one wept and pleaded, but the other was relentless.

"Giraldus, thou seest this pitiless woman who would put her out?"

"I see her, but surely she will relent in the end."

"She will not. She is a woman of pure heart and life, but cruel as a woman can be, and she will say to the other—'Go forth, for I am better than thee.' Yet look at their souls."

I looked, and the soul of the relentless woman was very dull and small, but the soul of the other was of a fair size and bright.

"Is she right to say to this one—'Thou dost defile my house?'"

"Child, surely she is not right."

"Now thou seest the spiritual cruelty of this people."

"No, but it is a physical cruelty, for where will the poor soul go when she is put out at night into the snow?"

"It has become a physical cruelty. But where it began is with the woman saying—'I do not thy sins, and so I am better than thee.' And the name of this cruelty is intolerance, and it is utterly displeasing to God. Deep in the middle of the black streak it lies, and it will come out and out, even after this time is passed, like the outcrops of the stone."

We heard the relentless woman grow suddenly more harsh and more bitter, and she gave the other an ill name she had not deserved. Then the piti-

less woman shut the door on her that was with child, and the lamp-light vanished, and there were we all three outside in the snow with the house door shut, and in the sky a wealth of snow yet to fall, so that there was darkness but for the radiance of the Child of God, and a lamp in a house here and there. The poor woman wept sorely, and my heart was wrung for her.

"Poor soul! What shall she do?"

"We will see."

And in that long, long street, wherever there was a light in the house she knocked at the door and asked to be taken in, but none of them would have her. They knew her, and that she had been put forth by her mistress, and either with harsh words or in grim silence they shut their doors in her face. So she came to the last lighted house, and after that there was nothing but the road into the open dark country.

"Child of God, if these will not have her then must she sleep all night in the snow or walk to the next village, there perhaps to fare no better."

"No, even in this village of the joyless there is one Christian woman."

And so it was, for the woman who was in the last lighted house received the sinner kindly and took her in and comforted her. The Child said:

"Giraldus, can our Lord Christ have much joy in these other followers of His?"

"Child, He is very pitiful and wise and very like He sees something in them that I cannot. But I cannot believe that they ever read His life."

"They do, but they will not understand it. When they shall learn to read it with understanding then the black streak shall melt away and be gone."

The Child made this snowy vision to pass away,

and we were back in my cell, but he was still with me. I asked him then not to show me any more visions of the people who lived under the soldiers who were like Romans, and under their grim leader, for of all the evil things I saw in my visions that were not cruelties this east wind joylessness oppressed me the most.

I had been from a child always deeply grateful to God for the large glories of the wonderful world He has made, and for the little kindly pleasant things in it, like a horn of the Saxons' mead which tastes of the heather. And I had a strong earthly spirit which took endless joy in the change of the seasons, and in things growing and perfecting themselves, and leaving their seeds to another year. And even though I was the son of a Baron yet I would join the churls in the corn-field and work with them a little while to hear the sound of the blade cutting the stalks, and the rustle of the corn falling, and to see the wind swaying the golden field uncut, and to hear the hones on the sickles. Also I was as besotted on music as a man may be, and as a child with my sister I was always running and dancing and singing, and inventing new games to play. And all my life I could laugh and laugh, if my troubles stood away from me, and my heart was merry enough. So I could not abide this people with their multiple new sins (as if there were not enough of the old ones) and their dark clothes (as if black were God's colour more than any other) and their mincing quiet gait (as if it were more holy to walk than to run) and their forgetfulness of the miracle at Cana in Galilee. For if our Lord Christ had thought it sinful to laugh and have a merry feast then surely He would not have made such good wine in the pitchers. No, but for these joyless ones

He must have made it vinegar, to wry their wry mouths yet further. Now is Giraldus harsh and intolerant, yet because he is a sinful man he will not strike out this passage.

The Child said : " I will take you no more to see this people in the day of their most power, but there is one of them you must yet see, and the greatest of all."

I thought he spoke of Oliver Cromwell, the captain of the strong soldiers, though how I was to see him and not in the day of his power, unless I saw his soul with God, I did not know. For the Child had said he would hold England till his death. Then I thought perhaps he would show me this Oliver as a young man, before he and his people had come to their power. But the Child said :

" It is a greater than Oliver, and a pitiful man."

He made a vision, and it was of a man in a prison. Then I remembered that he had said I was to see a man in prison for his belief's sake, but should not need to be sorry for him.

The Child said : " Come, we will go down and see what he does in his prison."

We went down and came into the prison with the man, and he was lying asleep on his pallet. I did not then see his soul, for the Child willed it otherwise.

" Why is he in prison ? " I asked. " Is Oliver now dead and the King's son come back ? "

" Yes. This man will not cease from preaching the Word of God as he understands it, and he has been in this prison for years. Neither for threats nor cajolery nor contempt nor imprisonment will he promise not to preach."

" Well, he is a stiff man."

" That he is, and one of the old Saxon sort. But

besides his stiffness, which can always go hand in hand with cruelty, this man has a pitiful heart. His pity all runs in one channel, and he would rescue and comfort those who walk wearily under the burden of sin. He grieves much for them, and will help them if he can. You, Giraldus, would rescue all bodies that are tormented, but this man would save all the world from hell."

"Well, Child, then he is a noble man. But all the same for that, I would care for the bodies and trust our Lord Christ for the souls. Shall He not for their suffering forgive them the more readily for their sins?"

"Yes. But this man is one of the heretics, he says passionately—'It is not there'—and by his nature and faith he must ever dwell more on the wrath of God than the mercy of our Lord Christ. Yet he is a Christian, and a great one, and he would help all his fellows. He himself has laboured very heavily under the burden of sin."

At this I wondered, for the man on the pallet had a pure, brave and sober face, and he looked as good a man as any I had seen. The Child laughed at my amazement, and he said :

"I will make you a vision within a vision, and while we stand in the prison with this man you shall see his life."

So he showed me the man's life, clear and small, and without the bonds of time as man knows it. It was a very clean, innocent, and kindly life, though I saw he had broken at times the new decalogue of the joyless people.

"Child," I said, when the vision was passed, "his sins are imaginary."

"They are, but his pity is not. Out of his pity he makes a book, and he has begun to write it. Go

to his little table and read his book that he has begun in his prison."

The Child made me to understand the language of the book, and before I had read very far I was more interested in the sound of the words in my brain than in what the prisoner had written. Now my visions are ended I have forgotten that language as I forgot all tongues directly I came out of the visions, but to this day I remember the feeling of depth and breadth, and the resonance of the English of that book, and I never heard any more beautiful tongue but the Greek. I said :

" Is this the language the Saxons made, with their own and with our Norman, when it has come to its perfection ? "

" Yes, that is it. It came to that perfection long ago, when the Word of God was first written in English it was perfect, and this man will write like that because of his great love for the Word, and for his own speech in the height of its beauty. And some of these English people shall go over a great sea and found a new nation and spread their language over it, and it shall be altered until a man can scarcely recognize it for the same speech, yet one and all they shall read the Word of God in the old lovely tongue, and some of them will be grateful. And this man's book will be read also, as long as the language endures, for its beauty and simplicity and goodness. Now read, Giraldus, and take in the sense of the words and not only the sound of them. How does your heart ever stray away from holiness to beauty ! "

But the Child laughed and looked kindly on me, and I obeyed him and read the book as far as the man had written it, and I wished there was more. It was as the Child said, simple and beautiful and good, and an account of a Pilgrimage. This touched

me in especial, for thinking of John and how he had to carry his burden to Glastonbury and there found forgiveness and peace. So I finished it, and asked what the man's name was.

"His name is John Bunyan, and if he saw thee, the monk, standing in his prison, he would think the devil had visited him."

The Child laughed, but I was a little troubled to know that John Bunyan would think so unkindly of me, if the Child of God opened his eyes.

"Why would he that?" I asked. "I have not seen my face for more than sixteen years, but I knew not that it had become in any way devilish."

"No, thy face is not devilish, as some day I will show thee. But John Bunyan is one of the joyless people, and he has been taught from childhood that the monks were sinks of iniquity. And so some of them are, and shall be, under bad Abbots and in careless times. But this man condemns them all, root and branch, as thou wouldst condemn all the joyless, root and branch. Yet now thou seest that there is among them a great man, and a noble, and one the world must thank God for."

"Child, I see that this John Bunyan is good and great, and I will not condemn the joyless people. But I will say that I do not like them, nor England under the grey east wind blight."

The Child laughed, and said: "No. Never will Giraldus, nor any like him, take the joyless people to his heart. But he shall be just, and give God thanks for John Bunyan. Now see his soul."

Then was there a radiance in that dark little prison chamber besides the radiance of the Child, and a fine blazing soul to look at, because John Bunyan was a pitiful man and would release all from their burden of sin.

CHAPTER XVI

THE vision the Child showed me after this one of the east wind blight and the man in prison, was of England in the latter part of the seventeenth century after Christ, when the son of the King who had been murdered was on the throne. And it seemed to me that he sat there very lightly, and with nothing but the good will of the people to hold him on to it. The Barons had now no power at all more than any other man, the heretics' Church had no power, because it had no head save the King, and the people who had thrown down one king and lived without anarchy for years under a captain of soldiers, could do the same again if they had the mind. I told the Child my thoughts, and he said :

“ Now you see the end of what began at the great battle in France when the English archers shot down the French knights in their scores. They began to know their worth then, and that they were men like the others, and that a Knight or a Baron was nothing but his armour and a horse. Since then their power has been rising like the tide that goes backwards and forwards in waves, and yet always comes up higher. While the Kings fought out their long struggle with the Barons their power grew, and grew still while the Kings were ruling absolute and the Barons' power was gone. Now the people have crushed the Kings, and from henceforward in ever-increasing measure the King's common people will rule over him. Is it right, Giraldus ? ”

Now I, remembering the glory of the soul that God puts into every man alike, could not say that in His sight a King was any better than a common man, and as I had seen, some, like John and this King Stephen that reigns now, are infamous bad Kings, and John within himself will be a wretched man. But that the King's common people should rule over him, and say "Do this," or "Do that," seemed such a strange thing to me that I could not tell whether it was right or wrong. So I said :

"Child, it may be right if the people can rule wisely and mercifully. But if they take to killing their King every time he a little displeases them surely it will be a cruelty."

"They will do it no more. And when it was done to this man's father many of the people who deposed him were against it, and knew it was a sin and a murder. But though they have restored the King they have not given him back the power the sovereign held before, and they will never. The old Kings would say, 'God gives us the right to rule.' But this people says no to that. They say 'We give you the right to rule,' and so, as you see, this man sits lightly on his throne."

"Is it so in other countries?"

"It is not, and that you shall see presently. But the English have such a free and stubborn spirit, which they get from the Saxons and the Normans (who were in the beginning Scandinavians, as you know, having heard John de Crespigny break out into heathenish old singing)—that they do this growing and changing quicker than others. And I tell thee this for thy comfort, thou Norman, that though the Saxon will resist passively like an immovable block of granite, yet it is the Norman in these English that makes them leap up to strike off

their chains. Now they have done it, and the King rules, in the latter end, by the good will of his common people. And this one they will allow to stay till he dies, but the next one they will chase away and this dynasty shall fall."

"Is it the dynasty of Henry of Anjou still, after all these years?"

"No, Giraldus. This is a line of Scottish Kings."

At this I was amazed, for the Scots are utterly uncivilized, even more barbaric than the Saxons were when we came to them, and I could not think how, without our influence, they had become civilized in such a little time. Truly I thought they were no further forward than the man who owned the bitch that made me think of Lett, and who drew rough pictures on his cave wall. So I asked the Child when we had conquered Scotland.

"Never. Scotland has conquered you. The wise Queen of England was the last of the house, and after her the Scots Kings reigned over England. But it was done peacefully and without bloodshed. Now come down, Giraldus, and see this barbarian Scot who reigns over your country."

For the Child always knew my thoughts, and sometimes he answered them before I had spoken them out. We went down into the vision and walked in the court of the Scottish King, and the Child told me his name was Charles, and that he was the second, his murdered father being the first. He was a very sorrowful man, and very merry, he was very wise in his thoughts and often very foolish in the things he did; he could read the heart of a man, and a woman too, yet he spent all his substance on worthless folk. He was an evil liver and his court was lustful and abandoned. Yet this man who ruled over heretics held in his heart that true and

perfect faith that I had lost, but the Child said he dared not confess it.

"Giraldus, is this Charles a barbarian?"

"No," I said, and indeed whatever were his faults they did not arise from barbarism. He was as civilized as the Greeks, very witty and courteous, and with a pleasant manner.

"Some nations have managed to leave their barbarism behind without the aid of the Normans," said the Child, and he laughed.

"Child, I am a Norman, and I would not be other than a Norman, but you will not say I am not pitiful to the Saxons, or that I make any difference in my heart towards them. I was sent to Glastonbury for defending the Saxon churl woman, and denouncing my brother and father as oppressors of the Saxons."

And this I said because I was a little hurt that the Child of God should always laugh at me for being a Norman. But he took my hand, though the vision was not very woeful or horrible, and he said:

"Thou art pitiful to all, and thy childish pride of race is but a little fault. But now, thou seest this King's court, and how it is lustful and abandoned?"

"I see it."

"It is the swing back of the branch that has been bound. If the joyless people with the black streak in them will try to impose their way of living over the whole country, then when their power breaks there will always be some who in the swing back will rush into a rage of liberty and excess. Yet this abandonment and sensual living is not over the whole of England, only the hypocrisy has gone. Those who were impure under Oliver are now impure openly, and those who were pure are still the same."

We walked in the court, and presently the Child led me to another man whom he called James, the Duke of York, and he said he was brother to the King and should reign after him. And whereas Charles, with all his faults, had a fairly large soul and some pity in him, this man had a very small, dull soul, and there was about all his person a coldness and hardness like black ice. I said :

" Child of God, this James is a cruel man."

" He is. But I shall not show you any of his cruelties. It is not God's will that you should see any more of the pitiless wars and persecutions for belief's sake. Surely in the Sack of Magdeburg you have seen them all. But this James is an open son of the Old Church, and he will try to bring back England to the fold."

Then I was in a perplexity and knew not what to say, for I hoped he would be able to do it, and yet shuddered for the people of England when he should be on the throne. Then I remembered the Child had said the next King should be chased away, so I supposed he would fail and leave England still heretical. I asked the Child if this was so, and he said :

" Yes, he will fail here and in Scotland, and none of his tormentings shall avail him. Giraldus, the Saxons have an idea fixed in their heads."

" Then there it will stay," I said, but I was sorrowful, as now I knew England would never come back.

" Yes. They have the idea fixed in their heads that they will not be ruled by the Pope, and that they will not say—' It is there.' The mass of the people will never go back, yet in the end all Christ's children shall be at one."

" Child of God, may I see that time ? " I cried,

for this man's cruelty, his coldness and hardness as of black ice, and the thought that he held the old, true faith, were troubling me.

"Not yet," said the Child, and then the vision passed, and I was alone in my cell.

I wished he had not left me, for I must then sit on my bed alone, and think of those two brothers, the King and the Duke, the unchaste and the cruel, who yet held in their hearts the faith that I had lost. For though the Child says that the wound in the Church of Christ will be healed by those who say humbly—"I do not know"—yet I must be, in spite of my visions, a man of my own life and time, a monk in Glastonbury in the reign of King Stephen, and I wish I were not a heretic and a doubter. I do not desire to coerce any man, or to say violently and bitterly—"It is there," but oh, if I could say it in my heart, and believe it, as I always did. And then I must look at the scars on my hand, and pray, and long for the time to pass quickly until the Mass next morning. For how do I know, even now, that the visions were not, in part, the test of my faith, and that the Child of God was not allowed to say what was true? And that when I am dead, our Lord Christ will not say to my soul :

"Giraldus, I touched thy hand, yet afterwards thou didst fail me."

I know nothing—nothing, and as I write here with the bit of candle burning out, it is a long time to the Mass, where I shall find comfort for a little while.

CHAPTER XVII

THE fourth night after, the Child came again and he showed me a vision of England as it should be when the Scottish Kings had been driven out, and a new house should rule and a new name. To me, who had seen Henry of Anjou, these Kings were not Kings at all, only men who sat on the throne for the people to look at, so that they could say, "See, we have a King." For the Child told me that the English, who before any other had broken the power of the crown and thus lost the substance, had a great loyalty and affection for the shadow of royalty and should keep it longer than any other nation. The Child told me that these new kings came from Hanover and were of the old family of the Electors. They were, for a long time, foreigners, stupid, and out of sympathy with the people, and as I looked at these and remembered Henry, and how I had felt crushed against the wall with his greatness, I thought how utterly kingship had fallen away.

But under these shadow kings and the governance of their ministers the people lived very quietly, and were loyal to them, neither would they have the Scottish Kings back again, for now they were openly of the True Church the mass of the people were against them. Twice they tried to come back and twice failed, and after that they disappeared. But the people lived quietly, and the bitterness of persecution for faith was ended, and all their hearts

were growing a little more pitiful and their souls larger. Yet it seemed to me that while the men had greatly advanced, and now lived comfortable lives free from fear, and with merriment and joy in them the women were still where Jerome had left them. Their lives were neither joyful nor free, save from the fear of lawful misuse, they must still be protected wherever they went, and they must still be despised and condemned. Still would a man say, if he desired to call another man a coward—"Thou woman!" Also a woman must take it patiently and submissively if her husband were drunken or adulterous, neither think she had any cause to complain, but she must be chaste or she would be out-cast. And in many small ways also they were oppressed and made unhappy, but they bore all in silence. And I said :

"Child, the people's souls are growing, but are they not still oppressive to their women, and forgetful that her soul is equally glorious with a man's?"

The Child said : "Giraldus, in thy father's hall thou didst say thou wouldst cry for the women, and that their own outcry should do them no good. And the outcry of pitiful men has remedied the worst abuses they suffered under. But their lives shall never be quite free nor joyful nor noble until they make outcry for themselves, and I will show you the first woman in England who for pity shall help her sisters. But the end is not yet."

So he showed me, moving in the last half of this century, a pitiful woman who had name Mary, like to the Mother of our Lord, and she had a great soul far beyond most others of the time. She made a book of the complaints of women, and it was written out on the writing-engine so that there were many

of these books, and they were cast abroad over England. But she received much scorn and mocking and shame for the book, and the men would not heed her, and even very many of the women were against her. The Child said :

" She is before her time by fifty years, and they are not ready for her, any more than in thy time are the people ready for thee. Yet there is her book in the world, and from pity she has done what she could. But seest thou that there are no serfs nor churls in England, and that even the poorest gets his bread quietly and without oppression, and that their souls grow larger ? "

" Child, I see."

" Now we will look at France and see how they do."

The Child made a vision of France in this century, and straightway we seemed to have gone backwards for hundreds of years. For the King had great power and was worshipped almost as God, and the Seigneurs oppressed the people so bitterly that the land groaned and cried out under their cruelty.

" See this great King pass, and another come."

We saw the great King pass, and another come, and he had no pity for the people, neither did he try to break the pride and cruelty of the Barons. Also he was of an unchastity incredible, and while the villeins were starving, his court was luxurious and whoring incessantly.

" See this King pass, and another come."

We saw that King pass, and another come. This King had pity in his heart, and a desire to do right, and his soul was much larger and more bright than those of the other two.

" Child of God, now this King will set all right and break the Barons and free the people."

"No, it is too late. What he can do, that he shall, but the tide must sweep him away, and for the sins and cruelty of the others he shall die. See the rage of pity that is behind the villeins."

And I saw that the sorrows and wrongs of the villeins had lighted many hearts with fury, and their souls blazed with pity, and they went here and there in the land, preaching a rebellion.

"Giraldus," said the Child, "is this rebellion they preach a just one?"

"Ah, Child, if ever any rebellion were just, it is this."

"Yet have these villeins any pity in their hearts for their tormentors?"

"Their wrongs are intolerable, and how should they have any pity?"

"Yet, if they have it not, what will happen?"

"They will be revenged."

"And what after that?"

"They will either be chained again by their masters, or fall into new oppressions among themselves."

"It will be the second. Giraldus, see this revenge."

So I saw the people come to their King and demand right for their wrong, and what he could do, that he did, but it was too late. The cruelties had been too heavy, and they had continued too long, and the people began to kill. And when they had killed many of their Barons, and their King and his Queen, and had chased all those who stood with the oppressors from the country, or slain them, they began to kill among themselves. Neither was any man's head safe on his shoulders, as the next day, for no fault, he might lose it. So they all lived in terror, and the killing went on, and on.

"Giraldus, is not there now a new oppression, when any man may be slain in their death-engine with but the semblance of a trial, or no trial at all?"

"Child, it is a terrible oppression, and they have lost the comfort of God."

For the people had thrown down the Church and the priests, and they lived godless in blackest atheism, which was a thing I had never seen before since the coming of our Lord Christ. The Child said :

"What was it stood at the backs of these later Seigneurs, to condone them in their oppression of the people?"

Then must I answer sorrowfully enough : "It was the Church, save for a pitiful priest here and there."

"If the Church will take sides with cruelty, then when the people break out and take revenge they will have none of the Church, and they will say, 'There is no God, or he is a cruel one. We will have none of him, for our own hearts are better than he. We will worship man and not God.' Also there are unbelievers at all times and in all nations, and in times of faith they will conform, and in times of unfaith they will be godless openly. This is a time of unfaith."

"Child, it is a ghastly time, with the killing and the faithlessness, and if it be God's will I would see no more of this vision. But the rebellion was just, in the beginning."

The Child was merciful, and he said I need see no more, and he made the vision pass away. I sat on my bed, sighing for this cruelty that is to come, when Paris shall run red with blood, and our Normandy whence we came be in terror and famine and despair. Yet I was glad it should never happen in

England, and I could not understand why France had fallen so far behind. I asked the Child, and he said :

“ When so many of you Normans went from France to England you did France much injury, and had you stayed the French would have been a greater people, as men count greatness. There is too much Latin and Frank in them, and too little of the old Scandinavians, for they were a free people with a free spirit.”

Now the Child was not wont to praise the Normans because of my faulty pride of race, and I was astonished, and thanked him. He laughed, and said :

“ This once I will praise them. For with the Saxons you Normans have made a great race, stubborn and patient, yet with the spirit that will leap up and break chains, and not bear them in meekness. So it came about that the English must always be as free as they can, and that at any time in the world, and it was never possible to oppress the English villeins as the French villeins were oppressed. So at the great battle I showed you the English archers and men-at-arms were strong men and stout fighters, but the French soldiers were not so good, because of their more bitter and cruel oppression in time of peace. So they could not shoot down the English Knights and Barons in their scores, and they could not become conscious of their power and value, but must return groaning into their bondage. They fell far and far behind the English, and the time I have just shown you is a hundred and fifty years after the time when Oliver Cromwell ruled in England, and the English people had broken the last power that stood against them. Now there is before them but one more cruelty and

one more oppression to be over them, and they shall make it themselves."

"Child of God, why do they make an oppression for themselves?"

"When it comes they shall not know it for an oppression, and when it is grown it shall be too powerful for them to destroy, and the oppression shall master man. But in the end he shall master it, and that time thou shalt see, but not yet."

"Child, I would know if there are to be any more of these rebellions of serfs and villeins or whether they are all now freed."

"There is to be a rebellion, not of serfs, but of freed serfs living in misery, which for horror and bloodshed shall exceed by far all thou hast seen this night, and through pity it began, and a great flaming desire for justice and mercy. It ended in cruelties unbelievable, and black atheism, and persecutions of Christians, and a bitter oppression of the people. Truly they are all alike, and there is no need for thee to see the other that shall come. But the next vision I shall show thee is of slaves that did not free themselves, but were freed, and I will show thee a man who is very like our Lord Christ. Yes, of all the men of thy race he is the most like Christ—of any that have been, and of any that will be until man is far nearer his perfection."

"Then wilt thou go back in time and show me a Norman?" I asked, for he said a man of my race,

"No, Giraldus. No pure Norman, not even thou, was ever as pitiful as this man I will show thee, nor so like to our Lord Christ. He is a greater than thee, nor only in the way Henry and his priest were greater. No, but he hath a larger soul and a brighter. And he is descended from the English,

from the joyless people who left their country and made a new one."

"Child, it would be easy for a pitiful man to have a larger soul than mine, for in my life and in the visions twice hast my pity failed—once for my brother and once for John."

"Not so easy," said the Child. "Yet this man never failed, and for his life, and for his work, and for the shining of his great soul all the world must give God thanks, and in especial they who speak his language."

CHAPTER XVIII

ON the fourth night after, the Child came, and he told me that this vision should be in the middle part of the nineteenth century after Christ, but that when he had shown it he would return again in time and show me England from the beginning of that century. But this was to be of a great new country which should be discovered three hundred and fifty years after my own time. It would be taken by the English, and the language of that country should be the tongue the Saxons had made with their own and with the Norman.

The Child made a vision first of the country, and he made appear on the vision the bounds of England and Scotland as they would be if England were set down in the midst of the new country. And this new continent was enormous, so that I could do nothing but gasp.

"Child," I said, "if we go down to walk in this country we shall be lost, and never shall we find the man that is like our Lord Christ. Surely he is less in it than one grain of sand in a vast desert."

The Child laughed, and said, "Giraldus, thou art no better than an infant, and the sudden failures of thy mind are unbelievable. Thou knowest well that when we walk in the visions we walk not as men do, and what is the size of a country to me? Neither is the man like one grain of sand in a desert, for he bestrides the country like a Colossus, and by the burning of his soul we shall find him."

Then I was abashed, and asked his pardon for my exceeding stupidity and faithlessness, but indeed that country was so vast that it bereft me of all sense, and I asked if England ruled it.

"No. Only the northern part does England still hold. As to this part, where I draw this line in the vision, it is free and broken away. England oppressed this people that were her own, and treated them unjustly, forgetting that the Saxon and Norman blood will always be as free as it can, at any time in the world. So they are free, and a republic like Old Rome. Now come, Giraldus, and walk with me in this vision, and I will hold thy hand lest thou be lost from me."

The Child laughed and took my hand, and we went down into the vision and walked in the southern part of that enormous land that was held by the free people who had broken away. And there were slaves, not white serfs or churls, but Ethiopians from Africa. I had seen some of them in the old, old time in Egypt, and then they had been slaves.

"Child, this is an unhappy race. They were slaves in Egypt, and now behold they are still slaves, and thousands of years have passed between. Will there ever be a time when in some place in the world they are not bond?"

"Surely there will. The time is not yet, not even when these be freed, for the Arabs will still enslave them. But see the minds and hearts of these Africans."

I saw their minds and hearts, and they were a people not grown to the full stature of man's brain, no, but like children were these Ethiopians. They would be very sorrowful, and mourn and grieve, and then they would be very merry, and sing sweetly

and dance, and they would have gusts of wild passions and then in a breath become quiet again. They were like children, and had not yet come by any great measure of restraint. But some of their hearts were pitiful, and their souls grown large.

"Giraldus, is the spark of God's breath in this people?"

"Truly, Child. In some of them it has grown large."

"And is it right that they should be enslaved because they are dark-skinned, and because they are like children and not grown to the full stature of man's brain?"

"It is not right. But if these slaves rebel then their revenge will be terrible, because of the wild gusty passions of their hearts. They would pile cruelty on cruelty until their passion blew out."

"They shall not rebel, they shall be freed. Come, let us go among their masters."

