

CHAPTER XII

THE STAKE

It was an awful night. Let those who have followed this history think of the state of these two women, one of them still but a girl, who on the morrow, amidst the jeers and curses of superstitious men, were to suffer the cruelest of deaths for no crime at all, unless the traffickings of Emlyn with Thomas Bolle, in which Cicely had small share, could be held a crime. Well, thousands quite as blameless were called on to undergo that, and even worse fates in the days which some name good and old, the days of chivalry and gallant knights, when even little children were tormented and burned by holy and learned folk who feared a visible or at least a tangible devil and his works.

Doubtless their cruelty was that of terror. Doubtless, although he had other ends to gain which to him were sacred, the Abbot Maldon did believe that Cicely and Emlyn had practised horrible witchcraft; that they had conversed with Satan in order to revenge themselves upon him, and therefore were too foul to live. The "Old Bishop" believed it also, and so did the black-browed Prior and the most of the ignorant people who lived around and knew of the terrible things which had happened in Blossholme. Had not some of them actually seen the fiend with horns and hoofs and tail driving the Abbey cattle, and had not others met the ghost of Sir John Foterell, which doubtless was but that fiend in another shape? Oh, these women were guilty, without doubt they were

guilty and deserved the stake! What did it matter if the husband and father of one of them had been murdered and the other had suffered grievous but forgotten wrongs? Compared to witchcraft murder was but a light and homely crime, one that would happen when men's passions and needs were involved, quite a familiar thing.

It was an awful night. Sometimes Cicely slept a little, but the most of it she spent in prayer. The fierce Emlyn neither slept nor prayed, except once or twice that vengeance might fall upon the Abbot's head, for her whole soul was up in arms and it galled her to think that she and her beloved mistress must die shamefully while their enemy lived on triumphant and in honour. Even the infant seemed nervous and disturbed, as though some instinct warned it of terror at hand, for although it was well enough, against its custom it woke continually and wailed.

"Emlyn," said Cicely towards morning, but before the light had come, after at length she had soothed it to rest, "do you think that Mother Matilda will be able to help us?"

"No, no; put it from your mind, dearie. She is weak and old, the road is rough and long, and mayhap she has never reached the place. It was a great venture for her to try such a journey, and if she came there, why, perhaps the Commissioner man had gone, or perhaps he will not listen, or perhaps he cannot come. What would he care about the burning of two witches a hundred miles away, this leech who is sucking himself full upon the carcass of some fat monastery? No, no, never count on her."

"At least she is brave and true, Emlyn, and has done her best, for which may Heaven's blessing rest upon her always. Now, what of Thomas Bolle?"

"Nothing, except that he is a red-headed jackass that can bray but daren't kick," answered Emlyn viciously. "Never speak to me of Thomas Bolle. Had he been a man long ago he'd have broken the neck of that rogue Abbot instead of dressing himself up like a he-goat and hunting his cows."

"If what they say is true he did break the neck of Father Ambrose," replied Cicely, with a faint smile. "Perhaps he made a mistake in the dark."

"If so it is like Thomas Bolle, who ever wished the right thing and did the wrong. Talk no more of him, since I would not meet my end in a bad spirit. Thomas Bolle, who lets us die for his elfish pranks! A pest on the half-witted cur, say I. And after I had kissed him too!"

Cicely wondered vaguely to what she referred, then, thinking it well not to inquire, said--

"Not so, a blessing on him, say I, who saved my child from that hateful hag."

Then there was silence for a while, the matter of poor Thomas Bolle and

his conduct being exhausted between them, who indeed were in no mood for argument about people whom they would never see again. At last Cicely spoke once more through the darkness--

"Emlyn, I will try to be brave; but once, do you remember, I burnt my hand as a child when I stole the sweetmeats from the cooling pot, and ah! it hurt me. I will try to die as those who went before me would have died, but if I should break down think not the less of me, for the spirit is willing though the flesh be weak."

Emlyn ground her teeth in silence, and Cicely went on--

"But that is not the worst of it, Emlyn. A few minutes and it will be over and I shall sleep, as I think, to awake elsewhere. Only if Christopher should really live, how he will mourn when he