We went among the white men who were these slaves' masters, and their lives were lovely and pleasant, with much beauty in them, and kindliness and loyalty and honour. They were like princes for courtesy, and their bare word was as unbreakable as a solemn vow to God. Also many of them had pitiful hearts and treated the slaves kindly, and because they were dark-skinned thought no worse of keeping them than of keeping dogs. The chief use of the slaves was to grow a plant for the making of cloth, yet not the flax plant, but some other. So the white men sold the plant and grew rich, and their lives were lovely and pleasant. The Child said:

"Giraldus, thou seest this civilization which is built on slavery, and how it is beautiful and pleasant?"

"Child, I see it."

"Its beauty is nothing to God, and it must pass away and be destroyed. Come, we will walk among the men who buy and sell the slaves, and those who drive them in the fields."

We walked among these men, and the souls of those who bought and sold the slaves were very small and dull, for they were cruel. Of those who drove the slaves in the fields many were cruel also, without pity in their hearts. There was a new wrong added to the wrongs done to the slaves, for the men who held the slaves despised utterly those who bought and sold them, and these lived in a bitter cloud of contempt which made them yet more harsh to the Africans. I was troubled, and said :

"Child, there is much evil under this outward pleasantness."

"There is. And now see the chief sorrow of the slaves."

Now my father's churls, and indeed all the other serfs and villeins I had seen in England, were bound to one piece of land and one master, and were not likely to be moved. So the families were not separated, and if they lived in misery they were at least together. But these Africans, besides any beatings they might get and other cruelties, were liable at any moment to be torn apart, and a mother taken from her children, and a husband from his wife. This touched me like a pierce from a sword, as all my life I had missed my twin-sister who is a nun, and had I not been in Glastonbury and very near to our Lord Christ I could not have borne it as well as I did.

But the Child led me, and we came near to one of these slave-sellings, where a man would dispose of a whole family of his slaves. These Africans were not

very dark, and I thought that in their veins must be some white blood. There was a man, hale and strong and fit for much work, a woman, his wife, a nearly grown girl, and two small children. One of the buyers would have the man, but he would not have any of the others. And one would buy the woman, but though she prayed in agony to him to buy the girl and the small children also, he would not. His heart was turned from pity, and he laughed and said they were useless to him. Then one would buy the girl that was nearly grown, and as he looked at her I shivered, as I thought he was buying her for himself, and he was a cruel man. She was very tall and strong, and graceful of her body, and in a manner beautiful.

"Child," I said, "he buys her for himself."

"He does, and will she or nil she, she must do all his desires, for she is a slave and not the holder of her own body."

Then the two small children were bought together by some other man, and so this family was torn asunder and all rendered desperate. Their lamentations were bitter to see and to hear, and for their sorrow I could have wept.

"Child, will they ever come together again?"

"Yes, when they are freed. But there have been many such partings and no meetings afterwards, and for the girl it will be too late. With the man who has bought her she will find no joy, but a black-heart cruelty."

"Do the masters in the big houses know these things?"

"They know, but they say it is the will of God that black men should be slaves. Come, and thou shalt see the will of God working on a slave-ship. It is one of the last that comes."

The Child led me, and we walked not as other men, but came on to the sea and into a slave-ship that sailed from Africa to the new country. In this ship the slaves suffered very horribly from heat and thirst and sickness in the little space they were allowed, as the sailors must keep them very straitly and below the deck lest they rise in rebellion and murder all, and take the ship themselves. And these had been torn full grown from their own land, and besides their misery of the body they were agonized for the daily widening of the sea between them and their country.

"Child, do the white men that live the pleasant lives know what happens in these ships?"

"They know that the sailors dare not let the slaves be about the ship for fear they rise. As for the other, their bitter longing for home, they say that it will soon be forgotten when they are in the new country. Come, now I will show you what happens if one breaks his chains."

We left the ship, for which I was thankful as the torments of the slaves hurt me very sorely, and the Child brought me back to the land again. But there he showed me a new wretchedness, for we came into secret places in the marshes where the escaped slaves lived, very dolorously, in hunger and constant terror. These were now outlaws, and any man might hunt them with hounds as if they had been beasts, and bring them in again, alive if it might be, but if they resisted, dead, or grievously wounded. The Child said :

"Giraldus, these men are of the strongest spirit among them, and the ones who will least contentedly endure their bonds. Thus are they punished for their brave hearts. But now I will show you the other side of this matter."

He led me, and we left the marshes and came to one of the beautiful houses where the masters lived. And here we saw an old white-haired slave, older than his master, who loved his owner like a dog, and like a favourite dog was he treated. The white man would have hurt his own flesh sooner than treat him cruelly, and the old African was utterly content to be a slave. He could imagine no other life than to be a slave in that house and on that land, and if he had been torn from his master he must pine away and die. The Child said :

“ If this white man lose his riches and can no longer keep his slaves, what will become of this old man who loves him like a dog ? ”

“ I think he will die of sorrow, as some dogs will die when their master leaves them.”

“ Then would it not be better that the masters should keep their slaves ? There are many like this old man.”

But I said : “ Child, it is not right that men should learn to live like dogs, and they of the marshes are the better men.”

“ Yet, if the slaves are freed, there will be cruelty to this old man and the others like him.”

“ Then must one cruelty be set against another, and the least one chosen to be done.”

“ And which is the least ? ”

I thought of all the things I had seen, both the good and the bad. The kindness of some of the masters, the love of some of the slaves, the cruelty of those who bought and sold and the contempt in which they lived, the great honour and loyalty and courtesy of the white men, the slave-ship, the outlawed bold spirits who lived in misery in the marshes, the girl that must go with her new master, and the lamentations of that sad family. And I cried out :

"Child of God, the slaves must be freed!"

"If you had the power, would you free them at one stroke?"

"Yes, Child, that would I."

"And so would many, for in the North part of this country men do not hold slaves, as the plant they tend does not grow there. And these Northern men say, many of them, that slavery is a cruelty and not to be borne by their country."

"If they be pitiful they are blessed of God—but then you say they do not want slaves themselves. Child, surely it would be better if these men down here grew pitiful."

"They will not, except for a few here and there, and there lies the whole bitterness of the matter. The South says to these Northern men: 'You would destroy our lives that we have built up, our lovely and pleasant lives, and you yourselves shall suffer in no manner, nor bear any of our burden. So, if you say we are to hold no slaves, and may not extend the bounds of our slavery, and may not make slavery permanent and for ever, then we will leave your country to you, but we will have ours and it shall be separate.'"

I cried out at this, for now it seemed the slaves might never be free. But the Child said:

"There is a man in the North who will not let these Southern ones go. No, he will compel them, and keep them in by force, for he knows it is better for all his people that they be one country and one nation. And even now he sets about the making of war."

"Child, is it the man who is like our Lord Christ?"

"Yes, it is he."

"Then he goes about to set free the slaves?"

"No, he does not go about to set free the slaves. But he will free them."

Then I was perplexed, as it seemed to me impossible that a pitiful man, and a man that was like Christ, should not set straightway about the freeing of the slaves, and make it his first thought and his first care.

"Does he not pity the slaves? Does he not hate slavery?"

"He hates it as much as thou dost, and he pities them like thee. Yet it is two years before he shall proclaim them free, and he makes this war to keep his people one nation, and together."

"Child, I do not understand. Why will he not proclaim them free *now*, if he pity them?"

"Why, this man is not Giraldus, who would free the slaves at a stroke. Come and see him."

The Child led me, and we came through the vast country to the northern part where no man might hold slaves, and the Child led me to a city with a white house in it. Through this house he led me, until we were within a room where a man was, alone, and walking up and down, up and down, as if he had a sorrow on his mind.

He was far beyond the usual stature of men, and very lean, with his limbs not well hung on him, and the biggest feet ever I saw. His face was like one roughly hewn out of stone, very rugged and very powerful, and his eyes had gentleness in them, and wisdom. I did not at that time see his soul, but by his face I knew that he had a great strong spirit and a clean heart, and I knew him to be as patient as the earth. I said:

"Child of God, this man is as noble as any I have seen, and more so."

"Yes, Giraldus. Neither shalt thou see in any

future vision such another as this. So look well at him."

I looked, and presently I asked the Child for his name.

"This is Abraham Lincoln, and he has set his hand to the making of war upon his own people. They are all his children, the African slaves, the slave-holders, they of the North who are indifferent, and those who are hotly pitiful and would free the slaves. He will not think more of one than another, he will not pity one more than another, he will love them all and do what he believes is right for them. For here is a man who can pity both the tormented and the tormentor, and until he believes it best for all his people that the slaves be freed he will not do it, and no man can compel him. Patient as the earth he is, and strong as the sea, and so gentle that he would not take the life of a beast or a bird."

"Child, this war must be an agony to him," I said, as I watched him going back and forth, back and forth

"Truly it is. He feels in his heart the wounds and the pain and the sorrow of both sides in the war—the wounds of the North and the wounds of the South, and on his cross of pity shall he hang daily until the war is ended and he has saved his people."

And as we watched him, the man, Abraham Lincoln, stopped his pacing up and down and sat in a chair by a table, and he put his great rough-hewn head down on his hands.

"Ah, Child! How long must this war continue?"

"Four years."

"He cannot go on as long as that or his heart will be broken and he will die."

"No, for fourteen years he could have gone on if

it had been required of him. He will go on fighting, and pitying all, even those that would on his own side betray him, and when the time comes when he will free the slaves he will write them free forever, and so it shall be. And then he will fight to make his words good, and in the end he shall win. And he will take no revenge on any, but treat all in justice and mercy, and then, and not till then, he shall die."

"Then it did break his heart in the end," I said, and the man, Abraham Lincoln, was so good, so great, and so exceeding sorrowful that I could have wept kneeling at his feet.

"No, he will come by the death of Thomas of Canterbury, for when his work is ended one of his enemies will murder him."

"Child, how could any see him, and not stay his hand?"

"They cannot see him as you do. He will have broken the South and destroyed the lovely pleasant lives they have there built on slavery, and impoverished them, and nothing will ever be again as it was. They are men, and they must hate him. Besides, why should not a man go home when his work in the field is done? Will not the Lord God rejoice to see this man's soul, and our Lord Christ the pitiful welcome him? Surely he has done few sins in the body, and need not fear to die."

But I must grieve for the death of Abraham Lincoln, and I asked the Child if it were the will of God that I see it.

"No, thou shalt not see his death."

"Then may I see his soul now, and before the vision passes?"

"Not yet. There is another vision I would show thee."

So we left Abraham Lincoln in his first agony of pity, because he had set his hand to making war on his own people, and the vision passed, and we were back in my cell. The Child made another vision, and this time was in the middle of the war, and we saw one of the Captains in the war, dying after a battle. He was a noble man, of a strong spirit and a fervent faith in God. Also his heart was pitiful and he had a great soul shining. But he was dying, and I saw that soon his soul must leave his body and go gloriously to God.

“ Child, is this one of the Captains of the North that fights for Abraham Lincoln ? ”

“ No, Giraldus. This man is on the other side.”

“ He has a pitiful heart.”

“ He has spent much of his life in helping the slaves.”

“ Then why does he fight for the South ? ”

“ From loyalty.”

I looked at his great soul, so soon to pass from his body, and I said :

“ Child, surely this is the saddest war that ever was in the world, or ever shall be.”

And the Child said : “ It is so sad that our Lord Christ must weep for it, and never in the world shall there be any more sorrowful war than this war of the North and South. But see, this man with the great soul must die, before Abraham Lincoln can win.”

So he died, and his army mourned him grievously, and the tide of war turned and set for the North against the South. And in my cell, when the vision passed, I wept outright for the sorrow of this war, and I prayed the Child that I might see no more of it.

“ Child of God, it is in cruelty nothing to the

Sack of Magdeburg which gives me the hideous dreams, but it is so sad that I may no longer endure it."

"Yet one more thing shalt thou see, and the soul of Abraham Lincoln."

He made a vision, and it was of Abraham Lincoln in his room, writing. I asked the Child if the war was ended, and he said :

"No, but the end is very near. Come down into this vision, Giraldus."

So I went down with him, and we came into the room. He bade me read what Abraham Lincoln was writing, and he gave me the power of understanding. I read these words :

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in."

The Child said : "Giraldus, what do you think of the man who can write those words, and mean them, and will hold by them, after four years of war ? "

"Child, I think he is very like our Lord Christ."

The Child touched my eyes, and as Abraham Lincoln still sat at his writing I saw his soul. It was so large it filled nearly his whole body, and so bright I could scarcely look at it. Never had I seen any soul that was so near to the largeness and brightness of our Lord Christ's, whose soul was whole and perfect. Then the vision passed, and I was in my cell, but the Child was still with me.

"Giraldus," he said, "thou hast seen a man greater than thee."

"Ah, Child of God, I am nothing before him."

"Has not his soul grown from the little spark that was in the body of the First Man ? "

"It has grown gloriously."

“ How would it be if the world was full of such as he ? ”

“ It would be well.”

“ Yet thou shalt not see that time. And I have a sorrow for thee, and a sad saying.”

“ What is that ? ”

“ This man, Abraham Lincoln, who is as like our Lord Christ as any that thou hast seen or shall see, was of no Church, neither thine nor another, and he had no set forms of prayer, neither went to any place of worship. He believed in nothing but God, and our Lord Christ.”

Then he left me and the radiance of the Child was departed, but my eyes were in memory filled with the glory of the soul I had seen, the soul of Abraham Lincoln.

CHAPTER XIX

IN the three days following I thought less of my own heresy and doubts, and had relief from the troubling of my soul, for I thought all the time of Abraham Lincoln—his ungainly great body, his head which was like a carving in stone, well begun but left unfinished, his wise and gentle eyes, and his splendid, flaming soul. I meditated often on his words, surely the noblest and the best guide for humanity that will ever be put into the world by a man yet in his body, and they seemed to be written in letters of fire on everything I looked at.

“ With malice toward *none*, with charity for *all*.”

Then I must grieve over my own failures, and think how far behind him I had fallen, for I had maimed my brother, and if I saw the son of Henry of Anjou in an agony I knew that I might yet be implacable towards him. And in all the visions I was accustomed to take very hotly the side of those who suffered, nor at the time make any allowance or excuse for the tormentor.

One day as I was at my writing and the Abbot came to see me he asked me straitly what I had been thinking of that morning, as one of the brothers had told him I had taken no food, but left it all on the trencher. So I told him I was sorrowful that I had so often failed in charity. But he said :

“ Why, my son, surely there is no man in the world more charitable than thee, nor more pitiful.”

"Father, there may not be now, but there will be."

"That may be so, but you should not allow it to grieve you. And I tell you, Giraldus, that if all men were only half as pitiful as you cruelty would be ceased for ever and ended off the earth."

When he left me I thought of what the Child had said, and how there would be a time when all men should be like Abraham Lincoln in soul, and man be nearly perfect, though he had said I should not see that time. And if one man could do it, why not all—in the end? But as far as I had seen the souls of the mass of men grew very slowly, so that in generations of them you might hardly see any change at all, but that here and there was one man towering like the peak of a high mountain far above his fellows. Such an one was Euripides, the pitiful Greek, and now there was this other, who in a more gentle age yet towered by as much and far more above the others, even far above the great-heart Captain of his rebellious people. But the words of Euripides were left after him, and the words of Abraham Lincoln, and no man with a heart to feel could read either of them, but his soul must grow very suddenly and with vigour. So do the giants stand for ever, and draw the others up to them.

For the words of the Child that he said would be sorrowful to me, that Abraham Lincoln was of no Church, not even the heretic Church, they troubled me very little. Here was a man indeed who had leaped straight from the ground into the Tree of Life and no want had he of any ladder, his spiritual arms being as long and strong as his bodily ones. And then I thought of him, with his work finished and his agony over, going gloriously to God, and I thought that even the angels might make two lines

for him, and bow their heads a little, because he had done so well in his body of a beast. Though I had seen the soul of man standing naked and without body before God, yet I must see Abraham Lincoln between the lines of angels with something of his own form—his awkward long arms and his legs not well hung on him, and his feet the biggest ever I saw—and looking sideways at the angels with a smile about him. But this was a childish thought and very likely lacking in reverence. Indeed it would be a hard thing if a twisted, ill-favoured body, such as some I have seen, must have a twisted, ill-favoured soul, and even the beauty of the Greek statues was nothing to compare with the loveliness of the two I saw standing, free as yet from the bodies of the beasts, at the feet of God on the mountain top. But a man, even if he sees visions, must always be a little bound in the body and think in an earthly manner, and I have often wondered how I shall know John when next I see him.

So in these three days I was happier than I had been since the death of John and the vision of the Rending of the Church, and when the Child came again I told him so. He said :

“ No man can see Abraham Lincoln in a vision without being happier for it, and more hopeful of the world, and somewhat eased of his troubles and his perplexities. There shall be many like thee.”

“ Child of God, wilt thou then show him to many in a vision ? ”

“ I shall not show them. But they shall read his life with understanding and imagination, and so they shall see a great and splendid vision, and his words shall light a fire in their hearts and their souls shall grow. Yet it must be some time from the hour of his writing that thou didst see, before

the slave-owners, that he loved so well and chastised so thoroughly, shall altogether understand him. Not all in a moment can the South forgive him."

"Child, I like not this while I say it, but had he been an unchaste man, not in cruelty but in a carelessness of restraint, could his soul have been large and bright?"

"Surely it would. But not so large, nor so bright. Pity without chastity is better than chastity without pity, but no man may come so near to perfection as Abraham Lincoln without pity, truthfulness, courage, and a shining purity. Without pity a man's soul will not grow, but to come near his perfection he must add thereto all the other virtues. And now I will show you a man who is like Abraham Lincoln in only one thing, and that is his greatness and his power over his fellows."

The Child made a vision, and I saw a man come from the island of Corsica to rule the French people, who were still in the throes of the oppression which they had made when they cast down the King and their Seigneurs. This man rose and rose till he had all the power in his hands, and he was supreme. For like the old Roman Emperors he put his foot on the neck of a republic, and he would not have it, neither would he be ruled by the common people. He defended France from her enemies without, who would come in to chastise the people for their bloodshed and their way of ruling themselves. The Child said :

"Is it right that he should defend France, or should he let them come in?"

"Child, war is cruel, but he must defend France from those who would come in from outside and restore the Barons and the oppressions."

But after, when France was strong again under his good governance, this man set out to conquer the whole of Europe, and make all the nations tributary to France. And truly he would have succeeded, but our England that we Normans had made stood out against him and he could not get command of the sea. But the other nations fell one by one, and as fast as they recovered a little and were ready to fight he turned and crushed them again, and he was like a great furnace wind from hell blasting through Europe, leaving desolation and woe, and shamed, conquered Kings. He ranged far and wide, for he was in Egypt, and he also led his army deep into the country of the Muscovites. But here he failed, for the Muscovites gave back before him leaving the country empty of all life, and when he came even up to Moscow to wait while the frozen months passed they burnt their city and left it void. So must he lead his army back again, and it was hard winter. And that retreating was the cruellest thing of all his wars, and if I think of it I get very cold and must shiver, so bitter and deadly was the frost that destroyed the army. But he came out of it still alive himself, and still he must set his hand to the making of unjust wars. And still England was unconquered, and no French soldier had set foot on her soil. And in the end she and other nations which had a little recovered from his blows pulled him down and held him prisoner. I asked the Child :

"What will they do with him? He has been on an island before, and escaped from it. Now they must surely kill him."

"No, they will again put him on an island, and this time he will not escape, but stay there till he dies."

The Child made another vision, and it was of an island far out in the sea with no land near it. He said it belonged to England and lay far to the south down the coast of Africa, and it was very lonely.

"He is there now," said the Child. "Come down and we will see him."

We went down on to the island and found the man who had raged through Europe like a blast of wind living very miserably, sick in his body and agonized in his mind for his past greatness and present failure, and exposed to petty tormentings by his gaoler.

"Ah, Child! How long must he go on like this?"

"Dost thou pity him, remembering the desolation he brought on Europe?"

"I like not to see him so agonized, and brought so low, and I wish he could die."

"He cannot die for six years, and for six years he must lie here in this island and think of the past, and for his sorrows God shall the more readily forgive him his sins, which are many. This man is Napoleon Bonaparte, the Corsican, and he is one of the greatest men who ever lived, and he has done much for France, and raised her out of the pit into which she had fallen, and given her good ruling and a wise code of laws. But he has not a pitiful heart, neither by shedding other men's blood can a man make his soul to grow. See, it is but a little one, nor greatly larger than the spark that was in the body of the First Man."

I saw this man's soul, and it was small and dull. Yet still I must be sorry for his exceeding misery on his island prison, and the six years he must wait to die pressed like a burden on my heart. And as

I could do nothing for him nor help him in any manner I asked the Child to take me away.

The vision passed, and we were back in my cell, but the Child was with me. I asked him, though with little hope, whether that might be the last war in Europe.

"No," said the Child, "that war is not the last, and there is another and far greater one that you must see. Come, we will walk in England after this war against Napoleon."

The Child made a vision of England, and we walked there. The country was in great misery and poverty and exhaustion, and if any had said—"Come, now we will go to war," the people would have cried with one voice, "We are too tired." But there was no thought, except in a few minds, that war in itself was wrong, and the mass of the people looked on it as inevitable, and the natural fate, at times, of every nation. Their hearts were not yet greatly pitiful, nor their souls grown. But the Child led me, and brought me to a man with a pitiful heart and a large soul burning.

"Giraldus, thou seest this man, who is pitiful and would make no war?"

"I see him, Child."

"He is a Friend."

"Why, surely if he would make no war he is a friend to mankind."

"He belongs to a heretical sect which has grown up, and they are called Friends, and they would have no war nor other cruelties, neither will they lift their hand against any man if he anger them."

"Are there many such?"

"No, there are very few. Their manner of worship is too strait, too severe, and too little helpful for the mass of mankind as it now is. They leap

straight into the Tree of Life from the ground, and there are not many who are strong enough to do it. But their hatred of cruelty and wars shall come into other hearts, in God's good time. These men are the little leaven that shall leaven the whole lump, and they are the first men to lay it down as part of their faith that there shall be no war, nor bloodshed between one man and another. They have had scorn for their beliefs, and will have more, and they are called cowards and otherwise vilified, and so will men always be, if they are ahead of their age. But in the end the others shall follow them."

"Child, I would know how they worship."

"They read the Word of God with understanding, and if God sends His Spirit to one of them he will speak to the others, and admonish or comfort. They have no semblance of the Mass, and yet they have a vivid sense of the continual presence of our Lord Christ. And a woman may rise and speak to them as well as a man, and they will hear her readily."

Now this seemed such a strange thing to me, that these people should in a way have women priests, that I was astonished and wondering. But the Child said :

"Giraldus, does the priesthood depend on bodily power ? "

"No."

"Or on great wisdom like the Greek had whom we heard reasoning ? "

"No, Child."

"But what must a good priest have, then ? "

"A pure heart and an understanding of his fellows, and a large soul and fervent faith."

"Might not a woman have all these ? Was her soul less than the soul of the man ? Or did our

Lord Christ ever say that women were not to be priests ? ”

“ No, Child. But the apostles were all men.”

“ Surely. Our Lord Christ was pitiful and wise and knew His own time as He knows all others. Not in those days would the Jews have listened to a woman. But did He ever say that women were never at any time to be priests ? ”

“ Child, I see that there is no reason why a woman should not be a priest, but it is such a strange thought to me that my mind boggles at it.”

“ Jerome is yet alive, and the words of Paul the Apostle. But they were both men, and liable to error. There is nothing unholy in the sex of a woman that makes her less fit to approach God than a man. His breath is in her, and all that a man can do, in serving our Lord Christ, she can do. How will they say that woman is not fit to approach God as close as man, when the Christ Child dwelt within her body ? Now, Giraldus, there is another heresy for thee to ponder.”

So he sent me back to the cell to think, and this heresy was not painful or troubling to me, for I had seen the souls equally glorious, and man does not serve God with his body of a beast. And I saw very well that there was no reason in God's sight why women should not be priests. But I must be Giraldus the Monk, of my own life and time, and this thought was the strangest I had ever, and I could not really grasp it or get it into my head. Later I did, for a while, but now the visions are ended and the Child has left me the thought has become strange to me again, and so it will be ever.

CHAPTER XX

THE fourth night after, the Child came again, and he told me that first he would make a vision which should not be a truth, but a symbol of a truth.

He made to appear out of the darkness on the wall of the cell a most horrible and ghastly devil with iron arms whirling and snatching, and iron teeth crunching, and a great pot of an iron belly. It had no life, and it was all made of hard cold metal, but as a line of men, women, and little children passed before it they were snatched by the iron arms, and ground up by the iron teeth, and dropped into the great pot of a stomach. And the monster was insatiable, neither was its belly possible of filling, but it must have more, and more. I was thankful that this vision was a symbol, and not a truth, for the old gods of the Phœnicians that lived on blood were nothing to this monster. And in this picture of the iron devil it was enormous, and the people were very tiny. But the Child, without speaking, made that vision to pass and another picture formed. This was of a man sitting down, and at his feet, no higher than his ankle bone, was the iron devil grown very small and whirling harmlessly. The man watched it kindly, and presently he picked it up, as a child might pick up a beetle, and let it whirl on his hand. And this very small devil could do him no hurt, neither need the man fear it at all. This vision passed, and I asked the Child what it might be. He said :

"It is the last oppression, and man made it himself. It is called the Machine. First you saw it while it was mastering man, and at the last you saw it when he had mastered it. And from one end of the fight to the other is five hundred years."

"Ah, Child! Must he be eaten for five hundred years, then?"

"Why, no, Giraldu. Not in one day did he reduce it from that size and that horrible cruelty and power to the little harmless thing you saw at the end. He will overcome it gradually, and less and less shall it eat men. But at the first it shall eat bodies of men and women and little children, and after they stop it doing horrible cruelties it shall still hurt their minds, and shut out the sun from them, and destroy beauty, and injure them grievously with its screaming, and cause them to live in foul and unnatural conditions, and take away the pleasure of labour."

"Then this devil is evil and a curse."

"No, it is not evil. Only while it masters man it is evil. When he has mastered it, it is good."

"Child, I do not yet know what it is."

"Shall I give thee understanding, so that thou forget again when the visions are passed, or wilt thou try to understand with thine own brain God has given thee?"

"My brain is little enough, but I will try to understand so that I may remember."

"Well. When a pot boils furiously, and it has a lid on, what does the lid do?"

"It moves and clatters."

"But what makes it?"

I pondered and mused, but I could not think why the lid clattered. The water boiled and steam rose,

and then it clattered. But I did not know why, and I asked the Child.

"It is the steam that makes it clatter, for there is not room enough for it and the water in the pot, and so it will lift the lid off and come out. It is a power."

"What would it do if the lid were bound down?"

"It would shatter the pot, for it must come out. Steam is one power, water is another, wind is another, and there are two more thou shalt see."

"But the devil in the picture was not made of steam, nor water nor wind. It was iron."

"Yes, but the devil is driven by steam or water or wind, and so long as man keeps up the fire for the steam, or the wind blows, or the water runs, so long will the devil go on working by himself without any man's hand on him. The devils are not alive, they are but cunning devices made of iron to save man turning his hand to his own work. They will do all things with these devices, nor use their hands except for the care of the machines, and while they do this the monster shall eat up their lives. And now here is another new thing. How is the smelting of iron done in this reign of King Stephen?"

"It is done in the Weald of Sussex where the iron workers live."

"And they make the fires with wood?"

"Surely, Child. What else should they make them with?"

"They have found a new thing to make fires with, and now I will show thee the foundation of England's last greatness."

"What time is this?"

"It is in the nineteenth century after Christ, and thou must needs see some of the first horrible cruelties of this oppression."

The Child made a vision, and it was of a well in the ground whence men drew up rock. They threw out all the dirt, and a very black kind of stone was left, yet it was not a hard stone, and a man could split it easily with a blow from a hammer. The Child said :

“ This black stone will burn, and it is not stone, but a kind of old, old wood which has been in the ground for scores of thousands of years. Only for a little while have men been taking it out. This black stone makes the fires that drive the machines, and always men must go on taking it from the ground. Come now, and we will see what they do at the bottom of the well.”

“ Child, I have a senseless terror of being under the ground, and I do not like even going down into the old Saxon church.”

“ Thou shalt hold my hand,” he said, but he would have me to come. So we went into the vision and down the well, and came to the bottom where men were hewing out the black stone at the ends of long dark tunnels. But that was not the worst, for there were women working in that black, damp, airless place, taking the stone away as the men hewed it, and even children who opened and shut doors. And the Child told me that they must do it all day long, neither might any go back to the earth until his hours of labour were finished. I was aghast, for this cruelty was worse than our churls had to bear, as, though they were often hungry and suffered terribly from cold in the hard winters, yet their work was in the open where they could breathe comfortably and see the light, and they got the benefit of the summer. But to these poor souls summer and winter were the same, and their days were all nights. And for pity of the

little children who must stay twelve hours opening and shutting the doors in the tunnels in that dark noisome hole, my heart was in a torment. Yet still I thought that they would be well paid for it.

"Child, why will the women let the children do this? Villeinage has ceased in England long ago. And why will the men let their wives work in this noisome hole?"

"If the women work not, and the children also, none of them can live. Their wages are so small. Look at their faces."

I looked, and I saw that all of them, in spite of their wearisome and lengthy labour, were only able to earn enough just to keep their souls in their bodies. And on these poor thin bodies the labour told the more hardly, and this circle of cruelty was complete. I cried out:

"They are not slaves! Why do they not leave this horrible labour for which they are so meanly paid, and go elsewhere, and do other work?"

"They have nowhere to go. Wherever they go they will be treated the same, and if they do not work they must starve. They are not slaves in name, but in England as it is now all the poor are slaves in fact. The machines must be fed. Come, and I will show you."

The Child led me, and we left the dark hole and walked in England at the top of the ground, for which I was thankful, but the things I saw made my heart ache. For in the North everywhere machines had sprung up, and we would see a lovely quiet little valley with an old grinding mill in it, and within the old grinding mill would be one of the new devices, with its slaves tending it. And always must the men, the women, and the children

work lest they all starve. And in the cities we saw how the poor mothers must bind their children apprentices to masters, not knowing if they would be good masters (which were rare) or bad masters (which were many) and the cruelties that were done on these children I will not write. The smoke that arose from the fires blotted out the sun, so that to add to all their other miseries they lived in a half darkness. Also the noise and crying out of the machines was incessant and wearying, and I came by the knowledge that our world is a soundless one. And at last I must pray the Child either to take me back to my cell, or to a noiseless place. So he led me, and we came to a hill top by one of the cities, where there was heather, and the sun shining, and a curlew whistling round our heads. Below us the city lay in its pall of smoke, and I knew that going down into it again would be like entering into hell, for the noise and the darkness and the cruelties. And I said :

“ Child, why must the machines make the masters so cruel ? And why can they not give the people more wage for their wearisome and incessant labour ? ”

“ It is because the machines have not been here long, and the country is still in a chaos, without law to guide either the masters or the men. For if a few pitiful masters will say—‘ Well, I will give them more ’ —then the others will not do it, and so they will be before him in the markets for the things they make, and sell theirs at a less price, and so the pitiful masters can sell nothing and their slaves must leave them, and go to others. So all masters will give just the bare wage necessary to keep life in the bodies of the slaves, and the men, the women, and the little children must work.”

"Child, these masters are the most cruel men ever."

"The machines must be fed. Come, Giraldus, I will show you a strange thing."

He led me, and we came to a place where a crowd of hand-weavers who were wont to weave cloth in the old manner were breaking up one of the new machines. They shattered it into pieces, savagely and passionately, and left it in ruins.

"Child, here are some who would fight this machine devil. It is a sad thing there are not more of them."

"There have been many of them, but they cannot prevail. Neither do they fight it for any reason save that they think their work will be gone, and they starving. They are not pitiful for the slaves who already tend the machines."

"Why do not the men in the cities leave the machines and go to work on the land and till the ground?"

"They shall be no better off save that they had more light and pure air. Come, I will show you."

So we walked among the men that laboured tilling the ground, and they were nearly starving, whereas in the last century they had been well fed and comfortable.

"Child, what has befallen them?"

"The men in the cities will have cheap bread for their slaves, lest they must pay them more wages. And if the farmers in England will not sell them cheap corn they will get it in from other countries. So these land workers are impoverished and their labourers in grievous distress. This is the beginning of the fight between the cities and the open country, and the end is not for generations and generations."

"Which will win in the end?"

"The cities will eat up the country, but in the latter end, when man has tamed the Machine, the country will prevail, and man shall live as God meant him to. Giraldus, walk with me again in the cities."

"Child of God, I will walk where you will, but I would as soon walk in hell as in these machine cities."

"I know. Yet I have something to show thee."

He led me, and we walked in the cities, and the Child bade me look at the souls. I saw many very small and dull, the souls of the cruel, but I also saw many flaming ones, the souls of those who pitied the slaves. So it was everywhere, and in one city the Child pointed to a young man who had a pitiful heart.

"I have brought thee to this city to see this boy. Thou knowest him."

"Child, I do not know him, and as I suppose he is seven hundred years after me."

"Thou dost know him, for he is the man who loves the beech trees, and he is to write the tale I told thee five hundred years ago."

So I would have looked long at him, but the Child made the vision pass and we were back in my cell. And I sat down very weary on my bed, and my head spun round with the things I had seen. The Child said:

"Giraldus, do you see any good thing in this oppression which is now at its worst in England?"

"I see only one good thing, and that is that there are far more to pity these slaves than ever there were in Greece or Rome, or in the days of villeinage in England."

"The hearts of the people are growing pitiful,

and they will not allow this utter lawlessness and cruelty of the masters to continue long. The very worst of this oppression shall be soon past. But do you know why their hearts are more pitiful now? They were Christians in the days of villainage."

"I do not know, unless God has touched them."

"He has touched them through the writing-engine I showed thee in its infancy. The people are growing pitiful because so many of them can read. And as there come to be more and more that can read, so will there be more and more pitiful ones. It is by reading, and understanding his fellows, and tending his imagination that a man can come by pity and make his soul grow. Now I will show thee one more thing this night, and it shall be the last."

The Child made a vision, and it was of a man who sat in a room, reading a book. He was fat and soft and white, and my flesh shuddered at him.

"Child, I do not want to go into the vision and be with that man."

"Why, Giraldus? He is not a devil. This is only one of the masters who owns many machines and many slaves. Why dost thou hate him so?"

Now my father was a cruel man, and pitiless to churl, woman, or beast. But he was a hard man, and a bold man, and would go to a fight as merrily as to the wine-cup, and he would look any man in England in the face and insult him if he felt inclined for it. But this man was fat and soft and white, with a sly cringing expression, and a greedy look about him, and I knew he would not go merrily to a fight, though he would have little children tormented to fill his pouch with gold. And for all I could do I must shudder at him, and hate him,

and had he been in an agony I could hardly have pitied him. And I said :

" Child of God, the Barons were better than these."

" No, Giraldus. This man will not force a woman against her will."

" Yet he gives the women so little that if they can they must add to their wage with the price of lust. He makes harlots of them."

" Well. Then you think your father a better man than this ? "

" I do."

" And you cannot pity this man ? "

" Child, I cannot pity him."

" God knows he needs pity. Can he carry his riches with him before the Lord God ? No, but the despair of his slaves—the sins of the women, the agony of the men, the torture of the children—he must take them all, and give an account of all. For the Romans, the Greeks, and the Barons sinned in part in ignorance, but this man and the others that shall be like him—they know what they do. They are Christians, they can read and understand, and the hearts of many people at this time are pitiful. But theirs are hard as stone, and the Lord God shall ask them why."

The Child's voice was very quiet and soft as it always was, yet it made me think of thunder far up in the hills, and a heaviness of doom. I was awestricken, and shut my eyes both against the vision and the Child of God, and when I opened them again he had gone, and I was alone.

CHAPTER XXI

THE next vision was of England in the latter half of the nineteenth century after Christ, when laws had been made and the worst cruelties of the machines had passed away. But it seemed to me that however many laws were made to win justice for the men that tended the machines there were always some of them, they who had the least wages, who lived on the border line of starvation. And for these unfortunates the least increase in the prices of bread, or meat, or clothes meant poverty intolerable and despair, so that in the big cities they often sank into a disreputable and filthy life, and the rats in the sewers were better off than they. So I asked the Child why, when many of the machine tenders were living in far more comfort than any of our churls could come by, there should always be these despairing ones, herded in masses in the big cities, and a heart-aching thought to all the pitiful. The Child said :

“ While some men will have luxury there will always be those who live either on the borders of starvation or in it. This luxury that you see in England now is built upon the sufferings of the others, and until luxury is passed away, poverty cannot pass either.”

He showed me also the lives of those who worked tilling the ground, and they also were very poor and in unhappy case, and many of them went to the dark, foul, noisy cities where they might get work

to do that was better paid. This seemed to me a horrible thing, that men must leave the clean open land to herd together in the cities, and the worst thing of all, to me, was that men were growing to like the machine cities, and be restless if they went into the country, and they began to look at their cities and say—"Behold what we have made! Wonderful is the work of our hands!"

But there was no beauty in the cities, no quiet, no clean air, and no unveiled sun. Also the people were too close together and too many of them. The Child said :

"Giraldus, do you think these machine cities are good?"

"Child, I think they are an abomination, even without the streets of the despairing. They are noisy and hideous and dark."

"Yet, until man has mastered the machine he will go on saying his machine cities are good, and he will go on taking pleasure in being cooped up close with his fellows, and he will take pleasure in noise, even though it injure him. That is the worst evil in the machine while it masters man, that it is a deceiver and makes men say that what is bad, is good. And even if men would stay and labour in the country how can they when their wages are so little, and except for the lowest paid of all, the wages in the cities are higher?"

"Why can the landowners not give them more wages?"

"Because the cities must have cheap bread. For many generations yet the city dwellers will impose their will on the country dwellers, for they are growing many, and the others, as you see, are getting fewer and fewer as they drift away to the machine cities."

"Child, it is a circle impossible to break."

"It shall be broken. But now look at this luxury which is built on the misery of the despairing, even as the luxury of Rome was built on the bodies of the slaves."

I looked, and saw that by the machines very many people had grown rich and prosperous, and they were self-satisfied and happy, forgetting altogether the despairing in the cities and the grinding misery of those who still toiled for little wage at the tilling of the ground. I said to the Child :

"The people are not pitiful any longer, and they will say 'All is well.'"

"No, Giraldus, they would be pitiful if they understood. But the lives of the poor, taking one with another, are so much better now than they were in the early days of the machines that they think all is well. And though a few pitiful ones begin to say not only, 'There shall be no machine slaves, but also there shall be no rich and no poor.' yet the mass of the people are not ready for that. Why, thou art not ready for it thyself."

For it seemed to me a new thought that there should be no poor and no rich, only I would have all the poor with enough to eat and to wear, and not have oppressions laid on them.

"Child, as long as there are any rich must there be the despairing, and those who live on the borders of starvation?"

"Yes. If you have luxury you will have poverty, but as people's hearts grow more pitiful they will say—'No, we will have neither'—and so luxury shall pass away, and poverty also. But that shall not be until man has mastered the machine. Now come down among these luxurious ones."

So we walked among those luxurious ones of the

latter half of the nineteenth century, and I did not like them. For by the coming of the machines or for some other cause had appeared again the east wind blight of the joyless, and the black streak had cropped out again in many hearts. Many of them were intolerant, and many were hypocrites. Also some were avaricious and there was in many places as much oppression of the machine-tenders as the laws allowed. And upon their women they had done a new cruelty, for now they had taken their work away from them and given it to the machines, and whereas in time past the country had depended on the women for all its comfort and many of its necessities, now the machines did it all, and the women, unless they were machine-tenders or hand-maidens, must live in a most deplorable idleness. So were the women oppressed from top to bottom, for they who tended the machines had to labour from dawn till dark for so little wage (because they were women and not men) that they must often be driven into harlotry ; and the women who did not tend the machines must sit utterly useless and idle in their homes until they were married. It was considered a shame for one of these women to do any work that was not useless and hideous, and if one would rise and say—" I will work "—the others would cry her down. And under this oppression many of the women became so idiotic and feeble that if work had been set for them they could not have done it, and the more feeble they became the more the men oppressed them and tyrannized over them.

" Child of God," I said, " I like this people as little as any I have seen in England, or anywhere else, and though I have seen many forms of raiment in many times and countries yet I have never seen

anything to equal in ugliness the clothes that these people wear. Their appearance hurts my eyes, and their joylessness, intolerance, and cruelty to the women hurts my heart."

The Child laughed, and said, " They do not know that they are cruel to the women, and they think that all they do is for their comfort."

" Then these people are not cruel, but fools. For how can it be to the comfort of women that either they are broken by labour and must turn to harlotry, or else must live in miserable heavy idleness all their days? The woman who lived with the man in the cave was working. Surely God means every man and every woman that lives in the world to do work of some sort. How can any human being be happy with nothing to do but make the time pass? And why will these people, who have made the laws to protect the women from going down the dark wells into the earth, not make a law to say a woman must have the same wage as a man, if she do as much work, so that she be not driven to harlotry? Child, there is more cruelty to women in this century than the last, and this people that is here now sickens me."

The Child laughed again, and said :

" If a people have any tinge of the black streak in them never wilt thou be just. This is England's golden age. She is rich, powerful, and first among all the nations. Come, I will show you her glory."

So we left walking among the luxurious ones, for which I was thankful, and we went back to my cell. And there the Child made a vision of the whole world, and England had by now taken so much of it that I was amazed. For besides Abraham Lincoln's country, which England had lost, but which still had the same language, there was the north part of

his huge continent, and other vast countries in various portions of the world. With this vision I was utterly dazed, both with the size of the world and the immensity of the countries England had taken compared with the little island whence she had sent out her people. I was dazed, and I can remember little of it, but the Child told me that she ruled a quarter of the world, and that the language the Saxons had made with their own and with the Norman was more used than any other. So that vision passed, leaving me gasping with the greatness that was to come, but still I remembered the despairing in the back streets, and the misery of the labourers on the land. I said :

“ Child, this great Empire is built on cruelty, and so it must be destroyed.”

But he said : “ No, Giraldus. This Empire was building before the machines came, and the cruelties, and in very many parts of the world the English settlers have relieved oppressions and brought wise governance to the peoples they found. It will not be destroyed as the Roman Empire. It will fall to pieces naturally and quietly and without bloodshed, when it has done its work. When these new young countries have grown to full stature then England will let them go, and they shall be new nations, like Abraham Lincoln’s, but English-speaking.”

“ But then what of the great country where the people are dark-skinned and do not speak English ? What shall befall them ? ”

“ Why, they shall have their country to themselves, when they can rule it. But now do you see why this people that is now in England is self-satisfied and swelling with pride ? Is not England’s horn exalted among the nations ? ”

“ Child, I see that it is. But how can they

enjoy it when there are the despairing in the back streets, and the miserable labourers who must grow cheap corn, and the lives of the women are still unhappy ? ”

“ And how can you, Giraldus, enjoy being a Norman when you know how and in what manner Duke William made his New Forest for hunting the deer ? ”

“ Child, you know I would stop the Norman cruelties if I could.”

“ Well, you are a pitiful man, and more than ordinary. But these people are afflicted with pride of race, and they say—‘ We are English, and what we do is right.’ And as to the despairing, the labourers, and the women, they will still say, most of them, that it is the will of God that these things should be. But see now, some arise to make outcry for the women.”

And he showed me, moving in the latter part of this century, a great many women with pitiful hearts and blazing souls who would rescue their sisters from oppressions. And always they laid it down that women must be allowed to think, read, learn, and do work according to their capacity in the same way as the men did, and that the machine-tending women must be better paid. For their outcry they were scorned and vilified, but always more and more joined them, and even before the end of the century there was a great change in the manner of treating women.

“ That is well begun,” said the Child, as the vision passed. “ Now the women will go forward, nor turn back again. Now see to the men.”

He made me another vision of the whole of this time, and I saw how the machine-tenders banded themselves together for protection against the

masters. And though these bands in the beginning did many foolish and cruel and oppressive things even to their own men, yet in the main they strove for justice, and God knows there was a necessity for them. For even when the law came and the most villainous cruelties of the masters were suppressed, yet there were still some hard and grasping ones among the machine-owners who would have out of the men all that the law allowed, and a little more. And against these the men must still band themselves, and they grew always stronger, and at last the law recognized them as corporate bodies, with certain rights.

"Child," I said, "see how strong they grow!"

"Yes. How will it be when they themselves are stronger than the law?"

"I cannot tell. Will there be a new oppression?"

"Presently you shall see. Now look again, Giraldus, this is England in the last year of this century."

So I looked.

"What is the greatest difference between this England and the England of a hundred years ago?"

"The hideous noisy cities and the dark smoke that lies over them."

"Why, yes. But there are many cities, and in each one many thousands of men. So what is the greatest difference?"

"Child of God!" I cried out. "With the coming of the machines England has spawned like a salmon!"

"She has. But where a salmon's eggs and young are eaten by the thousand by other fish, so that perhaps but one survives to make a new salmon, these eggs of England survive in quantities, and lay more, and always the people increase"

"Child, I cannot understand why this has happened."

"England no longer lives on her own land and on her own corn. She sends away the fruit of the machines and ship-loads of the black stone, and brings back corn from other countries. So more people can live in England, and more people do live. And always they grow more."

"Then the country will presently burst."

"England has the great new lands that are not half full yet. But look at this other country."

The Child made another vision, of a country which had spawned like England after the coming of the machines, and the people were already so many that the place looked like an overturned ant-heap.

"In another fifteen years what shall these do?" said the Child.

"Some of them must go to other lands."

"They have nowhere to go."

"Ah, Child, what will befall them? Will there be a great plague?"

"No. The physicians have rendered the old plagues powerless."

"Could England let them go to one of her half empty lands?"

"She will not do that. She would say it was an injustice and oppressive to her sons who are already there."

"Then what will these do?"

"They will go to war."

I was aghast, and could not speak for a while, for the thought of war between these countries which were now so full of people was stupendous and appalling. And it must be war to the death, for either that people must have somewhere to go or

their country would burst. It would not be like a war of religion, or a war of conquest for pride's sake. It would be a war of desperation, and that between hundreds and hundreds of thousands of soldiers on each side.

"Child, it is terrible! Can they not think of something else to do?"

"Why should they try to think of anything else? The rulers of the people are warlike and not pitiful, and they are absolute and the people have no voice. Giraldus, this country is part of the old Holy Roman Empire, and in it took place the Sack of Magdeburg."

"Oh, Child of God! Will it be like that again?"

"No, not so bad. But it will be cruel enough, and all the great nations must take part in it. England and her young sons, and France and Italy and the Muscovites (only they shall fall by the way), and last of all the people of Abraham Lincoln. It will be the last great war in Europe, but it shall exceed anything that has gone before. But if this people that will make war were as pitiful as thou art, and their rulers also, what were they to do? Is there any way, save by famine, war, or plague, to stop a people increasing? Would you have them kill the children when they are born? Where the machines are, and the people no longer live on their own land, there must the country spawn. But if they should invent a way that was neither war, plague, nor famine, for keeping a people within bounds, would it be a good thing or a bad thing?"

"Child, if there were no cruelty in it, it must be a good thing."

"Later I will ask thee again," said the Child, and he left me.

CHAPTER XXII

NOW after this vision of England when she had spawned like a salmon, and I had seen how numerous and enormous were the machine cities men had made, I could think of little in particular, and must go about in a daze, yet thanking God all my waking time that I lived in a noiseless world and in the peace of Glastonbury. For the machine cities, and also London, which had spawned with the others, oppressed my memory with a kind of intolerable weight of fear and distaste, not for any essential evil in them, but for their ugliness, and darkness, and the noise of them, and the feeling of thousands upon thousands of people all swarming together in herds. I had seen many cities before, but they were all quiet, and all had beauty in parts of them, and all were open to the blessed sunshine. And I wondered sometimes if there were any pitiful people who would live in the age while the machine was still mastering man, who (besides the aching of their hearts which must be torn by the thought of the despairing in the back streets) would have also my leaden, grey oppression with the ugliness that was creeping over England's fair body, and the infernal din that every day grew louder. If there were any such they could not look back with any desire upon the past, because of the cruelties, neither could they rejoice with their fellows in the glory of the machine age, but must pray to God in a quiet place and hope for something better to come.

And for these folk (if there should be any such) I felt so sorry that I prayed our Lord Christ to help them when their time came, though it were seven or eight hundred years away. And my memory of fear and distaste grew no better in the three days but rather worse, so that when the Child came I prayed him for God's sake not to take me again into the age when the machine was mastering man, but rather to go at one leap to the time when it ran harmless as a kitten at his feet, and no higher than his ankle-bone. But he refused me, and said :

"Giraldus, wouldst thou be a coward ? "

"Child, I would not, and I will go without complaining. But to a man who loves beauty the ugliness and noise of that age are heart-rending. And even if we are not in the cities I think of them."

"Well then, first thou shalt hear another kind of noise, to hearten thee."

"Child, I have heard so many kinds, and all alike were terrible."

"That century was quite soundless by comparison with the next. But now, come and hear this other noise."

He laughed, and made a vision of a great hall with many people in it, waiting, and a company of men and women on raised benches, and a vast number of musicians with curious new instruments. The Child said :

"This hall is in the country that has been made from part of the Holy Roman Empire and it is called Germany. But they are not at war yet, and now thou shalt hear what these people can do in time of peace."

So we went down into that hall, and sat with those that were to listen, and when the music started they were all as quiet as if they had been in

the presence of God. And so we were, for that music was like roaring, sweet flames that carry a man's soul away from his body and put it down at the very gate of heaven. With my pen I cannot describe it, and though the Child gave me understanding I have forgotten all the words of the singers, but the whole was a Hymn of Praise, and the man who made the music had taken all of himself that was of God and given it back to him.

When the last note had died away we were back in my cell, and I kneeled at the Child's feet to thank him, and the tears were on my face.

"Child of God, men are approaching to the music of the spheres, which is silence."

"They shall never come any nearer to it than that man did, for he is at the height and the keystone of the arch of music made by men."

Now in my foolishness I could not see how music was to be perfected unless man did it, and I said this to the Child. But he cried out :

"Oh, thou man ! Thinkest thou that any of ye, even the greatest, has any more music in him than the crumbs which fall from God's feast of music ? No, none of ye have ever heard any—save only thee, Giraldus. Save only thee."

And as the Child spoke thus with a kind of sudden heat, though tenderly enough at the end, for the first time I was afraid of him, remembering he was pure spirit, and that I had still my body of a beast. I fell down grovelling at his feet, and could say nothing. But he raised me up gently, and looked kindly on me, and he told me he would not spoil this pleasure I had had with any other vision at that time, but would leave me to dream on the music for three days. And I said :

"Child, what was the name of the man who made the music?"

"It is Beethoven, and he comes before the machine age, yet not very long before. To Germany he comes, and all the giants of music likewise, and the people's hearts will be full of music at its strongest and purest. They are supreme among the nations."

"Oh, why will they not go on with the making of music and leave the making of war?"

"Many shall ask that. But indeed, Giraldus, though the hearts of their rulers are pitiless, and they will still think that the making of war is the right and duty of every nation, yet there is a force behind them far greater than they. The machines have made the country spawn, and the people have nowhere to go. So be not thou, in later visions, too bitter against them for England's sake."

"Ah, Child, must England be conquered then?"

"No, but she will be wounded to the death, and never again be above the nations as she was before. No, after that it will be the turn of Abraham Lincoln's people."

Now I must always love that people for the sake of Abraham Lincoln, and so long as it was not the French who were to be above England I did not greatly care. So the Child left me, and I went back to thinking of the music, and of Beethoven, and I wondered what he looked like.

When the Child came again he showed me a vision of England as it should be in the fourteen years before the great war.

The machines were endless and marvellous, so that hardly ever did man turn his hand to his own work, but did all with the machines. They had for long used chariots without horses that would run

along lines of iron under the power of steam made with the black stone and water boiling in huge pots, but now they had invented a new horseless chariot to run on the roads, and they made it to move with a new power which was a liquid. With my own brain I tried to understand this power, but I never got very far with it. The liquid cast off a vapour, which they shut in a chamber with a movable bottom, then they moved the bottom of the chamber towards the top and enclosed the vapour very straitly, whereupon they set fire to it. The force of the conflagration drove the bottom of the chamber down, and by cunning devices a rod moved round and round with the movement of the bottom of the chamber. Then by another device which I never came near understanding this round and round movement was passed on to the back wheels of the chariot, and the whole thing sped along the roads, roaring, and emitting nauseous dark smoke. Also the roads were made very smooth for these chariots, and though at first they were so dusty in the summer that all who walked on them must be covered white like a miller, yet towards the end of these years they made the roads hard and black and shining, without dust, but cruel on the few horses that were still used. For they could keep no foothold on it, but must often slip and fall heavily, and I was sorry for the horses in the machine age as their lives were not comfortable when they were working. But for animals in general, people were far more pitiful, and ill-usage of them was against the law.

Towards the end of the fourteen years the chariots without horses became quieter and more powerful, so that they could fly as swiftly as a bird, and come from place to place without breaking any portion of their entrails. But the din was not lessened by

this, for now there were many of them, and they went so fast that they must scream or grunt upon some instrument so that folk should not be crushed under their wheels. And there was always a small chariot with two wheels one behind the other that could never be quietened, and it made such a hellish noise that if I were walking with the Child in the vision I must cover my ears.

At this time too the Child showed me another power that men were making great efforts to perfect, and this, the Third Power, I never understood at all. It was always in the air and in the earth, and thunder and lightning had to do with it, and men could make it with rubbing two things together. The Child said that it was the power of the future, and that when man had mastered the machine he would use it, and not the black stone nor the liquid. But as I saw, he must always use the black stone or the liquid to make the two things rub together, so what was he to do? The Child said :

“ He will use the wind and the sea, but he will need more subtle devices than he has made at this time.”

And in this time also I saw boats that flew in the air, and if the Abbot come in while I am writing this he will think me not so much heretic as madman. These boats were not perfect, as I saw them in later times, and often they fell to the ground and were broken in pieces, and those within were killed or horribly mangled, but still man would fly, and by the end of the fourteen years there were many and they were safer and did not fall so often. And the Child said they should be used in the war. But I said :

“ Then must the armies go under the ground, for

how can they escape them otherwise? And they must put roofs on their besieged cities."

"They will go underground, and not only for these. Come and see their death-engines."

Long before this, at the time of the great battle when the archers slew the French knights in their scores, some man (and I cannot think the blessing of God was on his hand) had invented a way of hurling pieces of iron out of another iron tube by the lighting behind it of a powder. This invention man had perfected, and now there were tubes of all sizes, and some were so large that a man could hurl the iron over a mountain and kill men who were hidden from his sight on the other side. Also there was a smaller one which would shoot and shoot without ceasing so that with it one man could kill a thousand. And when I saw these death-engines and the flying-boats which could drop iron on the heads of those below, I said :

"Child, if there is a man left after this war that comes it will be only by the mercy of God, and surely the one man who is left will say that war is now too dangerous to continue."

"They will say that. And there are very many in England now who say that apart from its danger, war is wrong. Let us leave these devices and look at the hearts of the people."

So I looked at the hearts and souls of the people, and very many of them were pitiful, and the souls, taking one with another, were far larger than at any time I had seen before. The Child said :

"They can all read now. The ordinary man, unless he can read, is little better than a beast without soul. What used your father to do when he must be in his hold in the long winter nights, and he was tired of hearing the harp played?"

"He tired very easily of the harp, and then he must turn to the wine-cup and make himself merry or a little over, or he must have a woman brought in. But we Normans are not as drunken as the Saxons."

"No, Giraldus, no. The Saxons are a drunken people with the minds of pigs, I know. But would not even the Norman Barons have been better if they could all have read, and gained some knowledge and understanding of their fellows?"

"Child, it is very likely, though in the reign of Stephen, even if they could read, there are few books. But though all this people that is now in England can read, and have countless books, and I see that it would take but a touch to make them say war is wrong and try to do something to stop it, yet their reading has not made them happy, and there are many envious and many grumbling."

"It is a bad time," said the Child. "The cost of the things they must have rises and rises, and the wages of the machine-tenders stay the same. They are poorer than they were, and as they are men and not angels they grumble and are envious. But see, there are many now, not among the machine-tenders, who will say that the company of the despairing in the back streets is a black shame to England, and who say also that there should not be luxury if with it there must be poverty. In this century there are not so many who say—'England is great, and so all is well.' No, there is more pity, and it is being gathered together so that it can be used."

"Child of God, the pity is very well, but there are many who say now that work is a shame, and that a man must do as little as he can, and that all men must work at the pace of the slowest. Surely that is not good doctrine?"

"No. But it has arisen in self-defence, and through the greed and cruelty of the masters in the last century. When the machine-tenders can a little begin to forget their wrongs then that doctrine will go to join all other false and evil doctrines. But as for work being a shame—well, it is not—but man can no longer take any pride or pleasure in his work. And this is one of the worst evils of the Machine while it is still mastering man."

I looked, and saw that the Child was right. Craftsmanship had vanished, and a man could never take pride in his work, because very rarely did he make a whole thing. He made a piece of a thing, day after day and year after year, and that not with his hands but with a machine, and it was like the monotony of hell. So that many of the machine-tenders, however well they were paid, lived in a great weariness and distaste for their work, and were only too ready to believe that work in itself was an evil, and not, as it should be, one of the greatest blessings God has given to man. I am a very simple craftsman, who does but write out the words of other men on a parchment, and draw pictures for the great first letters, yet not even in Glastonbury at my happiest time, forgetting the world and with John to talk to, could I have been quite happy without my work. I am a Baron's son, and had I been even as my brothers, should likely enough never have handled anything but a sword or a bow, nevertheless, my writing has been a great joy to me, and the sight of a book finished. So this evil of the Machine, that it had taken away man's pride in his work, struck me then as worse even than the noise, the spawning cities, and the ugliness that was everywhere.

Now I saw in this time also, towards the end of

the fourteen years, that the pitiful women who would have all their sisters free to work and learn and think, and the machine-tending women better paid, and the laws protecting women and children from cruelty made more strict, grew weary of asking for things peaceably and turned to violence. They demanded, with violence, a right to say who should speak for them in the Parliament, and this was a strange thing to me, and I could not at first tell whether it was right or wrong. For to say that a woman's soul is equal to a man's is true, but it is not saying that her brain is equal to his. But the Child said :

" They are very pitiful and they wish to do away with cruelty to women and children. The laws have been made by men, for men, and many of them are not just. And for thy guidance I can tell thee that Abraham Lincoln believed in women having this power of ruling, as much as the men."

" Then, Child, I make no doubt it is right they should have it. But perhaps they are wrong to demand it with violence, though indeed it seems to me that their violence is very gentle, and I cannot understand why the men grow so peevish over it."

I had seen the rebellion of the villeins in England, and the rebellion of the later villeins in France, and I knew what violence meant. But these women took no life, nor laid hand on any to hurt them, and their worst deeds were the burning of houses. And though I would rather they had burnt the hideous houses in the machine cities than the beautiful old ones in the country, yet having seen real violence I could not grow heated over a few burnings of dead stuff, not even the burning of one of the heretic churches. But a great many of the men

came to a wild and passionate hatred of these women, and I could not understand it.

"Child," I said, "women have been oppressed since the First Man fell on his mate when she was weak and beat her without cause, and now the men will grudge them a few houses to burn for their revenge. Surely they are peevish."

"It is just because the burners are women that the men are thus enraged. For with that cruelty of the First Man came a new sin, which the beasts in their innocence commit not, and it is called sex hatred. Look into the hearts of these men and women, and you will see that all of them, even the best and most gentle, hold a tiny core of hatred in their hearts for the other sex. Now it flames forth in many, and this is the beginning of a bitter sex war which shall continue for generations and generations, dying down and coming up again whenever women will add a little to their freedom."

I saw that the Child was right, and that even two lovers in their first ecstasy held always in their hearts this little seed of hatred for each other.

"Must it always be there?"

"While men despise women, and women fear men, it will always be there. But it will pass in time."

"Child, I see that men may learn not to despise women, though I do not see how they are to do it unless they could be all turned into women themselves for a year. But women must always fear men, not for what they *do* do, but for what they can do."

"Giraldus, when cruelty has ceased women will never fear men, for they will know without thinking about it that their weakness is their protection from any being with the flame of God's breath in him.

Man shall never lay a hand on her, simply because she is weaker than himself. As the world now is, some men protect women from the violence of other men, and then they think all is well. All is not well until every man shall allow her weakness to protect her, because it is a cruel thing to injure the helpless, and a thing that a man with the breath of God in him does not do. But it shall come."

"Oh, Child of God, why could it not have been like that in the beginning?"

"Cruelty was man's first sin, and so it shall be the one that he shall first utterly abolish. So be not downcast. I will not show you the time when all men are as noble as Abraham Lincoln, but I will show you the time when cruelty has passed away from England, and a child of seven years old is safer from injury than a Hercules."

"Child, have I this seed of hatred for women in my heart? I do not feel it."

"No. It is bound up with sex love, and though many men like you have a distaste for women, yet that is not the same thing. This hatred men have for women always goes with the ability to love them carnally, and that is why a sex war is unlike all others, because the soldiers on each side must ever and anon be making love to each other. But for all that the war is there, and in words it will be bitter enough. Then when it is ended, and sex hatred is passed away with cruelty, and women are free and not despised, their marriages and their wooings shall be happy and equal, nor ever made bitter by little swellings of the core of hatred that lies in every heart. Marriage will be more like the friendship and love that was between you and John de Crespigny, where was no core of hatred, but a perfect equality. Yes, in the end even men

and women shall be happy together, though at this, time they seem more likely to be at each others' throats. And now see this new thing that has happened in the heretics' Church."

I looked at the heretics' Church and saw that one small and very lively portion of it had returned to the True Faith, and yet would not go back to the True Church. There had always been men and women in England who held by the True Church, but these would not be of them. They would stay in their own Church, and deny its doctrine and disobey its Bishops until the heretics' Church was in a turmoil, and none knew what they would do next. But these half-heretics were very devout and spiritual, and in the main clean-living and pitiful, and they had much life in them and a fervent faith. And they brought a flaming vitality to the apathy of the others, and the Church was unwilling to drive them out, as many others had either been driven out or cut themselves off. I said :

" Child, they make many dissensions, and their Bishops do not know what to do. And all the time they grow stronger."

" They will make far more dissension yet."

" Why, if they believe in the Mass, will they not go back to the Holy Church ? "

" Because they are English and will not have the Pope to rule over them, and for the main part they will never go back. But do you see how with all their disobedience and undiscipline they bring life to the Church and the Bishops are not willing to cast them out headlong ? "

" Child, I see. And it is because they say—' It is there.' "

" It might be. Yet in the end they will all say—' I do not know.' But these new heretics will be

more after thy heart than the others, for very rarely are they of the joyless. The worship of Ceres is bound up in thy faith."

Now this was such a strange saying of the Child's that long after the vision had passed and he had left me I pondered over it, but I could not understand what he meant. For Ceres was the Roman goddess of wine and corn and all the pleasant fruits of the earth, and I could see that the joyless would never have worshipped her. But then neither do we, nor any woman save the Mother of our Lord, and I cannot see that she is very like Ceres.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN the next vision this gigantic war burst upon Europe, and though most men in England were unprepared, yet there were some, wise and far-seeing, who had felt the shadow hanging over them for years, and had risen every day knowing that the calamity was a day nearer. But most were unprepared, and though there had been no great European war involving England since the war waged against Napoleon Bonaparte, the people took it very calmly. The country could never endure a standing army since the days of Oliver Cromwell and his grim Roman soldiers, so there was no army in England to compare with the other countries, or to compare with the number of her people. But the fleet of ships of battle held the seas from the first to the last as they had against Napoleon, and the little army that was in the country was sent over to France. This war (as well as I can recollect it from the tumult and confusion of the vision) was fought by France, England and the Muscovites on one side, and later Italy. In the centre and dividing them was Germany and Austria and with them the Turkish Infidels. And how any Christian nation could have borne fighting at their side and against other Christians I have never been able to understand, and try as I would I could not forgive the people of Germany for doing this. And then the Child told me that England had done it already, and fought with the Infidels

against the Muscovites, who are Christians, though heretics. It seemed to me that an Infidel was no longer an Infidel and that men had forgotten the Holy Sepulchre. Then besides these great nations warring, a confusion prevailed in Eastern Europe among a crowd of smaller nations, which sprang to arms as they were forced to, or as good opportunity arose for removing the landmarks of the neighbour, but what nations they were, or on whose side they fought, or who, among them, did the best in the end, I cannot now remember.

In the first vision I saw the enemies of England push her and France back and back until they were approaching Paris, and then I saw France and England and the half of the Low Countries that was fighting with them, go forward again, and at last the armies settled down in two lines, half underground, stretching across France from the sea to the Alps. So I said to the Child :

“ Well, what will they do now ? ”

“ They will stay almost where they are for four years.”

“ Four years ! And must this little half of the Low Countries be oppressed by a foreign rule all that time ? ”

For the cruellest thing of the war was the way the men of Germany had possessed this gallant little country, though she tried to keep them out, and I saw some things done there that showed women were not yet safe in war. But considering the immensity of this war and that it was a struggle of desperation, the cruelties were not utterly intolerable, neither were they universal but only in certain places. Men on the whole, even in the rage of war, had grown more pitiful since the Sack of Magdeburg.

But the bloodshed was stupendous and sickening, and when the Child took me down into the vision I thought I was come quick to hell. For as our world is noiseless, so are our wars also. Arrows make a small whistling sound, and even the noise of men fighting in armour, which is a sound I heard when I was a boy, is but a gentle tapping compared with the din of this war of the twentieth century. Also in our wars men draw off at night when they can no longer see, but in this one the death-engines roared and screamed, day and night, winter and summer, for four years and a little. The mud in the long ditches where the men hid themselves was very noxious, and besides the killing and their ghastly wounds they suffered torments of cold and wet. I will never believe that any army of this time would endure what those Englishmen and Frenchmen suffered, without any hope of plunder, and simply because they were told to. They believed their cause was just, and where they were told to stand, there they stood, and stayed until they were killed, and that often in the most appalling ways. Neither were the English ones trained to arms, for the little army had almost melted away in the first onslaught when the battles were still open, and England must speedily call on her labourers and machine-tenders and the sons of the luxurious to come and help her. They came readily, in hundreds of thousands, and though England must in the end compel men to fight by law, so hardly was she pressed, yet for a long time she need not do it, and these free soldiers, and the French (who were compelled from the beginning) and the small army from the little half of the Low Countries, kept the long line.

The Child led me, and we came to a piece of the

line where, he said, were some men from my own part of England, the North. He touched my ears so that I should understand and he bade me listen to the speech of these later Englishmen.

"For thou shalt see, Giraldus, what a temper and manner of mind has been made with the sullen Saxon, the fiery Norman, and the old boisterous rude Scandinavians, who were thy ancestors likewise."

So I listened, and in that hell, in fear and weariness and the expectation of ghastly wounds, these Englishmen were jesting, many of them uncleanly, and all with a quick and ready wit. They jested, and they grumbled with ferocity, and they profaned God's name continually, and they were very kind to each other.

"It has become a sweet temper," said the Child. "Of all nations at this time the English are the most patient, kindly-tempered, and orderly within themselves. As thou shalt see afterwards. But now look into their hearts and see how badly, or how well, they take this war."

So I did, and I saw that the men, though determined to stand in their ditch for ever, to prevent Germany imposing her methods of ruling and her warlike ideas on the rest of the world, yet thought for the most part that war was wicked and cruel and unnecessary, and that by some means, after this one was over, it must be stopped. There was a deep distaste for the whole thought of war, especially in the minds of the younger men, and I had never seen it before. And at the beginning some Englishmen would have made friends with the Germans opposite them and stopped fighting altogether, but they were forbidden to do it.

Then the Child made this vision to pass away,

and he showed me a vision of England during the first two war years. Here again the people, though in desperate grief, anxiety and fear, were very calm and patient, and they prayed to God to help them, which they had not done so much in the days of their prosperity. The women suddenly cast off all their bonds and began to take the places of the men who had gone, and it seemed that if their bodily strength were equal to it they could do all the men's tasks as well as the men, and one or two things even better. And here again I saw the benefit of work and how cruel it is to withhold it from women, for these who now had something useful to do every day were happier than they had been before the war, and they could not help this feeling of happiness though some of them were ashamed of it. They tasted of the enjoyment of men, which is to work and not be despised, and if they liked it and would have more of it, who can blame them? I said :

"Child, after this the men must give them the right to rule as far as Abraham Lincoln said they ought to have it, for they have stopped burning houses and work as well as the men. They cannot call upon them in war, and then again utterly despise them in peace as they have done heretofore."

"They will give them that right," said the Child. "And many men will be dismayed at it. But they cannot now hold it back from them. Now see the battle-field again, for there is a new death-engine being used."

He made a vision of the battle-field, but we did not go down into it. And this last death-engine I cannot well describe, for it was a vapour which was loosed if the wind were blowing the right way, and it brought men to death or a horrible sickness

which left many of them disabled. I said to the Child :

“ Can they carry this vapour in the flying boats ? ”

“ In this war they will throw nothing out of the flying boats but the iron things which break into pieces. But thou seest how dangerous war grows. Men know now that if they cannot stop war, in fifty years one country will be able, in a day, to kill half the people in another. But besides this fear in their hearts there is pity also, and a growing feeling that war must be made unnecessary. Now see to the Muscovites, how they fall by the way.”

I saw how the huge army of the Muscovites, which was very badly armed and incredibly mismanaged, was crumbling to pieces because of a rebellion that had arisen in their country.

“ Child, is this the rebellion of the oppressed which you said was to be worse than the French one ? ”

“ This is it. But I will not let thee see its cruelties. But later on in this country of the Muscovites they will try to kill our Lord Christ, and in England after the war there shall be some who would kill Him also.”

“ Oh, Child of God ! ”

“ They cannot kill Him, neither drive Him out of any country. But they can persecute Christians and kill priests. So these Muscovite oppressors will do, and there are some who would do it in England. And these tyrants, who will impose on their people a far more bitter tyranny than that they rescued them from, will try to overturn every ruling and power there is in the world, and make them all cruel, and all blasphemous. I tell thee, Giraldus, there have been no more pitiless men in the world than these men that will now rule the

Muscovites. And in England, if a man will say—‘There shall be no luxury and no poverty’—he will be tainted by the trail of this serpent. And it is loathsome, cruel, and abominable, and utterly displeasing to God. It is anathema.”

“I do not see why the pitiful men who would have neither luxury nor poverty should be tainted by the trail of the serpent.”

“It is because men are impatient and foolish and not fore-seeing, and will think from year to year, instead of from century to century. And they will take weapons in their hands without knowing what they are. There are some indeed in England who would do all these Muscovites will do. But there are others who would not do all their wickedness, yet they say to them—‘Come, you shall help us against those who would hold to their luxury.’ Presently, when the pitiful men are stronger and more numerous and wiser, they shall cast off the serpent and have no more of him. But see now, how the Germans leave this side, where the Muscovites have failed, and go to the other, to France.”

Then I saw how the Germans, free from the threatening of the huge Muscovite army, hurled all their men against the long line of ditches in France. And I could not see how the French and the English were to endure much longer, for they had no new armies to call up, and the countries were drained of men.

“Child, in a little space they must be beaten.”

“They shall not. They shall hold to it until help comes. But now see England and Germany in this time, and what happens on the sea.”

I saw how the English fleet held the top of the sea, and they would not let the big ships of Germany come out, neither let ships of food pass in. So the

whole country was ill-fed and in misery. But certain boats of the Germans, which could go along under the surface of the water (again the Abbot would say, not heretic, but madman) came out from their country and with their death-engines destroyed many of the food ships travelling to England. So there was scarcity of food in both countries, but the misery of the Germans was the greatest by some way, and my heart was sore for the children. I said :

“ Child, this war strikes home to the weak, even if a country lies peaceful and not invaded.”

“ Yes, it is a war of desperation, and cruel enough. But see now how for the first time in eighty years the land of England is more important than the machine cities, and the farmers sell their corn at a big price.”

So I saw that after oppressing the country for eighty years, the machine cities now said—“ Grow us corn ”—and the farmers grew rich and the labourers were not in misery, and these labourers were either old men, or very young boys, or women. The Child said :

“ After the war they will have again their cheap corn from over the sea, and again the land of England will be unimportant. Now see, Giraldus, here are men who will not fight, and England is in direst need. What shall be done to them ? ”

I looked, and saw men who would not be compelled, either by scorn, or cajolery, or England's need, or by the law which had been made, to fight or take life.

“ Are these men cowards, as the people say in their wrath ? ”

“ Child, some of them are afraid, but many of them are restrained by their conscience. And these

that are not cowards have worse to put up with, in the scorn of the people, than the men in the battle-line. Some of them would walk into hell if they might there leave their consciences and be able to fight like the others."

"If you had been a man in this time, not a priest nor a monk, but an ordinary man doing his daily work, would you have fought?"

"No, Child. Not in any age or any time would I fight, or take life."

"Then what would you have done?"

"I would have asked to drive one of the chariots without horses that bring in the wounded, and I would pray all the time that a piece of the flying iron would hit me, and so I be killed. I know as well as any what it is to live in a cloud of contempt. For pity of these men who cannot fight and who yet suffer in England's danger my heart is torn. The people are cruel to them."

"They cannot understand. Now I will show you a strange sight, and one that will rejoice your heart."

He made another vision, and it was of the Holy Land. There I saw how the English, and the men of one of England's young countries, drove back the Infidel, and in triumph they rode into the streets of Jerusalem. Before this vision I kneeled in thankfulness and praise to God, that after centuries of defilement the Holy Sepulchre, and the places where our Lord Christ walked, were in the guard of Christians.

But this vision soon passed, and the Child made another one. It was of France again, and a new army had come. It was not a large one, but fresh and strong, and the soldiers were picked men, whereas the English and French were now reduced

to using boys and weaklings to make up their losses.

" Child, who are these new ones ? "

" These are Abraham Lincoln's men."

I must love these men for the sake of Abraham Lincoln, and I thought it very pitiful of them to come and fight in Europe in a quarrel that was none of theirs. But the Child said :

" They are pitiful, and they will always spring to the aid of the oppressed and miserable of every nation. But in this quarrel they must fight whether they be pitiful or no. If they leave Germany to be Lord of Europe she will impose her methods of ruling and her war-like ideas on the whole world. Their rulers know this, so these soldiers of Abraham Lincoln are come to help England and France. And now if Germany cannot win soon, she must be beaten in the end, for behind this little new army you see here is the whole wealth and resource of Abraham Lincoln's great country, and men in number like the sand of the sea. So now Germany must strike hard if she would win."

I saw Germany strike hard at the north part of the long line, and the English and French were driven back and back until they reached a certain river. I remembered that before, when the war started, they had reached this river, but had not crossed it. I said :

" Child, can they cross it this time ? "

" No. They may not pass over it this time either, and now they must go back. They have failed, and this is the beginning of the end. The people will throw down their war-like rulers who have brought them to this pass. Yet behind the rulers was a force greater than themselves, and greater than the people."

I saw then how the German armies broke and crumbled, yet retreated orderly to their own country, and I saw their rulers thrown down and cast out. Yet there was very little bloodshed compared with rebellions of the people in former times, and soon they brought the country to a kind of order, but they were in utter exhaustion and misery and despair, and their pride was gone.

A truce was called, and after four years and a little the death-engines were silent. But I, looking on the despair that lay like a great black cloud over the whole middle of Europe, knew that even the truce could bring little comfort to these broken ones. It had been a war of desperation, and like no other war in the world the countries had battled themselves to a standstill. The victors could say, faintly and weakly—"Well, we have won"—but for those who had lost there was no comfort anywhere, neither any hope, and every morning was a new desolation.

"Oh, Child of God! Was this war inevitable?"

And the Child said: "It was inevitable, and had the rulers been as pitiful as thee, it must have come. War, famine, or pestilence must have come to that spawning country in another fifty years. The people were too many, and they had nowhere to go. But this is the last Great War in Europe."

CHAPTER XXIV

IN the next vision the Child showed me, I saw the terms of the truce that was made, and later on the terms of the peace. The Child said :

“ Giraldus, thou seest this truce, and this peace, and how they are humiliating and harsh, and impose terrific burdens which must be on the children of the beaten for a generation ? ”

“ Child, I do see, and the countries which have won are not merciful. Yet in other times, after such a war, the French would not have made a truce at all, but have marched into Germany plundering and burning and wasting, and they would have sacked cities and done all manner of cruelties to avenge the insult to their own land where the war was fought. And the little half of the Low Countries, where Germany sat for four years, would have taken a most bitter revenge. Men are more pitiful, both in war and after it, than they were in former times.”

“ Yes, they are. And in England, when the fever of war has quite passed, there will be many troubled for the harshness of this peace. It will cause anger and impatience between the English and the French, because the French, whose country has been half ruined, cannot be as pitiful as the English. They are men, and not angels, and they cannot all in a moment forgive and forget, as the English would have them to do. But England was never invaded.”

"Child, there is always anger between the English and the French, and how they could fight side by side for four years without turning on each other is a thing I cannot understand, and though you have shown it me in a vision I can hardly believe it will come to pass. The Normans are very well, but the French are a tiresome people."

The Child laughed, and said, "Giraldus, I may show thee visions as I will, and talk to thee as I will, but never will thou be anything but a Norman. The thought that all men are brothers is beyond thee, save that thou wilt pity the oppressed of any people. Well, it will suffice, and I will not require thee to say that a Saxon or a Frenchman is as good as a Norman. Yet they are."

And then, as I did not like to say open denials to the Child of God, I must shake my head a little.

"But do you see that these English are unreasonable in expecting the French to be as forgiving as themselves?"

"Child, I do see it. But if they did not start angering each other over that matter then they would start over something else. They cannot come to any understanding of each other's minds. These English are more like to the men of Germany than they are like the French."

"Well, that is so. But in the end all men must be brothers, and not say—'I am a Norman'—or, 'I am a Saxon.'"

But this thought, as the Child said, was more hard for me to understand than the subtle machine devices, for though I would have cruelty to cease everywhere, and though I will pity a Saxon as readily as a Norman, yet I do think the Normans are the best race, and see what an England they shall make.

Now the Child showed me a vision of England as it should be after this enormous and bitter war, and in some ways it was like the England that was after Napoleon Bonaparte had been sent to his second island, and in some ways it was very different. The people were exhausted, and if any had said—"Come, now we will go to war"—they must have said—"We are too tired." But besides this exhaustion very many people, besides the Friends, now thought war was cruel and utterly wicked, and not the natural fate of every nation, and that it was every man's duty to do all he could to stop it. And many believed that it could be done by calling the nations together in a league and setting them all to stop war, and if any two nations had a quarrel then the others would try to settle it peacefully. The Child said :

"Giraldus, you see here a new thing. Neither is this infant League born to die, but to grow to full stature and ability."

"Child, I see it is a new thing. And there are some who would have all nations stop making new death-engines, and destroy the old ones, but it seems to me that no nation is willing to be the first."

"Well, in this matter of death-engines I will show thee a strange thing, but it comes later. Let us walk in this sad, tired England."

We walked in England in this time after the war, and it was a time of confusion, and weariness, and black discontent. There was poverty in the country, and in Europe, and many of the machines must be silent because no nations could buy what they made. There was little work for the returning soldiers, those who had no work were jealous of those who had, and those who had would hold to it and keep the soldiers out ; the women were dis-

contented because many of them must return to idleness, and in every work-place and in very many homes there was dissension and bitterness and open strife.

"Child," I said, "their sweetness and patience has passed away with the war."

"No, it is there. But they are not in danger now, and they are very tired and grievously disappointed. Their rulers have deceived them, saying that every man should find work to do. And the men snarl at the women, who have worked bravely, saying—'Go out, this is my place'—and the women return sadly to idleness, for weary as they are they would rather go on working in independence than be idle. All this ill temper shall pass when the people are a little recovered. And England will not let these workless starve."

So I saw that the country gave these men a dole of money, and until they found work they might have it, and if they found it then the dole must stop. But I saw that from the beginning there were some who, when they had the money, would not try to find work.

"Child of God, here is a new evil, for now some of them would rather live in idleness on small money."

"It is an evil, and it shall increase. But what would you do, Giraldus? Of two evils it is the lesser one. The greatest evil of all is that the machines have taken away the pleasure of labour, so that even the men who are not idle find no joy in their work. They must do it, or live poorly like these others, but it is a weariness."

And now I saw that there were very many who went about preaching that labour was a shame, and that a man must be bribed to do it with very high

wages, such as had existed in the war. But now England was in grave debt to Abraham Lincoln's country, and of her own debtors nearly all were too poor to pay, and the pitiless Muscovites said openly that they would never pay the debts of their country. So England could by no means keep the wages up out of her own wealth, as she had done during the war, and they began to fall.

Then there was great strife and bitterness everywhere between the masters and the men, and often the men refused to work at all, but that only made them the poorer, for their guilds, though strong and powerful and now above the law, could never afford to pay them in their idleness as much as they would have had in wages. Also the guilds must use much of their riches to send men to the Parliament, to speak there for the machine-tenders. At this time also I saw that the Muscovites had spies and helpers everywhere in England, and they whispered to the tired and miserable people that they should make a great rebellion, and cast down the masters and the luxurious, and the rulers and the Parliament, and rule themselves, by force. And many listened to them, and would do it if they could, and even of those who would not cast away Christianity or shed any blood, many would try to use the Muscovites and their followers in England to further their own schemes.

But there were also some, cool and far-seeing, who, though passionately desirous that luxury and poverty should pass away together, yet knew that in a spawning country like England who lived not on her own corn, and where half the machines made nothing but luxuries, this could not be done suddenly or in a day, nor yet in a hundred years, but that all must come gradually. They knew that if

any great change were made all in a breath there would be a new oppression, and half the people starving, and a desperation, and a calamitous failure of the pity that had grown up. The Child said :

“Giraldus, you see these who think not from year to year, but from century to century ? ”

“Child, I see them, and how others are impatient with them.”

“Well, that is natural. A man’s life, to himself, is three score years and ten, or four score years. But if he knew it, his life is the lives of all who have come before him in time. These who have learned how to think forward in hundreds of years are those who have learned to think back into the centuries. They know that evil comes quickly and good comes slowly, they know that it is easy to throw down, but difficult to raise up. The world as it is round them sickens them, yet they know it is better than it was and they have learned patience. And the number who think in this manner is growing. But now see these others who pine for the past.”

I saw there were plenty of people in this time who would still have it that luxury and poverty were the will of God, and that a man had the right to be born rich, and remain rich, if his fathers had worked well for him. And there were even those who, if they could, would have taken away all the freedom that had been gained, both by the common people and the women, and cast them all together back into their bonds. These people had unpitiful hearts and small, dull souls, and sometimes they had the black streak in them as well, and I could not love them. They were unbelievably like my father, except that he has no black streak. They thought that a man was not a man unless he were fighting or taking beasts’ lives, and that a machine-

tender was in some way a less high thing than themselves, and that a woman was made for nothing but man's use. My father thinks all these things, but then, unless he has learnt since I left him, he can neither read nor write. But these men could read, and they knew all the cruelties that had been done since history began, and the misery that has been suffered by women and churls, and the agony of the children of Middle Europe both in the war and after it, and yet they were not pitiful, and would turn back the clock of time. I could not understand it. No, I shall never understand how such people could still be there, in England, after the great war. But the Child told me, to my comfort, that these utterly pitiless would soon pass away.

"They are old," he said. "Their day is past, and their children will not listen to them."

And this was another thing I saw in these years, how the young men who had fought in the war were for ever girding at the elders, who, they said, had made the war and brought all this suffering on them. And they said that no more should the old men rule because they were fools and without understanding. But the Child said :

"They must be old themselves some day, and this peevish state they pass though is only weariness, and a memory of their miseries."

In these years I saw also very much lustful and careless living, and unchaste books made, and read eagerly, and new dances which could be made as sensual as any I had seen in any time or country, if the dancers willed it. And here was a curious thing, for the music for these dances was often played by the descendants of the African slaves Abraham Lincoln had freed, and it was barbaric music. It offended my ears sorely, and I asked the

Child why they must have this painful, screaming, and barbarian music.

"It is because Abraham Lincoln's dark people have in their heads a better sense of the beat in music than any white man can have, and so these English will have their kind of music, and have the Africans to play it. For in these later dances the beat is all, and the melody of the music is nothing."

"Child, why do the people, so many of them, live unchaste and go into this rage of pleasure?"

"Because none of them know what will happen next. The world is in a confusion, and they will have pleasure while they can. And also they would throw off the last remnant of the bonds imposed by the joyless of the last century. There are many alive now who sigh for that time, when England was great and her horn exalted, but these young men and women will deny all, and say that it was a vile time, hypocritical and oppressive, and they will have none of it."

"Well, there are not many hypocrites in England now. But, Child, why do they all turn from God? I have never seen so many unbelievers in England."

"Because a man will go to his church, and pray, and sing psalms, it does not prove that he is a believer in God, nor that he loves our Lord Christ, nor that he will try to order his life as a Christian should. In the last century there were many hypocrites, and now there are very few, for Christianity is not the custom at this present. But see, there are still many believers who hold a fervent faith."

I looked and saw that there were many who still believed, and for the unbelief round them their faith did but grow stronger and stronger. The Child said :

" Our Lord Christ is not dying in England, but the weak will not follow him now, only the strong. The weak will follow the men who cannot believe."

" Is there any man who cannot believe ? "

" There have always been some, and now there are many more, for this people has reached the full stature of man's brain. These men are made (and God holds them guiltless) with such truthful, honest, and unimaginative brains that they cannot accept anything for truth unless they can prove it by demonstration, or reasoning, or the power of numbers. They have found out that Genesis is wrong, and that men rose from slime and were not made in a day, but they cannot prove that there is any soul in man, and until they can prove it they must deny it. And though they do not know how life first came upon the earth, yet, until they can prove it they will not say God made it. And these men are some of them the noblest and of the strongest spirit that now live. But whereas before, in the last century, the weak men would be Christians because it was the custom, now they will follow these others and say man's brain is the highest thing there is, yet they themselves would be hard set to it to prove that their hand is not their foot. They are foolish and small-witted, and have neither the imagination to believe nor the reasoning power to disbelieve honestly. They follow the custom, and it leaves them free to minister to their own lusts. And it is far better that there should be no hypocritical Christians, because they foul the name of our Lord, and that in a worse way than do those who deny that he was the Son of God."

In these years also I saw two curious things about the women. The first was that they refused any longer to be bound up in robes or wear their hair

long. They cut their hair and went back to the men's dress of a much earlier time, for they wore a tunic to the knee, with hosen and breeches underneath it. So for the first time in centuries their legs were free and they could move about as easily as a man. Many cried out on them for it, but they would not do otherwise, and from this time forward as far as the Child took me women would never again bind their legs in robes, nor wear their hair long unless it happened to please them. But with this stiffness of maintaining their bodily freedom came a great rage for beautifying themselves, which grew and grew until at last there were thousands whose daily work was the beautifying of the women, and hardly any went their way in the world with their faces as God had made them, but marvelously altered. I had seen it done before in other times, but I had never seen such a universal rage for beauty, and it seemed to me they were growing very immodest.

But the Child laughed, and said :

" Why, this is only a little thing, Giraldus, and not very sinful. Men and women are still in their bodies of beasts, and every man and woman has a natural desire to mate. But now so many men have been killed that there is an enormous over number of women, and an unseemly scramble for husbands. Those that can make themselves the most beautiful will get the husbands, and the others be left behind. They will die off, and in time the numbers will grow more even and this chasing of husbands will stop. It is a very little and a very passing thing. In a hundred years it will be over, and women will not need all this beautifying."

At this time also, not long after the war, I came by the knowledge of an invention which men had

made, and it was not then perfected, neither was it in general use. But it was there, it was used by some, and violent dissensions arose about it. And now if the Abbot come in he will think I am neither heretic nor madman, but possessed by Satan, for the invention enabled a man to lie with his wife and be certain that from the union would come no children. And I cried out to the Child of God that this was, of all the devilish inventions man had made, the most wicked and abominable, and must end in an orgy of lust such as the world had never seen. The Child said,

"It will be abused. There is nothing on God's whole earth that cannot be used for evil purposes. But you must see the other sides of this matter, Giraldus."

"Child, I will see what you will. But if you are to tell me this thing they do is right then my peace of mind is gone for ever."

"I will not tell you it is right. It is an imperfection, and man is still very imperfect. His pity is growing day by day, but over his lawful sensual desires he has, as yet, but little control. And the world dare not wait for five thousand years while he acquires it. The world has got to choose between the unchastity of this invention, and the cruelty of war."

Then I was without words, and could not tell what to say, or what to think. I remembered the way the machine countries had spawned, and what had come of that spawning, and I knew that where in Stephen's reign four children out of a family of seven would die before they grew up, in this time the whole seven might live, and that not only among the luxurious, but among the poor. The Child said :

"There is nothing now to check the growth of a

people. If the nations all go on increasing as they were before this war, in another hundred years there will be a famine, or a war in which whole nations will be wiped out. Not in a hundred years will the mass of men learn to live continent except when they would have a child. That is the big side of the matter. Now I will show you the little side, and that it is above all a pitiful invention."

He made me a vision of a labourer's cottage where was a woman with so many children that I could not well count them, but I think there were ten, and another still in her body. And for these she must cook and clean and make clothes for fourteen hours in every day, and that on a very small wage. So she must be always tired and often sick and have no joy in her life, and half starve herself to give them and the man enough to eat. She looked so tired, and with it all so patient, like a sick animal, that I could do no other than pity her. But I told the Child that the man, when he had as many children as he could conveniently sustain, should have left using her and lived continent. But the Child made the vision pass, and said :

"He will not do it. She is his wife, and either, if he be brutal he will force her, or he will complain and complain until she must give in to him. Or he will do neither of these but take another woman and get children in whoredom. The man has no pain and no weariness to balance his pleasure, and though the women would live continent rather than be for ever ailing, the men will not. So there is no remedy, and that woman's life is a cruelty."

"Child, it is a cruelty of nature."

"No, Giraldus. If there be any remedy, and men will withhold it from women, they have taken nature's cruelty on themselves, and they must

answer for it. They will very readily overcome nature themselves, and fly in boats, or shave off the hair nature meant them to grow on their faces."

"Child, you have told me you do not think it right, and now you will be saying it is right."

"It is not right. It would be more pleasing to God if all men were so chaste and so strong in control that without this invention they could stop wars, and harlotry, and the cruelty that goes on in making women bear children they do not want and cannot sustain. It is not right, but it is not so wrong as the other things. The one is a sin of unchastity, and the others are all sins of cruelty. And any man, and any woman who has no children, that will discuss this matter is in a way a Pharisee. He binds burdens on others which he will not and cannot lift himself."

"Then, Child, I am a Pharisee."

"I will allow thee to discuss it. But now I will show thee some Pharisees."

So he made a vision, and showed me how in all countries the men who were most hot and bitter against the invention were the priests. And the priests of my own Church, the True Church, were the bitterest of all, and they were celibates and not married. But I said :

"Child of God, if they think it a sin they must speak out and say so. And it may well be that they do not believe it will stop war and harlotry, and they may think it better for the women to be sick and unhappy than sinful. And they may all think that unchastity is a worse sin than cruelty."

"Do you think that?" the Child asked me.

"No. I know very well that there is no worse sin than cruelty, nor one half as bad, that is a sin against man."

"Giraldus, these priests know one thing, and that is that the invention must make women as free as men. Their last burden will be cast from them. The priests are not willing for it to happen. Some honest ones there are, but there are some who have not a single eye in this matter. They are afraid that if the women are free like the men they will leave the Church like the men. Then the priesthood, as it is now, must fall."

"Ah, Child! Will you say this devil's invention will turn women from Christ?"

"Never—never. Women must always and always love our Lord Christ, because He pitied them. But these priests of this time would have them love Him through them and be subservient to them. So they go against the women in this matter, and say that this unchastity is worse than the cruelty of war or harlotry, and that in their bonds they must stay for ever. And later on the women will hold this against them, and never will they forgive these priests."

"But you say it is an unchastity?"

"It is. It is a sin, and when man is nearer his perfection he will no longer commit this sin. But as the world is now he must choose between two evils, the sin of cruelty and the evil of this other sin, and he must do the least. Compared with the crime of war it is far the least."

"Child, I see it. But it seems a hard thing to say to a man—'You must sin.'"

"Why, no. No man need use the invention, but can live continent with his wife when he has enough children, or he need not be married. But what men will say in the end is—'If you will not be continent you must use the invention, for we will have no more cruelty to women, or harlotry, or

war.' And that is what the priests will not allow them to say, and they would rather cruelty went on, and on."

But still I was sorely perplexed and very much troubled, and I was sitting on the bed in my cell, and the Child of God was standing before me, as he often did. But now, as I sat saying nothing and pondering deeply, he sat down by me, and took my left hand, and he spoke very gently.

"Giraldus, when I am gone from thee, wilt thou think me a devil, and the visions not from God?"

"Ah, never, Child. I will never think that. But this matter is too hard for me."

"It is hard. There will be many, like thee, with pitiful hearts, who would stop cruelty before all, and yet must shrink from the thought of preaching a thing which is a sin. And they must think of war and cruelty, and be troubled, and they must think of the sin, and be troubled too. But like Abraham Lincoln, they must go on—'with firmness in the right, *as God gives them to see the right*'—and they must say what they think without fear, and pray God to forgive them if they be wrong and have mistaken his message to them. But everyone must make up his mind on that matter, in the time I have shown you, for on it hangs the whole future of the world. Those who honestly preach the sin to stop the cruelty are guiltless, and so are they who honestly preach that cruelty is better than a small unchastity. But those who, while believing it but a small sin, or even no sin at all, will for their own ends preach that it is a heinous crime, will not be held guiltless. There are men who will preach thus dishonestly to keep the women in their subjection to them, and there are priests who will preach thus dishonestly to hold their place in the

world, which is at that time largely a domination over women. It is a very wicked and abominable dishonesty, and not to be readily forgiven. But for those that shall be like thee, who would have all men pure and no men cruel, and cannot see how at that time they can have both, and must in the end choose that men shall not be cruel, it is a hard and perplexing thing. But thou livest in the reign of Stephen and so need make no pronouncement on it."

"Child, I thank God for that, though I know that if I had to make a pronouncement I must be against war and against harlotry. But how will this invention stop that?"

"Well, it will come to an end gradually and from several causes. One shall be that a young man can marry early if he will and not fear that he cannot support a large family, because there need be none. But the most important thing is that when women are as free as men they will be strong and self-respecting, and there will be fewer and fewer found who are willing to be harlots. And at last there will be none, and the young men must either marry or live chaste. Harlotry is founded on the subjection of women to men, and without the subjection it cannot live."

"Yet, Child, there must be more wantonness and careless living if no woman need fear to be openly shamed."

"Oh, Giraldus, what is a chastity that is nothing but fear? That is not chastity."

"Then women never have been chaste?"

"Some of them have. The brave ones who have lived purely have been chaste, but the cowardly ones who have lived purely have been nothing but cowards."

"Child of God, thy sayings to me grow daily harder and harder."

"Why, it is not so hard if you will think. A chastity that is founded on fear is very often a whited sepulchre full of rotten and stinking bones. The impurity is driven within, and there festers. But a chastity that is not founded on fear is pure and shining and sharp as a sword. In this time that comes there will be no blurred edges on the chastity of women. No taint of fear will be there."

"Then this invention will be a good thing."

"No. No good that comes from it can make it more than an imperfection. But it is a necessity, like the necessity of being cruel to many of the slaves in order that they should all be freed."

Then he blessed me as he sometimes did if I had been troubled or perplexed out of the ordinary with things he showed me or told me, and for that time he left me. And I was rejoiced that I need not in my time make any pronouncement upon this matter, but I saw clearly that every thoughtful person in the time when it came must make up their minds, and say what they thought, honestly, always remembering that if they were men, or women without children, they must be, in a manner, Pharisees.

CHAPTER XXV

NOW in this time also, about seven years after the end of the great war, I saw how the black stone hewers, who had been in constant trouble and discontent for some years, now threatened to stop their work and come out of their wells unless their grievances were redressed. The masters were stiff and the men were sullen and they could not agree. So the rulers of the people made up their wages from the wealth of England (of which there was now very little) and told them to go on hewing and come to an agreement in certain months, during which this dole would be paid. But the masters were stiff and the men sullen, and I said to the Child that I did not think it likely that in their present temper they would agree in nine years, and they had only nine months. The Child said :

“ They will not agree, and it is not the fault of either, though the masters are stiff, and the men are sullen. See what happens in Europe.”

He made me a vision of hewers in other countries, and I saw that in some places they were ill-paid and lived very poorly, worse off by far than those in England. But the black stone they hewed could be sold at a little price, and though the stone itself was not so good as the English, yet some nations would take it in preference for its little price. The Child said :

“ Now see. If the masters in England must increase their price by much the nations will not

buy their black stone at all, and they and the whole country will be impoverished. But it is a hard thing for the men to hear, that because other hewers live unhappily so must their own wages fall, and they come down in their way of living. It would be better if these other hewers were better treated, and worked less for higher wages."

"Then why does not this League of Nations say that these masters give their men more?"

"The League is only a child, and born yesterday, and at this present its powers are little. Later it shall do more. Now it sits hatching out ways to stop war, and that is very important. Let us see England again, and how the hewers leave their wells."

"Child, if they leave the wells for very long all the nations will take the less good black stone at the little price, and become used to it."

"They will, and England's greatness must pass because she has lost the foundation of it, and the whole country be poorer than it was. But then the hewers are not seeing a vision. They are living in their own time, they cannot see very far, and they are badly led by a man who believes in the Muscovite oppression. And from his bad leadership the men shall find it hard to recover in twenty years, and the country will never. Now look, and you shall see wheels stop in England."

I looked at the vision of England, and saw the hewers leave their wells, and at one stroke thousands of other machine-tenders came to their aid, and everything that ran on wheels stopped if its driver belonged to one of the huge powerful guilds, which had long been above the law. The Child said:

"Is this right, Giraldus?"

"Child, as I suppose, it is not right that the

guilds should try to force the rulers and force the law. But they come readily to the aid of their fellows. And they seem likely to starve both themselves and others in the cities, and whatever they do will hurt them as much as anyone else."

"The rulers will not let anyone starve. See, they call on other men to drive the chariots and bring the food, and the milk for the children."

I saw other men come in their thousands to drive some of the chariots to bring food to the cities, and though they were unskilful yet they did well enough, and all were fed. But the strangest thing to me who live in Stephen's reign, and the thing which showed most how enormously pity had grown with reading, and also that the temper of these English was now as sweet as an apple, was the little bloodshed that took place. There were hundreds and hundreds of thousands of men, the hewers, and the drivers of chariots, and men who worked at unloading the ships—all idle, and very many of them dissatisfied. Among these men the emissaries of the Muscovites, and the Muscovite believers in England, had been working for years, saying—"Rise and kill"—yet now, when the chance seemed to be come, they did nothing but riot a little in certain places, and overturn the chariots that were being driven by others if they could get at them, and throw a few stones. And I saw that even a woman could drive a chariot among them and they would not harm her, though they might wreck the chariot if she stopped. Neither was this gentleness only in fear of the soldiers, for there were many places where there were no soldiers, and only officers of the law without weapon that was deadly. Their worst deed of all, and one whereby they might have taken many lives, but God prevented them, was in

trying to throw one of the long steam chariots off its iron lines. But by comparison with what they would have done if they had been living in Stephen's reign, even that was nothing, and I wished that the luxurious, who complained so bitterly about them, could find out a little how pity had grown, and be thankful.

After nine days they saw that the country could get its food without them, so they returned to their work, and all that they had accomplished was a grievous impoverishment of their guilds. But it had seemed to me always that if any large body of men ceased to work they returned to it the poorer, yet what else they were to do I could not see, either, for this ceasing to work in large numbers was the only weapon they had against injustice. I asked the Child what else they could do, and he said :

" They never can do anything else, and the ceasing to work very rarely helps them, but later you shall see how the whole country will prevent injustice to them. Their friends grow more and more, not less and less."

But though the chariot drivers returned to their work the hewers did not for many months, and what I had seen must happen, did happen, and when they returned there could be no work for thousands and thousands of them, and they must be workless and have the dole of money. And the Child said it would be twenty years before they would be fully recovered from this blow and either taken into other trades or gone to other lands. And he said England herself could never recover, nor be a rich nation as she had been before. Her one chance of regaining her golden prosperity had been in the black stone selling, and now that chance had passed and would not come again. I asked the

Child how long it would take before there were no workless at all, either hewers or any others. And he said :

“ In fifty years there will be few able-bodied. But it will be two hundred and fifty before there are none. For a long time there will be those who are not able to work.”

Now at this time also I saw how, by the Third Power, men had made a device whereby they could hear anything that was making a sound anywhere in the world, and they could be sitting at home in their chairs. This invention I never came anywhere near understanding, neither the one which followed it. That was seeing things at a distance, even if a sea or a range of mountains lay between. But at this time of the machine-age devices were endless and being invented every day, or the old ones improved. The boats that flew were growing very numerous, and women could fly them as well as the men. Indeed, in this age women did everything and could do everything except the very severe bodily labour such as hewing the black stone in the wells. But, as the Child showed me, the sex war was still continuing, and men wrote constantly and bitterly in the daily books that people read every morning, complaining so angrily of all the vices and follies of women that sometimes I thought Jerome was come back to earth. I thought it not just, for viciousness and folly never had been quite confined to women, even in their worst days of oppression. Men also wrote whole long books against them, and the Child showed me one, and it was so like Jerome that I could see his face rising before my eyes. I saw then that the rage some men have for keeping women soft and foolish and submissive is a very cruel one, it is the fury of the

oppressor who sees his victim departing from him. But Jerome had written honestly and in the name of Christ, though the Child had said he must be punished for his blindness, but these men wrote in their own names, neither for our Lord Christ's sake, nor any good purpose.

I saw at this time also how the small and lively section of the heretics who would say—"It is there"—and yet would stay in their own Church and create strife, had grown very strong and powerful since the war, and now there were even Bishops of them, and very many priests. And I saw how all the Bishops, after making it for twenty years, had produced a new book for the prayers of the heretics, and with it they hoped to pacify all and bring a little peace to the Church. But it was lost labour, for most of the heretics raised the old, old cry against the True Church and our Holy Father at Rome, and said this book was leading the country back to him (which it was not), and the lively heretics said the book was not leading back enough to the true doctrine, and they would have none of it either.

So they returned to their old book of prayers, and the Child took me into a vision that I might read it. I have forgotten it now, but I remember that it was written in the deep, strong, resonant English that was its perfection, and that the prayers at their semblance of the Mass were very beautiful, neither could I see why any of them wanted to change a word of it. I remember I said to the Child :

"If a man will pray these prayers with earnestness and humility surely he will find our Lord Christ."

And the Child said : "Surely he will."

And he told me that Abraham Lincoln had been very fond of this book of prayers, and had read it often, so I know that though it is a heretics' book there must be in it very much good.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE Child, when he next came, said that now he would show me no more of the years immediately after the great war, but that we should go on a hundred years, and into the first part of the twenty-first century after Christ, and see how they did then.

"For," he said, "they went on very quietly for a long time after that, making the laws always stricter against great luxury and riches, but doing nothing suddenly. The Muscovites had only one propitious time, and that was just after the war. And now, in this time I will show you, they have themselves a less oppressive form of ruling, and they have ceased to trouble the other nations and persecute Christians."

So the Child made a vision of England a hundred years later. The people had neither increased nor decreased, but were about the same, and there were neither many more machines, nor many less. And where I had expected every man of the luxurious to have his own flying boat, there were hardly any who did, and the flying boats were all used for the public good and not for the pleasure of one man. The chariots without horses which were driven by steam were now very few and only used for carrying weighty merchandise, and the people and light things were all carried in the chariots which ran by the power of the liquid (or some of them by the

Third Power) and in the public flying boats. The Child said :

“ You see how the luxury has spread outwards and downwards, so that now hardly any man can own a flying boat or a large horseless chariot, but nearly all of them that are not the despairing, or the lowest paid, can have a comfortable happy life and own a little chariot without horses. They never could make the flying boats or the big chariots so cheap that every man could have one, and now there are no rich people, so no one has them.”

I saw that the Child was right, and the wealth of the country had by gradual wise laws been distributed more evenly so that there could be no great luxury, and though the whole country was poorer, owing to the partial failure of the black stone selling, the people were far more contented. Also they had made the towns clean with devices for absorbing smoke and a greater use of the Third Power, which was now largely made in great houses at the mouths of the wells where the black stone hewers worked. But the cities were still very ugly and, to me, exceedingly noisy, (though the Child said they were quieter) and the army of the despairing was larger than ever. For nothing the rulers could do, either by making them new houses, or by care and attention on the part of pitiful men and women who spent their leisure time in looking after them, or by the care of the physicians, could these people be made clean or seemly or happy. There were the poor still, who in spite of their little wages were clean and seemly, and there were these despairing who lived like swine in a sty. And there was a sharp hard line drawn between the poor and the despairing, and the poor would neither live in their streets nor marry their children.

"Child," I said, "surely there are more of these."

"Far more."

"But why?"

"It is because the invention I showed you, that for keeping a people within bounds while man still is very imperfect, has been perfected and in general use for fifty years. These despairing are the half-witted and little-brained who cannot or will not use it. Now, in spite of the constant deaths of their diseased children they grow and grow, while the others stand still. A hundred years ago the physicians prophesied this would happen, but until the people are driven by necessity they will not do anything to stop it. But see how the others live."

I saw that the others lived very decently and quietly, and though labour was still a weariness because of the machines, yet because the hours of work were now shorter the people had more leisure and could, besides their wearisome and uninteresting time of labour, have some hours of every day to spend in doing other things. But because the country was poorer than it had been they must work very hard for their leisure or earn little wage, and in this time a man would do more in his six hours than the workers after the great war did in their eight. The doctrine that a man, if he were working with a weakling or a half-wit, must only do so much as the other could do, was clean passed away, for the people would not have it. They would work to the best of their ability in their six hours and buy a little chariot for their play time. They would pay their taxes for the sustainment of the weaklings and half-witted, but they would not be reduced to their level. In other ways also they were prouder and more independent. In the days after the war the huge taxes laid on the luxurious

had been spent largely on the comfort and well-being of the machine-tenders, to teach their children, and pay physicians to care for them when they were sick, and a number of other things which they had free from the country, but the luxurious must pay for in enormous taxes. But now there were no luxurious, and the people must pay for these things themselves, which they did willingly, and despised their ancestors for being servile.

Also their consciences were aroused for the well-being and happiness of their children, and if a man and a woman who would marry had a doubt as to their own bodily health they would go to a physician and ask him whether he thought their children would be healthy, or had better not be born. And the children, when they came, were watched intently from their cradles to their manhood or womanhood, and many diseases were no longer cured when they were there, but prevented so that they should not come. There were now many physicians, both men and women, whose work was to watch the children in the schools and see how they did. This people that was now in England seemed to live on fruit and bread and not very much meat, and those who were not half-witted were very healthy and strong, because the weaklings of full brain had died without issue rather than rear sickly children. And their faces were more pleasing than at the time after the war. The women also were very strong, and in hard bodily labour their wages were calculated at three quarters of those of a man, so that either four women or three men could be employed at the same wages. It seemed to me that in the end the women might grow as strong as the men, as they had been only a hundred years free of their robes and their imprisonments, but the Child said

they would not, and that they had nearly reached their greatest power of body, but that their brains would go on getting larger for some time. These women were strange to look at, and it took me some time to get accustomed to them. The whole race was a little taller than it had been, and the women more nearly the size of the men, but they looked shorter than they were in reality. Their muscle of body had developed so much that their waists had disappeared, and now they were broad-shouldered, broad-hipped and broad in the waist, so that they looked very sturdy and thick-set. Their power of endurance, which had always been great, was now tremendous, and at slow exercises, such as swimming or walking for long distances they must because of their sex always overcome the men. In fast exercises and feats of strength the men could still beat them easily, but the women could no longer be despised physically as the men now knew that the women's endurance was the greater. And they carried themselves very upright, and as if they were proud of being women, and few indeed there were who would be harlots. A woman by the law must be paid the same as a man if she did the same work, and a woman in every way was considered as a human being with all the rights of any other human being. So the few harlots there were were nearly all of the half-witted, and often diseased, so the young men must marry or live chaste, and the old men could not be lecherous.

And in this age living chastely was considered the sign of manliness, for so might a man the better overcome his fellows in the games they held continually. The women also held games among themselves, and in all they did in community they asked no man's advice, neither clung on to them,

but ordered their own lives. And though there were some women who would live carelessly, and not for money but in wantonness would suddenly take a man to be her lover and as suddenly let him go again, yet there were very many who lived soberly with their husbands, and were neither inordinately desirous within marriage, nor adulterous. It was a temper which had come over the whole country, and was in great contrast to the years after the war. It was felt by those who could think at all, that though man must have his body of a beast, yet he need not be bestial. And though some of the priests were still clamouring and crying out against them for living together in pleasure and having only two children, or possibly three, yet the mass of the people did it, and did not think it any sin. Neither could I blame them, for they could see the healthiness and happiness of their own children, and then look to the poor diseased issue of the half-witted despairing. And though they would live soberly, and not be adulterous unless they fell into the grip of an intolerable love-passion, they were not yet good enough to have two children and then live continent for the remainder of their lives. They would not increase their people lest there be another war, and the Child said the same prevailed through Europe. So they took no notice of these priests, and if a man would preach against them for this they would leave his church and not return. And these heretic priests, who had long been accustomed to be married, would find it hard to get a wife who was not a half-wit, because the sturdy independent women would not have them. I asked the Child how the True Church did, and he said :

“ The women have left it where the priests will

still preach against this, neither will any of them confess it as a sin, though they will confess their other sins. And the women begin to say that they have been ruled too long by priests, but if the priests will be less dominating they will be faithful and devout. But they are not turned from Christ, and where the priests will meet them and admit that they are now free and not to be ruled by any man, they will be as humble and reverent before God in the church as they ever have been. There will never be any time when women will not love our Lord Christ, if they know anything about Him. But they do not now turn to Him in despair as they did once when their lives were uneasy and joyless, and they will not believe everything the priests tell them, as they did once. Now women are free and happy, the priesthood, as it used to be, must fall, but our Lord Christ is above the priests, and never can He fall, and always the women will love Him."

Now I saw in this time that the old masters had passed away, and that all the machines and the black stone wells, and everything that must have paid workers were owned by the country itself and hired out to the men who worked. And if they conducted it ably their wages increased, and if they conducted it ill so their money was lessened. So they would not endure stupidity or laziness or waste in the men they had appointed to conduct the working, nor paying a great many men for the work a few could do. I saw also in this time that private rent was abolished, and no longer could a man live in idleness because he owned houses or land, neither could his son after him. He could own nothing except his own house, and every man and every single woman must work, or be placed in contempt

with the worst of the half-wits who must always be kept by the country. And the Child said :

" Now see, Giraldus, they take a census of these little-brained despairing, and this time the whole people will fall into a panic. They have till now been very patient and very pitiful, and have spent much money in keeping these despairing, but now they will endure it no longer."

I saw that they took the census, and cast it abroad on the device for hearing at a distance. So every man and woman in the country could sit in their homes and hear the enormous number that the despairing had grown to, and now they must see that if nothing could be done either the nation would be swallowed by those who could not be clean or seemly, or else they themselves must increase and so the world be too full again, and more wars come. For by now the despairing were far too numerous to be enclosed and kept separate, the men from the women. The people fell into a panic, and with one voice they called on the physicians to stop the half-wits from breeding. So a law was passed, and by their delicate arts, and painlessly, the physicians made sterile the half-wit men, but they could still live with their wives in pleasure. The women they left alone, as no full-brained man, save perhaps one here and there, would touch them. The Child said it would take years and years and cost so much money that a special tax must be laid on the people, but they would bear it gladly, to be rid of the half-wits in the end. And for those of the families of the half-wits, who were themselves of full brain but would be likely to have half-witted children, a law was passed, and they might not have any children. If they disobeyed and had one, they were treated like the others if they were men, and

if it were a woman her husband was punished severely. And if a man were proved to have got a child on a half-wit woman he was punished as severely as if he had offended a child. The children in the schools were watched even more intently, and if any grew up under-brained they were made sterile. The Child said it would take a hundred years before there were no more growing up half-witted, as in the old days the half-wits had mingled with the poor, and even now there were still some full-brained families with a back taint in them. But in the end it would all be finished, and the nation be clean. And he said :

“ Is this right what they do ? Or is it a cruelty ? ”

“ Child, I cannot see what else they were to do, for either they must do that, or let the half-wits swallow them, or have wars and famines. It seems the smaller cruelty of three, and the children of the half-wits were always ill-kept and miserable.”

As to cruelty of a private nature at this time the Child showed me, it was still there, and wicked things were sometimes done by people of full brain and not only among the half-wits. But the laws, in a hundred years, had changed round completely. For after the great war the laws against stealing and fraud were very severe, and the laws against deliberate cruelty very gentle, so that a man might go to prison for three years if he stole, yet get little punishment for grievously offending a child or deliberately torturing an animal. But now the hearts of the people had grown so pitiful that the mass of them would not endure this way of the law, and the punishments for cruelty had been made exceedingly heavy, and if a man were drunken at the time of his cruelty he was punished for that as well, though drunkenness in itself was not a crime in

the law. But it was always held to be an aggravation of a cruel offence, and in no manner an excuse. So that if a man knew himself to be evil-tempered he was the more careful not to drink to excess and so give his devil full power over him. As the law stood now a man could never be sent to prison for more than two years for any theft or fraud, however heavy, or any accidental and unpremeditated killing, or any other offence that had no taint of deliberate cruelty in it. But if he beat his wife or any other woman he must go to prison for a year; if he offended a child he must go for ten years, and for very horrible ill-usage of an animal he must go for three years. And for a rape, which was the worst offence in law, carried out wholly, he must go to prison for twenty years, nor get any abatement of this sentence.

The Child said that the women had passed this law, and they would not have it altered, and that they had been largely concerned in the whole changing of the standing of cruelty as an offence. For when all is said, women and children, being the weak, must suffer most frequently from cruelties, and when the women came to full power they would not have it. They lightened the penalty for murder, but the penalties for cruelties they made more severe. They knew that they themselves would far rather die than be ill-used, or allow their children to be so, and they argued that killing is the lesser crime. I asked the Child whether these heavy laws against cruelty did not defeat their own ends by lenient judges avoiding them, but he said they were always carried out.

"The men in prison," he said, "are very kindly treated, and allowed to have anything they want, and work to do that interests them, and large

grounds and land, and they can walk where they will. But the judges, even if they are not women, have more pity for the victim than for them, remembering that one is guilty but the other innocent, and they will not speedily let them out again to do more cruelties. And if a man offend a child or commit a rape, or torture an animal he has hard work to prove he is not mad, and so he has if he do a murder in cold blood. The people begin to say a man must be soulless if he do such things. Then, if he be mad, he is not responsible, but must be shut away for the rest of his life. In this age they will protect the weak with severity, and these laws show how pity grows in the hearts of the people. And the old laws were made by men, who thought of nothing but property and life, but these are made by women as well, and they think more of the sufferings of the weak than either property or life. In this matter the women have influenced most of the men, and the others must do with it. Nor would any man in this age dare to rise up and say, 'Cruelty is a small offence,' though he may still say 'thieving is a very bad offence.' But in fact, thieving is not now such a bad offence, as men do not own much property, nor live on their savings or the savings of their fellows. They work till they are old and then their children and the country sustain them. And as you see there are less thieves than there were because work is plenty and men are prouder, and less cruelty because among the few cruel-hearted there is a wholesome fear of being caught."

I saw at this time, too, that the farmers had given up the struggle with the cities, and nearly the whole country was in pasture. They grew just such food as the beasts required, and a root also for the use of

the town dwellers, and green stuff, but very little corn. I was sorry to see this, for I always loved to look at corn, but the Child said :

“ It shall come again, when men have no luxury and no poverty, and have tamed the machine, and brought back the pleasure of labour. But there are three hundred years more until the machine will be down to the size you saw in the second picture. So far it still masters him. Now come, and I will show you the last great World War. It is in the middle of this century, about nine hundred years from the reign of King Stephen.”

So the Child showed me how in this century the Mongolians from the East, who had been civilized for a very long time, and had sat quietly in their country for thousands of years, doing little but make war on each other, now rose up in hordes and came against Europe. They were led thereto by a white man whom I said was Anti-Christ, but the Child would not either deny or affirm. His object, however, was to destroy Christianity and pity in Europe, and he was a greater man in his mind than Napoleon Bonaparte. The Yellow Men had made no great strides in growing their souls, for all their civilization. Their women were not free and they still had many harlots, and their religion was a gloomy one of worshipping dead men. Some of them were very wise and very pitiful, but the mass of them were far behind Europe, and the Child said that if they could over-run it they would put the time back for five hundred years.

There had been rumours of this war for some twenty years, but the League of Nations in Europe could never quite believe in it. But now their spies came to tell them that the ground armies of the Mongolians were moving, and that they had

a great fleet of flying boats with death-engines innumerable which would fall upon Europe when the armies were near the frontier. The League consulted, and though they had still plenty of death-engines they had nothing newer than vapours, and the Mongolians had those also. It seemed that the war must be utterly destructive, and that the Yellow Men might win in the air and then rush into Europe. But the man who represented Germany rose up and said that if the nations would give him sixteen hundred of the most powerful flying boats he would go out against the Yellow Men and destroy them. Germany had four hundred of these very powerful boats, but he would want two thousand altogether. So the League said he should have them, and the spies told him that the ground armies would be up to the frontier in about a month, and that whatever was done must be done against the ground armies and the fleet of flying boats together. So the German went back to his country, for the League was sitting in Geneva.

In Germany (and only twenty men in the whole land knew they were there) were some appalling death-engines which had been invented fifty years before, and made secretly, and kept secret from all the other nations, which was against the rules of the League. But the man who had made them had foreseen a possible war outside Europe, and he would not have every nation in Europe talking about his invention and betraying it to the rest of the world. He knew Germany would never use it except in the League's defence. So he had made two thousand, and had taken them in pieces to a secret place and hidden them, and it took him twenty years. And he told his son about them, and some other men in case his son died suddenly,

and showed them how they were to be used. He died, and later his son also, but there were always a few men in Germany who knew where these death-engines were, and how to use them. So the man who represented Germany in the League called to him the others who knew, and they fetched the engines, and taught four thousand picked men how to work them, and put them in the swift powerful flying boats which the other countries had sent. Then they were ready, and the Mongolians were coming near the frontier. Then Germany called to the League, which was still sitting at Geneva, in great fear but some trust in God, to say that her men were ready to go out against the enemy, and she would know whether the League would have them killed or driven back. Then the League debated, and weighed one cruelty against another, but at last they must decide out of pity for their own people to have the Yellow Men killed. If they were driven back they would come on again, and the war was not of the League's seeking, and for Christianity and pity they would not have the Mongolians in Europe. So they called to Germany to kill them, and Germany replied that now she would send her fleet out to lie in wait, and catch the Mongolian fleet as it began to pass over the ground armies, and destroy them all in one. But Germany said that the armies and fleets of the League which they must hold in reserve, must not advance beyond a certain line, as the first onslaught would be so deadly that she might kill friend and foe together unless the League armies and fleets were safe out of the way. Then she said to the League that if her men failed then they must use vapour and trust God for the issue, and after that this German fleet flew away towards the east and disappeared.

And in the vision I saw how they flew high over the air fleet and ground army of the Yellow Men, and destroyed them with sheets of flame. In every one of these appalling death-engines was a ray of heat which spread out to an enormous extent, and everything that was beneath it melted away, even if it were the hardest metal. That war, the last world war, took six hours only, and then the flying boats of the Germans had passed over all the flying boats of the Mongolians, and over all the hordes waiting to spring upon Europe when the air war should be finished, and destroyed them by fire. And of their own flying boats only some seventy were lost, either by collision through getting out of place in the lines, which befell some of the less skilful of the flyers, or by vapour which a few of the Yellow Men's best boats managed to cast round them before they themselves were burnt. The Germans allowed a small remnant of those that were on the ground to escape that they might tell their tale, and a few of the rear-guard of the fleet were able to turn and flee, but the white man was in one of the foremost of the Mongolian flying boats, and he perished.

Then must the German representative on the League go back to Geneva and tell them that the Mongolian armies and fleet were destroyed, but that the strictest law of the League had been broken by Germany, for she had kept secret a death-engine, its nature and its number. But the League gave Germany a special chair which no other nation might use, carved and with an inscription, and some coins were struck in commemoration, and on her own coins she might put ever after, 'Germany, Saviour of Europe.'

This war took six hours in the fighting, and in all,

the peoples of the countries had only been in fear for some six weeks. The League had not been quite easy about the Yellow Men for twenty years, because of this white man who had been among them, and preaching war, but they had always hoped it would take more than his life-time to rouse an Oriental people. But after this they closed Europe against the East, as they had proved themselves pitiless. They would have no more people from the East in, and those who were in already were sent away. At this time also the League gradually sent away all the dark people who were living in Europe, and sent them back to their own countries, wherever they had come from, and the League said they would have none in Europe but white men, Christians, and pitiful, as the others were behind them in gentleness, and they must go to other countries to riot, and oppress women, and do murders, and make war if they chose. The Jews only they allowed to stay wherever they were in each country, because they were peaceful and gentle and civilized, and kept the laws. This was the last war except for some tribal struggles among the dark people of Africa, for the white men all over the world had abolished it, and no other nation would ever dare again to come against them, and the name of the League was terrible and only spoken in whispers. Yet all it would do was to defend Europe and keep it safe against the pitiless, and keep Europe for Christians until all men had become pitiful and might be brothers. And the Child said that this also should come in time, but that the Christians were thousands of years in advance of others who had not a religion that taught pity, as did our Lord Christ.

This vision of war, with the flaming of the fire,

and the after desolation of hundreds of square miles of country, gave me the biggest thought I ever had of the power of man, but it was not nearly so awesome as the vision of the stars in their courses, for that was the power of God. Beside that, even this last World War was a little thing.

Then the Child made a vision of England as it should be at the beginning of the twenty-second century after Christ, and now the number of the people was lessened considerably. Partly it was because the despairing had died leaving no issue, but also the others had decreased, and the cities were growing smaller. And these English had by no means grown used to the weariness of their machine labour, but the more intelligent they grew the more they hated it. Many of them began to make things with their hands in their leisure time just for the pleasure of making a whole thing that took skill. They found out how to make them from their old books, and if a man had on a pair of shoes that he had made himself he would display them to all and boast of them. At this time also there began to be a shortage of certain kinds of metal, and wherever wood could be used, there it must be, for cheapness, and the rulers ordered forests to be planted, both with quick-growing trees and slow ones, for men were now used to looking ahead for two or three hundred years, and with the peace in Europe and the peace at home, their minds had grown slower and quieter, but no less strong.

Every child now had the same teaching up to the age of fourteen, then, if they wished, they might go on to eighteen, then, if they were to be physicians or wise men of any kind they would go on learning till they were twenty-one. But no child had any better future when he was born than any other

child. If he had a good brain he would later be paid more money than if he left learning at fourteen and went to be a machine-tender. I was surprised at this, as I thought they would in the end try to have everyone, physician or machine-tender, paid the same wage. But the Child said :

“ They are too wise for that now, though at one time many wanted it. But now they know that it is not just to pay an unskilled worker as much as a skilled, and it is long since they would have it that no one was a worker unless he worked with his hands. But even the physicians’ wage is very small compared with the money some of them earned two hundred years ago. Then they were paid by the men and women they cured, now they are paid by the government of all the Guilds, and the wage is unalterable.”

At this time every man and woman in the country must belong to a Guild, or he could not choose what member of his Guild was to represent him, and none but members of Guilds might rule. For a very long time no one who was incapable, or unwilling to work, had had any hand whatever in governing, but at this time they had everybody into the Guilds, and if a man would stand out from perversity he was not persecuted, but he must be like the children and have no voice. A woman, when she married and wished not to work for a while but to care for her young child or children till they went to the school, might still belong to her old Guild, but if a woman had no children she must work certain hours every day, nor ever sit idle at home.

And at this time one of the most curious devices ever made by man was at work, and it had been invented by one who wished to help the physicians.

It was to do with the Third Power, and was like the far-hearing and the far-seeing, but it could transfer the pain of one body to another, as a man transfers his thought with speech to another mind, yet still he retains the thought himself. The physicians could by its use on their own bodies find out more exactly how a man was suffering, and how they should treat him. And if one came saying—"I am in agony"—the physicians could find out if it was so, or whether he were a little over-imaginative. This device did away with the last reproach against women, for now never again could they be called cowards. They need not have children unless they wished, and if they did wish it men could find out how brave they were. Any husband must hire a device at cost and put it on his own body during the fiercest hour of his wife's first labour, and if he did it not he was despised by his fellows. The women, being pitiful and fond of their husbands, would have readily forgiven them this duty, but now men could no longer prove themselves brave in war they must prove it in the women's way, and some of them would keep the device on so long that they fainted away with pain, and the physician, who was always in these cases a woman, must leave the wife and go to the man. The Child said :

"The people grow healthier and healthier, and there is less and less sickness, and in the end the physicians will have nothing to do but bind up accidental wounds and set broken limbs, and see to the women in childbirth, and watch the children in the schools. Then this device will pass away. But women will never again be called cowards, and the sex war is at its end. The men have found out that they are happier when women are not in sub-

jection, and must be vain, foolish and deceitful, and they have found out that they are happier as the equal companions of their wives than lording it over her as a master. Men and women are friends, and for one peaceful marriage in the old days there are ten now. And if you asked one of these people what a harlot is, if he had only learned to the age of fourteen he would not know. There is nothing now in England that men have to be ashamed of, except their own private sins."

"Child, there is even yet a great crowd of poorly paid workers, and though they are very healthy yet they do not have so much pleasure as the others."

"They get all the country can afford to give them. While you have luxury you must have poverty, and there is still luxury, though it is more evenly divided. But now hear what these men begin to say."

And I saw that a strong body of men and women had arisen, and they grew yearly more numerous, who said that the decrease of the number of people should be encouraged, and hurried as much as possible, until the people grew small enough to live on their own land of England. They said that of the machines they would keep only the very best and most useful, and that they would have no more luxuries of any sort or kind, and that nearly everything should be made by hand. They preached that man might choose whether he would go on for ever in thralldom to the Machine, and doing work that was not and never could be a pleasure, or whether he would go back to being a craftsman with skill and joy in his work. They said that no luxury made up for the dreary hours they must spend in tending the machines, and they would keep none of it but books, the hearing machine for

music, and some flying boats for the physicians and to carry fruit and fish. All else they would carry with horses, of which there was still the acorn of a good breed in England, and they would live on their own land and work hard at something interesting. I saw that these people, who preached the deliberate reduction of the numbers (a doctrine which would have been anathema to Christians two hundred years before) were of a very earnest and God-fearing sort, and they had a flaming belief that this mastery the machine had obtained over man was displeasing to God. And they knew very well that the weariness of machine labour was displeasing to man, and that many would rather work with their hands, but so long as there were so many of the people, and they must buy corn from other lands, so must they sell the fruit of the machines, or starve. And at first they were called dreamers and some laughed at them, but they were so earnest, and withal good, gentle men and women, that they drew more and more to them, and in every country in Europe these believers grew in number, and the question came up before the League. The Child said :

“ Now see, Giraldus. This is the beginning of the final mastering of the Machine by man. He abolished its worst cruelties long ago. Now he will abolish its thieving, and he will not let it take from him his joy in his work. This time is three hundred years after the Machine came, and in two hundred years more he will have mastered it. But I will take thee much further on than that, and the next vision is when there is no cruelty in England.”

CHAPTER XXVII

ON the fourth night after, the Child came, and now he told me this vision must be the last, and that when it was past he must leave me. This made me sorrowful, for when he had left me not to return again I must be more lonely than ever, and miss John more, and be in doubt about my faith, and be in my torments of pity with no relief until my death. And though it might be presumptuous, I had grown very fond of the Child of God. His face and his form were dear to me, and his voice, and his wisdom and utter sinlessness, and the way he had of laughing at me, and how he would hold my hand if the vision were very sad (as the rending of the Church of Christ) or ghastly, like the Sack of Magdeburg. But of all this I said nothing, only that I hoped the vision would be a long one.

"We shall be in it for days," he said. "But it shall take no more time out of the life of Giraldus, the Monk of Glastonbury, than any of the others, and that is no time. So come, brother."

He took my hand very gently, and I did not see him make the vision on the wall of the cell, but all in a breath we were in a vision, walking along a road in the sunshine. We were walking as men do, and not as we had heretofore. I said :

"Child, if we walk as men do, never shall we come to any place."

The Child laughed as long as I had ever heard him, and then he said :

"Men walk, and if they continue at it long

enough, then do they come to a place. Brother, thou art lazy."

I knew the Child of God was somehow different in this vision. It was not only that he called me "Brother," which he was not wont to do, but he was singing in a small, low voice, very sweetly, and though he had never before seemed unhappy, yet now he seemed happier. He had put off his radiance also, and he had the appearance of a lovely human boy in a white tunic, with shoes on his feet, and a wallet hanging from his belt. And every now and then he danced a little with his feet, as a boy might do if he were so happy he knew not what to be at. I said :

"Child of God, why are you so happy?"

"If I must pass through the circle of man I cannot be easy until I come to the place where cruelty is over. How, think you, can a spirit like to see the Sack of Magdeburg? I am not God, but I am of God, and all things He hates, I hate."

I was struck silent by this, and must remember, and ponder. In all the visions, whether they were beautiful, sorrowful, or ghastly, the Child's face had changed in no way that a man could notice. He would laugh, but if he were not laughing or smiling at me his face was always the same—grave, wise, and ever lovely. Without any shrinking or shutting of the eyes he had stood with me in Magdeburg, and yet I knew he must hate evil, being purely good; and cruelty, as the worst evil, he must hate the most. So then I felt sorry that because of my clamouring at the gate of heaven he must come into man's circle with the Monk Giraldus, and I said so. He said :

"There have been many horrible things, and one lovely thing that never left me."

I asked what this might be, thinking it was something he had within himself.

"Thy soul, Giraldus. And—'I may love thee, I may love thee, for thou art a man, and I am only—' what am I?"

And with that he began to dance and sing again, and laugh at me. But I was amazed, and said:

"Child, you cannot love a man still in his body of a beast."

"But God can. God is love. I am one of the Children of God, and I love thee very well, for all thou art such a proud Norman. And in this vision thou art Brother Giraldus, and I am thy little acolyte. Brother, wilt thou have the Child of God for thy little acolyte?"

Then he began to dance round and round me, singing very sweetly, and I stood still in a daze, neither could I understand him at all. So he became very sober, and walked quietly at my side, and in a grave, solemn voice he said:

"This is England, and it is two thousand years from the seventh year of the reign of King Stephen."

But my wits were not well together again, and all I could say was: "Child, it cannot be England, as it is much too quiet. It is another land where there are no people."

Yet, as I saw, there must be people, as there was a road. It was not a hard road, either black and shiny, or white and dull. It was a soft dirt road such as I had not seen for hundreds of years. It had broad grass sides where a man might ride or cattle might feed by the way, and there were green hedges with a wild rose growing here and there. And it was quiet. I heard a cow low, and a dog bark, and the small wind in my ears. Those, besides the sweet, low singing of the Child, and the

little noise our feet made on the road, were all the sounds I heard. So I thought it could not be England.

"It is England," said the Child. "Noise has passed away."

"And all the machines?"

"No, there is one."

I heard a soft droning hum, like the noise of a huge bee, and over our heads, not very high up, passed a big flying boat.

"That will be a fruit boat or a boat with fish from the sea going to one of the cities."

"Oh, Child, must they still have cities?"

"They are not like the old ones. But in every shire there must be a city where the physicians live, and the Guild officers, and where the people meet once in the year for their big games. But they are not like the machine cities, as you shall see. Giraldus, where is thy monk's habit become?"

I looked at myself, which I had not done before, being amazed with everything, and found that my monk's habit was gone, and that I was dressed in a tunic like the Child's and shoes like his, and that my legs were bare from the knees down, but higher up covered decently in a pair of breeches. But I thought it unseemly that a monk should walk thus in England with bare legs and no long robe, and I was glad the people would not be able to see me. The Child answered my thought, as he did sometimes, and he said:

"But they will all be able to see thee, and me. We are a man and a boy, and we walk as men do. And never do these people wear any hosen but in the winter when the cold winds blow. And what would the Abbot say if he could see thee now?"

"Child, for long since I have tried not to think of

what the Abbot would say to anything. Indeed, I believe his power of speech would leave him. But if we are a man and a boy in this time we shall have to work. Or I must, and thou wilt have to go to school with the others."

"No, it is holiday time when the children help with the hay harvest and the corn harvest. Never do they learn in the harvest times, for they must be at home. And thou shalt work if any come thy way."

"But I can do nothing but write, and they said they would still keep the writing machines so that they could have many books to read."

"They have, and thou art not a writer."

"What am I, then?"

"Brother Giraldus, a priest."

"Child, if I am Brother I must still be a monk."

"No, they call the priests Brother and Sister in this time that now is. They will call none but God, Father. And they will call none Mother, save the Mother of our Lord Christ."

"Then there are now women who are priests?"

"There are many, and they advise and console the women, and teach the maids. But thou, Giraldus, must teach the boys, and as I am now a boy thou shalt teach me."

"Child, I am not fit to teach even any human being, and all these people who are in the world now must be better and wiser than I am, and more able to teach the children."

"Some of them are wiser. But I have not brought you to the time when all men have souls like Giraldus. That time is far away. But now they will know Giraldus, and what he is. And I am Herluin, the acolyte."

This, his taking of my own Norman name,

touched me as much as anything the Child had done for me, and I did not know how to thank him for it. He laughed, and bade me look down the road and see what came. I looked, and saw a big wagon drawn by horses, all dark browns, and these horses (as I saw when we were up to them) were the noblest I had seen in any age. They were of the huge breed which England perfected long and long before this time, and they pulled very proudly, with their coats shining like silk, and long manes and tails. At one time there was a custom in England of cutting some horses' tails off so that they could not beat away the flies, and it was a minor cruelty I hated very much. But all the horses I saw in this vision (and I saw thousands) had only the hair of the tail cut, to make it of an orderly appearance, and for the rest it was as God made it.

"Child, the horses are far more beautiful than any machine, but they will take a long time to come to any place."

"There is no hurry. None ever hurries now unless he must, and if he must then he will go in one of the physicians' flying boats, and leap across England in half an hour. But these people are too wise to think speed a good thing in itself."

"Child, with this quietness and this lack of hurrying my heart is eased like a bow string let down. In England during the machine age I was never happy, and if I had had to live then I must have died. But this is so blessed and peaceful I might be in Glastonbury."

The great brown horses came slowly on, and presently the first pair were abreast of us. The wagoner was sitting on the shaft, seeming asleep, but suddenly he opened his eyes and saw us, and it appeared to be a young and sturdy lad, dressed in a

green tunic with orange flowers worked on it in wool, and having his hair neither long nor very short, but after the custom of the time before the rending of the Church. It was dark hair, very thick and shining like the coats of his horses. His face was nut-brown with sunshine, and he had brown eyes, very large and crystal clear, and not like a boy's eyes. But still I must think him a boy as he was dressed like myself. He jumped off the shaft and called to his horses to stop, and then he went down on his knees in the grass by the side of the road and asked me to pray him a blessing. These were his words :

"Pray me a blessing, Brother."

Though the Child had not touched my ears I understood his language, but I was so fore-wandered that I blessed him in Latin. He took it with some surprise, but thankfully, and rose up laughing.

"Brother, where were you at school?" he asked.

"He comes from Glastonbury," said the Child of God.

"Glastonbury," said the wagoner, and I thought he looked at me wistfully. "I shall go some day. I have been to Durham twice but to Glastonbury never. But there must be some strange masters in Taunton School. Good-bye, Brother. Good-bye, little Friend."

He called to his horses, and sat himself again on the shaft, and with a grave and dignified gesture of his hand which the Child returned, he passed on and the wagon rumbled gently away. I said :

"Why did he ask me where I went to school?"

"She asked you because she thought your way of uttering Latin very unusual. They do not speak it that way now. And she must have been

through the Second School, to know any Latin, and I should think she drives that wagon to help someone else. It is unskilled work."

"Was that a woman, then? Do they all dress the same way now?"

"Why not? The clothes the women wore in the day time after the great war were the natural, seemly, and well-looking way of covering the human form. Now the men do it too, because sex-hatred and contempt and fear are dead. They are all human beings and they all dress alike. Why not?"

"I cannot be certain of telling a woman from a boy."

"Then, Brother Giraldus, thou art singularly lacking in discernment. A woman's voice and eyes are very different from a boy's."

"Child, I know, and I think I may tell them apart, now I know they are all dressed alike. But then is women's love of many clothes and adornment and precious stones clean passed away?"

"None of the unlearned would know what a precious stone was, and they are always puzzled with the woman whose price was above rubies. They would say: 'A woman above five fields of corn or a very excellent horse.' And as to the love of adornment, it was never natural and it came from the subjection of women when they must make themselves pleasing to men. Now they know they are pleasing, but the men, being the male animals, are never quite so sure. They must strut about like the cocks in the mating-time, and play very well in the games, and show off their great strength. But the women stay quiet and do nothing to charm the men, which is the natural and proper way."

" And then why did she call you ' little Friend ? ' "

" She cannot know I am older than time, when I look like a boy. I am the boy, Herluin, in this vision."

" Yes, but why ' Friend ? ' Do they all belong to the sect of the heretics that leap straight into the Tree of Life ? "

" There are no sects, and no heretics, and all are Christians. The wound in the Church of Christ is healed. And if they do not know a man or a woman's name they say ' Friend,' but a priest they will call ' Brother ' or ' Sister ' and there are not many that will pass one in the road without asking for a blessing."

" And then she said, not ' Bless me,' but ' Pray me a blessing.' "

" And so they will if they come to you to confess and have your advice. They will say, ' Brother, pray that I be absolved.' They do not believe that a bad priest has any power at all to do anything, but they will believe that a good priest has the ear of our Lord Christ. The priesthood, as it used to be, is clean passed away. And yet few will pass a priest now and not ask for a blessing. They believe it does them good, and will help them in their next temptation."

" And then she said she had been to Durham, and not Glastonbury, as if both were pilgrimages."

" They are. Durham in the North and Glastonbury in the South. And we will go first to Durham. and then to Glastonbury."

" What is there at Durham ? "

" There is a Great Church, and the only one of the old great Churches they could afford to keep. They chose it because it is very lovely, and founded on a rock."

" Ah, Child ! Are all the beautiful churches of England passed away ? "

" All but that one. Great churches are a luxury, and if you will have thousands of men in a country doing nothing but prop up churches you will have other men in poverty. They must all do useful work now. But they kept Durham, and the proudest set of men in England are those they call the Durham Builders. They have a special dress, and their feet hardly touch the ground. And their leader, who thinks out the strains and the structure, is a woman. They will always say that she sleeps in the great church lest it call out for her in the night, and she not be there. And they have tended it so carefully all these years, replacing stones where they seemed likely to fail, that now it is like a man after seven years, who is the same man to look at, but no part of his body is the same, and all changed."

But I was thinking we were in the north of England, and I said : " Child, shall we go past my old home where my father's great castle used to be ? "

" If you desire it we will go that way. But you will be hard set to find the place for the valley is all forested and the corn lands and pasture are gone. We might find some mounds in the woods."

" Child, you know all, and can tell me where the castle stood."

" No, I am little Herluin the acolyte, and I know nothing of Norman castles."

And with that, and his laughter, a great rush of the strangeness of the visions came over me and I remembered how I had stood in my mother's chamber in the castle, looking at myself, and the Child had been with me. Now (for I was sure he would help me to find it) I should stand in the same

place again, and it was two thousand and forty years after. But I drew a little feeling of certainty and firmness from thinking that if the children learned any history of England at all they must begin with the Norman Conquest. The Child said, in a meek, drawling voice as if he had been repeating a lesson :

"William the Conqueror, 1066, beat Harold the Saxon at Senlac fight. Yes, surely, Brother, if I tell them you are a Norman they will come crowding round as if you were a lion. But then they would not believe that even a Norman could lie away in his coffin for two thousand years and spring from it whole and sound and quite young. In this vision you must be an Englishman, and half descended from the Saxons."

"Child, I do not see how they ever have time in their schooling to learn the history they must."

"There has been no history in Europe since the passing of the machine age. If a country is happy, it has none."

"Yet there was much before the machine age, and in it."

"Yes," said the Child, with a sudden soberness, "and it makes them ashamed. No child in this age will ever enjoy his history lessons. Now listen, here rides a troop."

We heard behind us a sound of many hoofs, and much laughter and shouting in children's voices, then they came round a corner and were upon us. But though there were more than twenty of them and all riding recklessly on ponies which seemed not too well broken, they divided into two packs when they saw us and shot past on the grass at the sides of the road. They then all got off the ponies and knelt down, and clamoured for a blessing like a

flock of starlings. One boy's pony was less well broken even than the others, and he could not hold it kneeling, so he shouted to me to know if he might take his blessing standing up. I said yes, and then they were all very quiet, except for the one bad pony that would rear whatever the boy might do, and I blessed them, in their own language this time, for I had become a little shy of my Latin. Then they thanked me and sprang on to the ponies again, and were off at a thunderous gallop all except one young girl who said she would walk along with us, and lead her pony. I was much puzzled by this time to know how they all knew I was one of their priests, but I did not like to ask the Child before the young girl, in case she thought me a madman, and the blessing void. But the Child took my hand, having read my thought, and he guided it to the front part of my left shoulder. I felt a roughness, and looked, and saw a cross, not very large, embroidered in red wool.

"There is one on the back of that shoulder also, and now thou art a Crusader," he whispered.

I thought it very kind of the Child of God to have me be a priest in this last vision, and bless children, and I prayed that in no way might I bring the smallest shame on the cross I was wearing. Presently the young girl said :

"Brother, what is your name ? "

"Giraldus."

"And where from ? "

"Glastonbury."

Then I thought she also looked a little wistful, like the young wagoner, and she said she had not been to Glastonbury but would go some day, and she told me she was going with her parents to Durham for the feast of St. John, to see the big

Horse Fair and worship in the Great Church. She told me they were both potters and very good craftsmen, that she had a brother of eleven years who would work tilling the land, but that she would be a potter and even now could throw a pot that did not come out greatly bigger one side than the other. She said she was glad school was done with and the long summer holidays come, and she had great hopes of winning the high leap for girls under fourteen years at the county games.

"For you see, Brother, I am thirteen and a half and very big and strong in the leg, and at the school games no girl could beat me, so unless there is a stranger there I must be the best in the county games. Friend, what is your name?" she asked the Child of God.

"Herluin."

"Just only Herluin?"

"Herluin Norman then, and the Brother is called Giraldus Saxon."

And with that the Child fell into a fit of laughter, but indeed I thought he might have let me be the Norman and taken the Saxon himself. And they would have sounded better the other way round, for Giraldus Saxon is a very hissing name.

"Where are you going, Herluin?" the young girl asked.

"To Durham for the feast of St. John."

"I wish I might go along with you all the way, but I must go home first. Where is your pack-pony?"

"We have lost it," said the Child.

"Herluin, that cannot be true."

"Then we never had it. Brother, did we ever have a pack-pony? And if we did, where is it?"

"It is your work to see to the pack-pony, and not his," said the young girl gravely. "That is, if, as I suppose, you are travelling with him as his acolyte."

"Why, I am, and I will obtain a pack-pony and also a pack to put on it, for we seem to have come on this pilgrimage very ill-prepared."

"But where have you come from?"

"From Glastonbury, as Brother Giraldus told you."

"Then you must have come as far as this in a flying boat, for you could not have walked all the way from Glastonbury without a pack-pony."

"That must have been how we came," said the Child, and he began to laugh again. The young girl laughed too, but she told me she did not think I was greatly blessed in my acolyte, as he was very careless and also inclining towards untruthfulness. Yet it was all said in kindness and jest, and she offered the Child to ride on her pony if he were tired, and said that even if he were not he could take it and gallop after the other children, and she would walk with me as far as the Rest House. But the Child thanked her, and refused the pony, and then he said :

"Brother, are you tired with walking as men walk? Will you have the pony?"

But I said I would rather walk with them, as we were, and I was not tired in the body, only amazed and confused in spirit. For I knew, without being told, that in this world I had come into, everyone, and not only the unthinking children, would love me and respect me for what I was, and in the world I had left they had to know me very well before I could be loved, and all my childhood I had been beaten. And because of this change, which I

felt very deeply, a tear fell down into the dust of the road, and another followed it.

"Friend," said the Child, "take the pony and ride after the others, and at the Rest House we shall see you again."

So the young girl took the pony and mounted it, and when its fore legs were down on the ground again she made off at full gallop as had all the others, and the Child and I were left alone. He said :

"Giraldus, why do you weep ? "

"Child, you know that I weep for the strangeness of this world where I shall not be beaten for what I am. I know that if I called out in this England as it now is—'I am a man with the soul of a woman'—they would say—'Then the better priest thou shalt be.' But oh, Child, we have been beaten in other times. For all of them my tears fall, and for my sister who in King Stephen's reign must be a nun—for all of them who shall be beaten for what they are, and not for what they do."

"Giraldus, so long as they are beaten for what they are, so long shall they, the most of them, do ill. When the world leaves beating them for what they are then shall they, the most of them, do as well as thee, and as thy twin-sister, the nun. Surely both of you are very precious to our Lord Christ, and in this time thou art precious to men. So leave weeping, and laying the dust with thy tears, and let us on to the Rest House."

We walked on for another mile, or it might be a little more, until we came to an open fence of wood instead of the green hedge. Within we saw a grass field with many ponies grazing in it, and a little yard to drive them into when they must be caught, and behind the yard a long, low house built of logs. Behind this again was another much bigger building,

and the Child said it was a farm house, but that the small one was the Rest House. When we came to it there was a turmoil of children, all turning out their packs and throwing things about the floor, until suddenly and as it seemed for no reason, they all rose up like a flight of birds and went to the farm to obtain food for the ponies. The grass in the field was not sufficient, and they must have a small feed besides. So I could see the Rest House, and it was nothing but two big rooms, one for men and the other for women, with a little kitchen place in between. The beds were hard wooden shelves built on to the walls in tiers, and the pallets which the children had started to take from a cupboard were very thin and hard also. I had seen the luxury of many ages, and the soft sleeping and pleasant lying of even the poorer in the old times, and these hard wooden shelves and thin pallets made me understand that indeed luxury had passed away. I asked the Child if all the beds were like these shelves.

"No, there are moveable beds, but they must all be made of wood because they will not do any working of iron unless it is necessary. The pallets would be a little thicker than these, but not much. The old and the sick have wood and cord beds, but the young people are now so hardy and healthy that they do not want luxury, even if they could have it without the machines and a class of very poor."

"What is the greatest luxury the richest man among them can buy?"

"He could have a tunic made of silk, and a superb horse to ride, and he could drink French wine instead of the ale the people all drink. Also he could buy more pictures to hang on his walls.

But the man in this country who is paid the least for his work can have his tunic of sound linen or warm wool, and his horse or pony to carry him, and ale to drink and good shoes to wear, and can hear the same music as the richest, and read the same books for very little price if he will fetch them from the City Hall. And in that Hall he can look at pictures if he love them, for the Guilds buy them. So you see there is very little difference. Come, we will go to the farm now."

We went to the farm house and the Child told me to bless the house as I went in, and all those inside that I met. So I did, and was presently very hospitably entertained by the householder and his wife, and his three young children who served us, but the other children, when they had obtained such foods as they wanted to add to that which they carried, must go away to the Rest House to cook it and eat it. And I found next morning when we were to go away, that the children returning from school to their homes paid for what they had had in clamour and much confusion of numbering, but that neither I nor the Child were to pay anything, as it was not the custom to charge priests for entertainment. They were never paid any wages for their ministrations, as the people all thought it was not Christian to pay a man for devoting himself to God, but the people gave them all they wanted, and as I found, more than they desired. For when the Child asked the farmer for a pack-pony he took us out to see two of his best riding horses, and he offered us those, with their saddles and bridles and all equipment, as he said that for years he had given nothing to a priest except the usual offering in his church. And I would not have taken these beautiful horses, which he had bred to sell, but the Child

said we would have them, and the farmer thanked us for taking them. He gave us also coats to keep the rain out, and changes of linen, and all necessities down to a razor for me, and never did he ask why it was we had nothing with us. And as for the razor I knew not well what to do with it, unless I used it to cut my throat, for it was years since I had shaved myself. But the Child laughed and said he would help me, and he took me into a room where there was a mirror. And there for the first time in sixteen years I saw my own face, and it was very strange to me.

"Thy tonsure is gone," said the Child. "Thou canst not walk in this time with a tonsure, as they do not use it, and none of them ever grow bald. They think it ugly and unseemly."

I saw that my hair was very thick and curly, and covered all my head as it had done when I was a boy.

"Child," I said, "in former times men must grow bald whether they would or no, and my father was nearly as bald as an egg when I left him, though still a strong man."

"But they do not now, as they wear neither heavy helmets nor any head-cover unless it be raining, and of every part of their bodies they take the greatest care, so that it may be healthy and as beautiful as it can be. And thou, Brother Giraldu, art very beautiful after the manner of men."

But all I could tell was that my face was strange to me, and had I seen it on another man I should have said: "There is a man with a sorrow." And yet the face I saw in the glass was not deeply lined, and it looked quite young but for the eyes. And I remembered that in the old days even my face had been made a reproach to me, after my voice had deepened and I was no longer a child, because all

said it was too comely for a man. But as I stared at this face of a stranger and thought thus, the Child said :

“ In this age thy beauty shall be no reproach, no, but they shall all love it and rejoice in it.”

After we had eaten, the householder took us out to a great barn he had, built of logs like all the rest, and with a big fireplace at one end where he could have a fire of logs if it were cold. But of other comfort there was none, only hard wooden benches to sit on. But presently a child brought me a chair made of linen and wood, very easy, so I was to sit in that, but the others would all sit on the benches. The children from the Rest House came pouring and tumbling in, shouting and laughing, and first they must all crowd round the farmer to ask what music there was to be that night. He said, only dance music by one of the small Companies of London musicians, for that night neither of the Big Companies were playing, nor any choir singing. And he said that it would not be for an hour. So he drew out some mats for them, and they all had wrestling games, the boys with the boys, and the girls with the girls, until they were tired. Then they would all act in a mumming, but I never came near understanding what it was about, for there was a boy, one of the larger ones and as the Child told me, in the Second School, who had a face he could contort and twist about so strangely that whenever I looked at him I must laugh and take no notice of the others. The Child sent for him to speak with me and he came gladly, and sat on the floor by my chair, and he told me he was to be a forester, but besides that he would write books for people to read for a pastime, and so he wanted to go through the Second School. I asked what the foresters did, and

he looked a little surprised, as if I might have known, but he told me they cared for the trees, and cut down the big ones and planted little ones, and sawed up logs and sent them where they were needed in big wagons. I remembered that one of the most dreadful noises in the old days had been the crying out of wood sawed by a machine, so I asked him if they used it. But he, again looking surprised, said that they used always the big saw that two men handled together. And that the women foresters did the light sawing and the planting, but the heavy work was done by men. He said also, with one eye lifting at the farmer, who was with us, that the foresters were without doubt the most important Guild in the country, because wood was so much used.

"No," said the farmer, "you are forgetting the Durham Builders. And even after them there are the farmers and labourers who grow the corn and the cattle. I may do wanting a new wagon or a new bed, but I cannot do wanting bread, and a little meat, and milk for my children, and I must have them every day. The only thing the foresters excel in is silence."

"Why is that?" I asked the boy, and he said he did not know why it was, but all those who lived among the trees grew silent, and if they were taken from them they were miserable. He himself had been brought up in a forest, and his school times were not very pleasant to him, but as he wished to write books he must go through with it. He told me about a great forester poet who had lived about three hundred years before, and he had been so silent he was almost dumb, but he had been a very good man and able both with the axe and the pen.

"We listen to the trees," said the boy, and that was the nearest he could get to an explanation of this silence.

"But then, if you are going to live in the forest, in silence, and as I suppose in a very small company, your power of making others laugh will be wasted."

"Brother, that is a very small part of me, and I must have the trees, neither could I live making others laugh in a weaving place."

Soon afterwards the music for the dancing started, and I could not see where it came from, but it filled the barn with its sweetness. They all rose up to dance, the children, and the labourers both men and women who were there, and the householder and his wife. The dancing at first was slow and graceful, and the dancers never did more than hold hands. They did not, as in former days, clutch each others bodies.

Then the melody changed to a bright and merry one, and two of the children, a boy and a girl, stepped out to dance alone, and the others watched. And their feet twinkled in an endless variety of very quick steps so that I could not follow them, and they leaped high in the air, and sometimes they clapped their hands, and sometimes stamped their feet, and when the music ended they were perfectly together on the beat, but very hot. And the others applauded them and said they had danced well and might win a prize at the county games. Then the slow music started again and those two children went outside the barn to cool themselves in the air, but all the others danced, and the Child of God talked to me. He said :

"You see, Giraldus, this people is very strong in the body, and they will have some dances that show

off their strength and quickness of movement. And then they will have some that are slow and graceful and have sweet melodies in them. But never will they have the touching dances of the old days, for they would think them a foolish running into temptation. This people always desires to live in a Christian and pure way, and they will make it as easy as possible, not as difficult. If they fail, as they do sometimes, they are very much ashamed for the most part. And their failures are sometimes from carelessness or the strength of youth, but more often they are from falling into the grip of an intolerable love-passion, and there are adulterers among them, for they have no divorce. Their moral rulings are rigid, yet they are a much purer people than were here in the old days when the moral rulings were slack. They are very brave and will endure far more of the torment of love unsatisfied before they will give in. But unhappiness and sometimes sin there is still, for there is no way of preventing these real love-passions, and they will not always come to two who are able to marry. These people, though, say that divorce is no remedy, and that on the whole they are strong enough and brave enough to do without it. Neither need any man or woman fear to be deceived, for they will not be secret if they have sinned, but go away together and live in misery and happiness, with their faces turned from Christ but towards each other."

"But then, Child, what if they later repent and would turn again to their own husbands and wives?"

"Well, the wronged ones need not have them back, and if they will they may all live lonely for the rest of their lives. But the priests will always

urge them to forgive, because no man is perfect, nor can say 'I am better than thee, for I do not thy sins.' But whatever they do, none of them can marry again, and for no reason, ever, is there any divorce."

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN the morning we thanked the householder and rode away northwards, and though many of the children rode out with us, by the afternoon all were dispersed except the boy who would be a forester. When the sun was getting low we entered his forest, and the Child said we should be in it for a day, and could not this night go more than a fifth of the way across it, as it was one of the biggest in England.

“It is the biggest of all save the New Forest,” said the boy proudly, for it was his forest where he would work all his days. The Child was riding on my other hand and he said to me quietly :

“That one he speaks of is King William’s forest, which has been enormously increased since they started growing the trees again, and after two thousand years and a hundred they still call it ‘the New.’”

With this thought, that they would call King William’s New Forest the New Forest for ever, and the silence of the trees through which we rode, I fell into a musing. The boy fell silent also, and the Child of God, and our horses’ feet made little noise, as we rode on the grass at the side of the road, and it was a very still, quiet evening, with the sun slanting through the trees. It was like being in a dream. And it might have been an hour after that the boy said :

“Brother, my home is down this track, and will

you and Herluin come to our house? It is quite a long way to the next one that is on the road."

I said we would go with him gladly, and we rode with him to the clearing where his home stood. We found there his father and his mother and his sister, who was a woman grown, and they received my blessings and gave us good entertainment, but they were the most silent people ever, and unless they must speak they did not. But they seemed very happy and peaceful, all foresters, and the young woman was presently to marry another forester when they had built themselves a house wherein to live. And that was all they told me of themselves, but they gave me a best chair, which was always one of those made with linen and wood, and after we had eaten they made to work their hearing machine. None had told me what it was to be, though the Child had said that every morning one spoke from London and told the people what music would be played in the evening. But these foresters said nothing, only suddenly filled their house with music. And it was one of the Big Companies of London Musicians, with a splendid and magnificent choir, and the music was the Hymn of Praise by the man Beethoven, so I heard it again, and hundreds of years later, in a little house in a forest. This was strange to me and very wonderful, and I cannot describe with the pen what I felt when I heard for the second time that music that was like roaring sweet flames. And when I heard it before it had been to soothe my ears after hearing the hideous noise that had come upon the world with the machines, but when I heard it again I knew all England and all Europe was as still as this forest, and as peaceful.

I sat listening in idleness, and so did the Child

of God, but the foresters were all employed. The mother and the daughter were working linen tunics with wool patterns, the boy was sewing himself a pair of breeches which his mother had made ready for him, and the father was making wool hosen for the winter with long wooden pins. So I saw that all these people must make their own clothes, and that from others they would get nothing but the woven linen and the skeins of wool. Later the Child told me that in the schools every child, whether boy or girl, was taught to prepare food, and sew, and twist the wool cunningly over the wooden pins to make the hosen, and that at fourteen, when they left the First School, they were able for all these things and no longer need their parents do everything for them.

Next morning we rose early and would go on our way, but first I must pray a blessing on all of them, and when I had done it and the boy had gone to fetch our horses, the forester woman, who was the most silent of all, called me and the Child of God within the house again.

"Herluin," she said, "why does the Brother look so sad, and what are the marks on his right hand?"

None other had noticed either my sadness or the marks, and I saw that these people who lived in the forest and spoke nothing, yet saw and thought the more. The Child said:

"He is sad because God has sent him many sorrowful visions, and the marks on his hand are the touch of our Lord Christ."

"I knew he was a man set apart," she said, and she kneeled to kiss the scars on my hand. "And thou, Herluin, art not a human child. May I tell the others?"

"No. Those who have eyes to see, let them see."

"Then, Child, give me thy blessing also."

So he did, and afterwards I asked her how she had eyes more than the others ; she said :

"It may be from living in quietness, and praying. It may be from the trees. I do not know. But I have always seen more things than the others, and now I feel sorry for them, that they do not know you and the Child."

After that she spoke no more, and soon we were on our way. But of all those I met in this vision only that one forester woman knew that the Child was not human, and that I was a man set apart, and some time afterwards I asked him why only she, who was no priest, but a woman doing her daily work, and married, should have had eyes to see. The Child said :

"It is a gift of spiritual sight, neither is it in itself connected with holiness of mind or life. But that woman, with living silently among the trees, and with prayer, has developed it from the seed that must always have been in her till it is a great strong flower. She sees many things in that forest that the others do not, and she may have seen another Child like me."

Now on this morning as we rode, I had proof enough that cruelty had passed away from England, for we met a little maid riding alone to the southward, and she told us she had sixty miles to go and was to spend her holidays with her grandmother. She was not above eight years of age, and when we met her, to amuse herself perhaps, she was riding with her face set towards her pony's tail. And this pony, for a marvel, was properly broken, and jogged along the road not caring how his little burden sat, nor whether he was guided or left free. But when

she heard us coming she twisted round, and saw it was a priest, so she slid off with a blush and a little confusion, and kneeled down for her blessing. And when she had it she told us where she was going, and of her grandmother who was a farmer, and how she knew the way as well as anyone, and would come there in four or five days. Then she said good-bye and left us, sitting very straight and soberly, with her little pack bumping and jumping behind the saddle. The Child said :

"That little maid is safer from injury than a Hercules, and in all this land there is no one that will not help her on her way. And her mother would no more think of sending anyone with her, save perhaps for companionship, than she would send one with her husband to protect him. In England now, all weak things are safe."

"Child, I see. And would that I could forget the little maid in Stephen's reign."

But I could not, for a long while, and we rode silent through the big trees. Then we met two others coming towards us, and these were a man and a woman, walking handfasted, and leading behind them a pack-pony. And these two were the fairest I ever saw in this vision, where many were fair. They were both tall and very strong, and where most of the people at this time had light brown hair, these two were different and in contrast to each other, for the woman was pale in colouring with hair like corn and very blue eyes, but the man was dark-eyed and his hair was nearly black. And he was dressed in a russet tunic, but hers was blue like her eyes. These two in their beauty, which was different but equal, made me think of the souls standing at the feet of God, and then of the old story of Adam and Eve, created

perfect in God's image. For the loveliness of this pair, walking handfasted through the great forest, there is no description. But at that time I had only a glimpse of them, for though they both looked up at me then they turned away their eyes, neither asked for a blessing, nor stopped, but went swiftly past. I was sorry, as I would like to have seen more of them, and I said to the Child :

" I wish they were not unbelievers, or I wish they had not both been so beautiful."

But he said : " They are not unbelievers. They are unhappy, and thou, Giraldus, must have them back and speak to them."

" Child, what am I to say to them, except that the sight of them rejoices my eyes ? "

" Why, you must not say that, but rebuke them harshly, and say that their sin has made them hideous in God's sight."

" Ah, Child, can those two be sinners ? "

" They are. The woman has left her husband to go with the man. And now I will fetch them back so that thou, the priest, may admonish them."

" They will not come."

" They will come," said the Child. " They are both Christians."

So he rode after them, and they turned and came back with him instantly. And I stood on the ground so as not to be looking down on them, and the Child of God took our horses and led them up the road. But when I had these two before me I felt myself the sorriest priest ever, for I knew not what to say to them. They were both so lovely, and so young, and in neither of their faces was a taint of lasciviousness or vice, only a grave and noble kind of honesty. And I knew they loved each other with the love that comes not to all, and sud-

denly both their faces went away from my sight, and I saw the face of John de Crespigny, and remembered he was dead, and I thought how sorely I should miss him when the visions were ended, and I should be alone. And I remembered how on the night when he died I had told the Child that I loved him more than could our Lord Christ. And I knew that if I had walked in the world with John, and we had come to a cross-roads, and he had said—'Come, Herluin, now we will take this path'—I might have gone with him, though my devoir lay at the end of the other road. So who was I to rebuke these two, and tell them they must leave each other? So I looked at them, and said nothing. But at last the woman burst out, not angrily, but with a kind of urgency,

"Brother, if you would speak to us, then speak, but if not, let us go on. And do not look at us like that."

But still I could say nothing priestly, only :

"Friend, I am acquainted with love, and I know not what to say."

Then the man said, as if he were at his wit's end with struggle and grief,

"Brother, what shall we do?"

So I said :

"If you are Christians, in the end you must choose our Lord Christ, and turn from each other, and perhaps it is better to do it early than late. And now leave holding each other's hands, for I will not bless your sin, but you yourselves I will bless, if you will."

They were amazed and said nothing, but kneeled down apart from each other, and I blessed them both and left them. Then I went after the Child and mounted on my horse again, and I said to him :

"Child, I am the sorriest priest ever, and more fitted to be a soldier than a priest, for I have blessed them and let them go on, neither rebuked them at all."

But he said: "No, for thy gentleness and thy blessing has parted them, and she will turn and go home, and he will go on. It is four years since they met at Durham on the Feast of St. John, and he moved further south to be near her. For four years they have endured without sin, and thou hast parted them at the beginning of their journey. So she will go home as she came out, and they will both live in misery, yet it is not so great as the misery of Christians who must live with their faces turned from our Lord Christ. And in the end they shall be together."

"Child, they were made for each other, and their loveliness and sorrow hurts me in my heart, so tell me about this people that is now in England that I may forget them for a little."

So he began, and he told me so many things about their ways and customs and ruling that I cannot now put them all down. He said they were in number, in England and Scotland, about eight million, which number had varied very little for eight hundred years, and that that did not mean the same small number of workers as it would have in the old days. Everyone worked except the very old, the women in bearing or with young children, those who had been hurt in an accident, and the children who must go to school. If a woman had young children to care for she need not work, but the care of a house was not considered work at all, and a whole family would do it in turn. Their houses were so bare that there was little to clean, and the people had long given up wasting time in

the preparation of luxurious food. The baking of the bread was the hardest task and the longest, but they would do it cheerfully in addition to their other work. In the cities they had big bake-houses, and these bakers, who must bake for many, were workers and had a Guild. They ate very moderately for the most part, but they must have fruit all the year round, and it was brought in flying boats and unloaded in certain places, and the people must fetch it with horses. In this forest, the Child told me, there was a big cleared place where the fish and fruit boats could come down to earth.

They had, on the mean, five physicians to each county, three women and two men, who must watch the children in the schools, and fly in case of need to fetch in men who had been hurt, or women who were near their time, and bring them into the cities to be cared for. There were certain centres for the speaking cord, which was a very old and useful invention, and if any were hurt a messenger must be sent on a swift horse to the centre to speak with the physician in the city. Then the physician must take his flying boat and come far faster than the wind. And if a man heard by the speaking cord that his brother or his son was dangerously hurt in another part of the country, then he might borrow a physician's flying boat and leap to his side. If there was hurry, then they would hurry, but if there was none, then they would walk or ride, and all the things that were imperishable would be sent on wagons drawn by horses, or in horse-drawn boats along the old water-ways. They had a few machines for farm labour, but they must all be horse-drawn. Then they had their devices for the Third Power, which was still used for lighting the towns, and was made by the wind and the

sea. And they had the Third Power for the hearing machines and some other things. And the parts of all flying boats and the farm machines and the devices for the Third Power must still be made with machines and not by hand. Also they still did weaving on machines, and the Child said the weavers were most of them poets or limners or musicians, and that if a man did nothing but weave he was called a Silly or Simple Weaver. The others did four hours a day working on the machines and thinking in the gentle soothing noise they made, and then came forth to do their own art. No man or woman that tended a machine might work more than four hours a day, by law, but on other forms of labour the hours were much longer, because it was interesting. The cobblers and potters and such-like could work as long or as little as they pleased, for they were all master-craftsmen with no man over them.

The labourers on the farms had their hours and wages fixed by law, and though they had tried having very small plots of land and each man or woman to work his own without hired labour, yet it had not succeeded. One bad season must impoverish them for good, and it had been found better for the country as a whole that the farms should be fairly large, with one man at the head directing his hired labour. Yet no one could own land, but he must rent it from the ruling of all the Guilds, and at his death he could not pass it on to his son. If he would be prosperous he must work hard himself, and if his wife had no other work but would help him on the farm he must pay her the women's wage even though she might give it back to him for use on the farm.

If a man were a bad husbandman and let his land

get dirty, and did not do the best he could for the ground, he could be cast out of his farm and must go for a labourer. And though a man might do well if he had a good season and seem to be much richer than his labourers, yet he must put money by for a bad season, for he must bear the loss of it and pay his labourers always the same. The wages were very nicely calculated on an average year, neither very good nor very bad, to be what the farmer could afford to pay when he had given in his rent, and bought his seed and laid out some money for restocking and other things needed on a farm, and had a fair wage for himself to live on. If he had three ill seasons in succession he must come upon the Guilds for aid, and borrow money at a low rate of interest. There was always more land under cultivation than the people needed, and the surplus corn was bought by the Guilds and stored in various places about the country for use if there were any shortage in a bad year. None other than the Guilds might lend money, save he made no charge for it, and it was done for friendship. A man must work, and even if he had saved money he could not make it breed. No man could live in idleness by the produce of the machines, and they, like the land, belonged to the Guilds. Now I was still thinking of the farmer who had given us the horses, and it seemed to me that it was a great gift from a man who could not be really rich. The Child said that it was, and that he might take a year in recovering the gift, but that it had made him happy for much more than a year.

The Child told me also that the greatest difference between these workmen that were now and those that had lived in the machine age, was that as these were craftsmen and loved their work they

would make everything to endure as long as possible, whether it were a pair of shoes or a big log house. They would strive always for quality, and this spirit had even pervaded the few machines that were left, for the linen and woollen cloths that were woven were of the finest and hardest and best, and would last for years. The restless desire for change had passed away, and a woman would contentedly wear the same three or four summer tunics, and the same three or four winter ones until they were worn out. They knew now that they were attractive to men, and they had other things to think about besides their raiment. The Child told me also that these people, being so hard and healthy, could do far more work than those of the machine age, and yet not feel driven or weary. Their pleasures were music, books (which were sent out from the writing-machines by the wagon load), dancing, games and riding.

"So," said the Child, "they have not many pleasures but much happiness, and the others had many restless pleasures but little happiness. The greatest happiness of all is to like your work and be at peace with God, and most of these have that."

He told me also that they wanted very little from other countries, only fruit, a little wine, and small quantities of certain metals. They brought in, too, a little of the woven silk. For these they sent away horses, for English horses were in great demand in Europe, some of the finest linen, and a good deal of the best potter's work. Otherwise they lived on the country and wore linen or wool and drank their own ale. Their ruling was entirely done by the Guilds, as it had been for over a thousand years, and certain men and women were paid by the Guilds to give their whole time to the affairs of

government. The Guild Parliament still sat in London when it met, which was not very often nor for long at a time, and then the Child said London was fifteen miles further west than it had been.

"Child, what befell the old city?"

"It fell in."

"Into the river?"

"No, it fell into itself. When they no longer kept up the tunnels for the underground chariots without horses the whole city began to fall in. Now it is a place of hollows with water in them, and the new city they built must be further up the river. It is a very fine city, and covers miles of ground because all the houses are so far apart, and the great Third School for England is there, but for one man who will make a journey to see London there are ten who would go either to Durham or Glastonbury. It is London, but it no longer excites anyone to a frenzy. But if a man is thirty and has been neither to Durham nor to Glastonbury, he is considered poor in faith and lacking in enterprise."

"But what can there be now at Glastonbury when the Great Church was in ruins thirteen hundred years ago?"

"There is a hollow in the ground where the old Saxon church stood. And the whole of the Abbey grounds is a big garden, which is a luxury and paid for by the Guilds. And there is at Glastonbury, as there always has been and always will be, the peace of God and the presence of our Lord Christ. Durham is the last Great Church, but Glastonbury is England's holiest place, as it was in Stephen's reign."

Then I wanted to turn the horses' heads and ride south for Glastonbury, and not go to Durham, but the Child laughed and refused me.

"No, Brother. You must hear the St. John's day Mass in the Great Church at Durham, and then we will go to Glastonbury."

"Child, it cannot be a real Mass, for you have said that now they all say—'I do not know.'"

"Well, it is not a Mass then, but they will be very humble about it and penitent and adoring, and it will make them all happy. And we will hear them sing, and then see the Horse Fair and the games, and then we will go to Glastonbury. Now see, this is a church and a games place for this part of the forest."

We had come to a cleared place in the forest where were two big fields with sheep grazing them down, and a small log building. There was no person there, and if the log building was the church there was no house for a priest. So I asked the Child where the priest would live.

"With one of the foresters near by. The priests are never married, but that is no reason why they should not have companionship. And these forest priests work among the trees with the others, but they take no wage. How dost thou like being a priest in this time, Giraldus?"

"Child, I like it very well, but I am an impostor, and not even a good one."

But the Child said: "No, thou art the best of all, and those two, the fair ones, would have parted for none but thee. They have parted because they are Christians, but it was thy face and thy gentleness that has made them think more of our Lord Christ than of themselves."

CHAPTER XXIX

ON the next day we had left the great forest behind us and were in grass and corn land, and saw in front of us heather hills. The Child said :

“ Those are thy hills, Giraldus, and we can go up the valley where thy father’s castle stood, or we can hold close to the sea.”

So I said we would go up the valley, but when later we came to it and the Child showed me where the castle had stood, there was nothing but a little mound, and some rabbits playing in the trees. Then I forgot the castle with thinking of these little furry beasts, and I asked the Child how the wild animals were kept from eating the corn, and the foxes from taking the chickens, as I supposed they were never hunted. The Child said :

“ The foxes were killed out when men ceased to want them for hunting, and there are none left now except in wild places near the sea where they live in the cliffs. And the rabbits for the most part are kept down by the stoats and weasels. But if in any place they become too numerous they must be killed with a quick painless poison or caught in Third Power traps. They give a sudden and easy death. The men who do this have a Guild of their own, and they also are the most important people in England.”

“ Child, who are really the most important ?

The farmers? And why are all these squirrels grey and large instead of red and small?"

The Child laughed and answered the last question first.

"The squirrels are grey and large because long, long ago they were brought in from abroad, and escaped from their captivity and became wild, and they have driven out the red squirrels and taken their place."

"I liked the red ones better," I said, and remembered how in these woods I had watched a red squirrel and heard suddenly the outcry of the churl woman. And now there were no red squirrels, but only these big grey ones, and never in any place in England could there be such an outcry. The Child said :

"And the most important people are the priests, for they care for the souls, but these others care only for the bodies. The priests are the most important, and they are the best loved."

"Are there any unworthy?"

"Surely. I never said I would show you a perfect people, and these are very far from being perfect. But if a priest has failed badly, and knows himself likely to fail again, then he will cease to be a priest and turn his hand to other work, and the people do not scorn him or blame him. But they would not endure the old ways when a priest might be drunken or avaricious or lustful, and yet still would call himself a priest. Such a man in these days would get none to come to his church. Neither is there, in this time, any worldly advantage or any possible magnificence in being a priest. No one of them is higher than any other, though some of them are very wise. There is a priest at Durham who is known all over England for the books he

writes, and he has a mind like the Greek we heard reasoning in Athens. But very few can read the books."

"There seems no use for great brains now the people have ceased to invent machines," I said, foolishly, but then in the times we had left, man's highest function seemed to be to invent new machines, or to measure the universe.

"They have passed that stage," said the Child "They are tired of machines, and they no longer care about the exact size of the universe. What they strive to understand now, is the mind of man, and God's relation to him. And they have so long been used to the knowledge that man rose from a beast that it no longer troubles them as it used to when they had just found it out, neither does it make them say 'There is no God.' What they would find out is why there need be any sin at all, when man has proved himself able to abolish his first sin. They know God is sinless, and they know man is rising to God, very slowly, but still always rising. Men like this priest, by a thorough understanding of the human mind, would help him to rise a little quicker. But his books are very hard to understand, and you, Giraldus, could not get the meaning out of a single page. For all that he is a good priest unless his mind is elsewhere, and the people love him and are proud of him."

"Is he like me, Child?"

"No. He is a man all through. But he has so much more mind than body that he never wished to lead an ordinary man's life, so he became a priest. He is old now."

"How old is old?"

"He is eighty, and he might live another fifteen years. But he is old."

"Child, this people is so healthy I cannot see why they should ever die."

"They die in the winters. They catch a cold and get a coughing, and their old hearts stop. If they did not play such wild games all their youth and middle-age they would live longer, but then why should any Christian be afraid to die? That panic search for long life is not a Christian thing, it is the uneasiness of a man who must be centred in himself. If he think there is nothing higher than his own brain then the thought of its annihilation will be a horror to him. But these people die very peacefully, as peacefully as thou shalt die. Surely it will be a home-going to thee, who must presently go from this time to the reign of King Stephen."

But he would tell me no more of the manner of my death, and I remembered that he had once offered to show me myself, dead, and that I had refused, being already in confusion with seeing myself an infant.

So in three days more we came to Durham, and the things I saw there I never can write.

But there was the Great Church set apart by itself on the hill, for the people had removed all the houses away from it long before this time. Below it was the city of Durham, and all the houses were built of wood, except the City Hall and the School. The houses were wide apart, with grass and flowers growing in between them, and it was, except for the quiet passing to and fro of the people, as silent as the country. The City Hall was built of some very hard rock that was a mixture, and made by the hand of man. The secret of it had been known by the Romans, and had then been lost, though men had made imitations of it in the machine age. But towards the end of the machine

age a man had re-discovered the secret of the Romans, and had made an everlasting stone.' So they had built the City Halls and the Schools with it, and they were all of them from eight to nine hundred years old. But they were not beautiful, and looking from this one to the lovely Great Church on the hill I saw that the peak of building had been reached in England in the far past time, and that people had always known it or they would not have made the special effort to keep Durham. I have only seen one more beautiful building than that, and it was the new Abbey Church of Glastonbury as I saw it, whole and perfect, in my vision.

But inside a church, not even in Glastonbury among the brethren, I have never seen such reverence and devotion as these people displayed at their Mass on St. John's Day. It was the Midsummer Mass, and their great day in all the year, and the crowds were such that there must be two Masses or many of the people must go away disappointed. Their form of words I cannot now remember, but I know that the spirit of the words of the Wise Queen was in it, and most humbly, and with utter adoration of our Lord Christ this people said—
'I do not know.'

I went with the Child among the people, for in this matter, though I was invited, I would not be a priest, and though I be banned by myself as an unalterable heretic, yet I will not here write less than the truth. It is that in that Mass, which was none if I could believe wholly as I ought to, I felt as humble and thankful and joyful as ever I have in my life, and my soul seemed to fly away from me into the great lofty roof.

After the last Mass they had singing, with music

made by a company of musicians, and I knew that these English were a marvellously musical people. Hundreds and hundreds of years of the hearing machine, and listening to the purest and best music from childhood to old age, had made to grow every atom of ear for melody that was in each one, and it had been handed down through the generations. All their joy in the Mass came sweeping out of them on a great wind of sound, and the singing was so thunderous and yet so sweet that I wondered whether the Great Church would bear it. And they all looked so happy, with their best clothes on them and shining uncovered heads, that I wondered why men had ever thought religion was a gloomy thing. The Horse Fair and the games were much, but the St. John's Day Mass and the St. John's Day singing were better still. Only one that I could see looked uneasy, and that was a woman, small for those days and not very young, who was standing next to me and the Child. She looked ever and anon at a certain place at the top of one of the pillars, and she often stopped singing.

She was a woman one would mark in a crowd, for she had an unusual big head, and her hair was not the light brown most of the people had come to, but red, very thick and curly, and beginning to be streaked with grey. She was dressed in a green tunic with a device on it worked in gold, and even in those crowds I had seen one or two others like it, so I guessed she was one of the Durham Builders. There was a pause in the singing, and the Child said:

"Friend, is there a crack coming?"

"It must come, it must come," she said, not looking at him. "This St. John's Day singing is too powerful for the Church. It would be far better if they sang in discordance. The sound pierces the

stones with its sweetness, and the loudness shakes them. I enjoy any other Mass in the year better than this. Christmas and Easter are bad, but St. John's Day is the worst of all. Hear them ! ”

The singing burst out again, thunderously loud, and with all the sweetness of harmony, and the Durham Builder shifted from foot to foot, and looked at the pillar, and began to sing too, and then stopped again, and when that hymn was over she sighed in relief.

“ Now there is the blessing, and then they will go,” she said. “ Except for people coming in to pray there will be no one, and prayer, thank God, is silent.”

We kneeled down for the blessing, and it came in an old man's voice, sweet, but not very strong. But the people were all frozen-still and we heard him well, and the Child told me afterwards it was the old, wise priest who wrote books hardly any could understand. Then the people began to go out, very orderly, not hurrying in any manner, so that it took some time. The Durham Builder turned to me and said :

“ Brother, it would be better if they sang as they did in the old days of the machine age when only a few could sing in tune and harmony, and only a few ever opened their mouths. Now they all sing so well and they will put such heart to it, and they will have all the proper harmonies for every hymn, and the church cannot endure it. I am going to bring it before the Guilds and ask for the children to be stopped learning to sing in school. Every St. John's Day new cracks come.”

“ Proud as a Durham Builder,” said the Child, in a small, sweet voice. “ She would have all the children stopped singing in school.”

"What is it to thee, little acolyte? Wouldst thou keep Durham Great Church or no?"

"Why, surely. And some of their hearty singing is pride in the Church and in the Builders. It will stand for a great while yet, Friend."

But she said to me, "Brother, this boy of thine is not very well managed, for the priest should speak and the little acolyte be silent, but with ye two it is the other way. Still, I am joyful to know that he thinks Durham Great Church will stand for a while yet."

"Friend," said the Child, "we are strangers in Durham, so come with us and show us the Horse Fair and the games, and leave thinking about cracks in the church, as nothing can be done for three days."

The Durham Builder looked at him as if she would be angry, then she smiled, and then she said she would come with us and show us the Horse Fair and the games. Also she asked us where we were lodging, and if we would not leave that lodging and come to her house. But this the Child said we would not do, because it would hurt the man who had taken us in the night before.

So for three days I watched this people at the taking of their pleasure, and everything they did, that did they with their whole hearts and all the strength that was in them. They had an enormous playing field outside the town, in part of which they held the Horse Fair, and the leaping and racing of horses, and merry tricks of riding. In another part they had racing and wrestling and leaping for the men and the women, and for the boys and girls, and in yet another part they played games with a ball. There were only two of these games. One was called the Men's Game, and the other was

called the Women's Game, and neither sex (except sometimes among the children) ever played the other's game. The Men's Game was very wild and fierce, played with the hands and feet without any instrument but the ball, and men sometimes were hurt playing it and broke their limbs or stretched their muscles. The Women's Game was swift and graceful, as pleasant to watch as a game could be, and they tossed the ball from one to the other in nets on sticks, and often flew into the air like birds in their efforts to reach it before any other ; and at their game they were very rarely hurt beyond a bruise or so on the arm. I had seen times when there were so many games played with balls that they could not be counted, and there were some that were only played in the summer, and others only in the winter. And there were some for the young and others for the old. But these people had only two games which they played the year round, and they were so hardy that they would go on with them all through their middle age. I asked the Child why all the other games had passed away, and he said :

" They cannot have any now that take thousands of men to minister to the ground where the game is played, or make the instruments. Such games are luxuries, and they cannot have them. But for these two they only need a sheep-fed field with a cut line to show the bounds of the Men's Game, and wooden posts, and a few balls and the women's nets on sticks. The leather workers make all the balls and the carpenters make the nets on sticks, and the sheep feed down their fields."

Then I remembered the time when the women played all the men's games and would not be stayed. But now they were of full equality and

yet they would only play their own game. The Child said :

" Because they are equal it does not mean they are the same, and that was a mistake much made by women in former times. To prove themselves equal they thought they must prove themselves the same. But now they are happy in being women they know that the Men's Game is not suitable or seemly, nor fitted to their bodies. So they play their own game."

" But men might very well play it too."

" They will not, and it is not because they despise it or think it a bad game. But the wise men of the Guilds decided long ago that any kind of bodily rivalry between men and women is evil, and might possibly lead to a revival, in a few of them, of sex hatred. So they would not allow the men to play the women's game, nor the girls to run against the boys, nor the women against the men. Nor would they allow women to challenge men at swimming or walking, though in those exercises the women are the best. So by this time it is a custom which no one questions, and in all their sports and games they keep separate, and only join in the riding of the horses, which is not such a serious matter."

And the splendour and beauty of the horses I saw in Durham is not to be described. There were the very large ones for pulling the big wagons, and the lighter and swifter ones for riding and pulling small chariots, and the ponies for the children. And though some were, by nature, more lovely and better made than others, yet in all this time I saw no horse that looked ill-fed, or over-worked, or anything but contented. With this kind treatment there were few savage ones amongst them, but the people with constant use of horses had

become such good riders that they rarely more than half broke the animals, except the large ones. And the kicking, and squealing, and laughter and cheering that went on in the part of the field where the horses were, I cannot describe. But it was none of it machine noise and it did not trouble me.

In the evenings, though it was light very late, they left their games and went to the City Hall to dance to the music that was being made in London, or they turned off the hearing machine and danced to the music of the Durham Musicians who were to a man (only half of them were women) weavers of woollen cloth and the most important people in the country.

Or they did not dance, but walked about together in couples of friends, or lovers, or an old man with his old wife, or roaming bands of boys and girls, and they sat in the gardens between the houses which were unfenced and open to all, and sometimes they climbed the hill to the Great Church and sat there in the peace of it, or prayed.

And as the Child and I wandered with these happy people, who had no cruelty among them, neither to man, woman, child, or beast, I had great tightenings of the heart and sudden desolate sinkings of the mind to think of the long time between Stephen's reign and this, and the miserable army of victims yet to come.

CHAPTER XXX

ON the fourth day, when the Horse Fair and the games were finished, and the people of the county and the pilgrims for the St. John's Day Mass were leaving the city in great numbers, the Child and I rode away also, with our horses heads turned towards the south.

That ride from the north of England to Glastonbury was very wonderful to me, and very strange, and often I thought of the journey I had made, in despair, when I was sent away from my home in shame to go to the Abbey. And that was either sixteen years, or two thousand and sixteen years ago. Then every hoof-beat of the horse had been an agony, and I must think all day of my sister, and of Lett, my great hound, and of the heather hills, and of the forest, and of the pasture and corn lands near the castle. Then, riding south, I was leaving my home for ever. Now, riding south, I was going to the home of our Lord Christ in England, and to my own place.

So of this journey I remember very little, for it was all like a dream. I know not how long it took us, nor much of the people we met save that one and all they were kind and gentle, and would give me the best of everything. I remember if it were foul weather we stayed in the nearest house till it was over-passed, and then in the sunshine or under the soft, grey, kind clouds rode on again. I remem-

ber that three people, two boys and a man, asked me to hear their confession and pray that they might be absolved, but I cannot remember their sins, neither, if I could, would I write them down. I know there was no cruelty among them. And I remember the Silly Weaver, because he was the merriest man I ever met anywhere, and he had a piebald pony under him. He was so merry that he must be for ever laughing, at anything or nothing, and in former ages he would have been taken for a madman. He told us that he was a Silly Weaver, and the lowest paid man in England, with no hope of rising to anything better, and no craft outside his work. And when the Child asked him what he did with his time when he had finished his four hours of weaving he said he went into a wood near his home, and tamed wild rabbits and listened to the birds singing. And the rabbits had become so used to him that even if he laughed at them they were not frightened, but took it in good part. In the winter, because he could not be out with the rabbits so much, he made all the clothes for his household, and many pairs of hosen. He said his wife was a physician and a very wise woman, but he was only a Silly Weaver, and nearly everything he learned in his school he had by this time forgotten, but that she was very patient with him and liked to hear him laughing. So when we came to his city where he lived, we must leave him and go on towards the south, and he is the only one we met that I remember well.

We came off the last hills and down into the great Vale of Avalon, and there was the round green hill, rising like an island in the sea. For a moment I thought I was back in my own life and that I should hear the Saxon guide mumbling his prophecy

of a man's death on it, and the coming of the end of the world. But the man had died a thousand and six hundred years before, and the end of the world was not yet come. The Child said :

"Giraldus, there is the Isle of Avalon, and the last pilgrimage is nearly finished."

But I, with joy and sorrow mixed, could make him no answer, so as we rode he took my hand for a little.

So presently we came into the little town of Glastonbury. It was not a big county city like Durham, but quite a small place with a few Rest Houses for the pilgrims. They came to Glastonbury all the year round, and there was no one day that was better than any other, like the Midsummer Mass in Durham. There was a large farm there, and a weaving place, because flax grew not far away, and the weavers' houses, and a house for those who tended the Glastonbury Garden. Quite apart from all these, and with a big field in between, I saw a wooden wall, with great trees towering over it. The Child said :

"That is the Garden, and the wall is the old bounds of the Abbey. Come, we will leave the horses."

We left the horses, but for all I knew they might have vanished into the air, as I saw nothing but the wooden wall and the trees, nor felt anything but a great longing to be inside the garden. So the Child led me, and we came to a gate in the wall, and passed inside.

Therewith the peace of Glastonbury, which is of God, and the joy of the presence of our Lord Christ, rushed over me in a great wave that was like the hundredth wave in a storm on the sea, and I fell on my knees. Nor could I see anything of the

flowers and the trees and the fair green lawns of that garden, for the tears which blinded me. But the Child said :

" Surely our Lord Christ walks here for ever and ever. Brother, come and see it."

So I rose up and we walked in the garden. The old Saxon church was a hollow in the ground, a green hollow with grassy banks on which children played, rolling down them with shouts of laughter. Neither did any rebuke them, for no one thought children's games or children's laughter in any way displeasing to God, but rather that He might like to hear it. The great arch was fallen and disappeared, and the walls I had seen in my vision, and there were no stones left anywhere. The Child said they had to take all the stones of the old walls down lest they fall and hurt those who came to the garden. It had been done long ago. But the place of the old High Altar was marked with a flat stone in the ground, and there were people kneeling near it, naturally, and unconscious of any shame in praying to God in the open. And near the High Altar in the place where there had been a beech tree, there was still a beech tree, a fine fully-grown tree, and her leaves were still very green and lovely, though St. John's Day was passed some time. As we stood under her branches, looking at the brilliant flowers of the garden, the wind and sunshine together made moving shadows on the Child's face. I looked at him, and I saw that he was no longer a human child, but that he was the Child of God, and in brightest sunshine, or darkness, or dappled playing shadows, a radiance must always pour forth from his head, and his raiment, and his limbs. I looked at myself, and I saw that I was Giraldus the Monk, in his dark habit, and I knew

the people in the garden could not see me unless the Child willed it. He said :

"Thou shalt see them. Giraldus, look at their souls."

Then it seemed as if all the garden were full of moving flames, this people's souls were so large and bright. For there was not one that had a soul any less than the soul of the Greek, Euripides, and they were of an exceeding brilliance.

The Child said : "They are all like that, because there is no cruelty among them. They are half perfect now, and they have abolished man's first sin."

"Child, they have come a very long way from the little spark that was in the body of the First Man."

"And they have a long way yet to go."

Then this vision passed also, and I was still in Glastonbury, but in Stephen's reign. The Child said :

"Giraldus, I will make thee one more vision, and then, for a little time, I must leave thee."

"Till my death, Child?"

"Yes, till thy death. And in one night of all the nights I will come to thee again. But see."

He made me a vision on the wall of the cell, but all I saw was a brilliance of light which was gone before I could draw a breath. I said :

"Child, I saw nothing."

"You saw your own soul."

"But I could not see how large it was."

"No. It might make thee too proud. But then thou canst always remember how bright it was."

Then he neither blessed me nor said any words of farewell, but he kneeled down and kissed the scars

on my right hand. So the Child of God left me, for the last time.

So now I have written all my visions, and on the morrow I will hide them in the secret place in the old Saxon church. So shall they escape the fire that will destroy this Abbey. And if they are found and read—it is well, it is God's will. And if they are never found and never read—it is well, it is God's will. My head is tired, my hand is tired, my eyes, with the writing by day and the writing by night, are failing. My spirit is tired, and sore burdened with the cruelties that are now, and that are still to come. King Stephen yet reigns, and men's hearts are not pitiful. I would pray that all men go to Glastonbury, where our Lord Christ walks for ever and ever. It is in Glastonbury that I have been happy, and come to a little measure of understanding. For any presumption, or error, or lack of wisdom in this my writing of the visions I pray God to forgive me. I am an ignorant and unlearned man. I have nothing but pity, and there are many wiser than I.

The blessing of our Father God, and of His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, be with us all.

GIRALDUS

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Sin and Sand HELEN HALYBURTON ROSS

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The Atoning Years

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Crisis

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The Vandekkers

RUSSEL THORNDIKE

The Tenth of March

ELEANOR REID

The Laughing String HILDEGARDE HUNTSMAN

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The Defeated

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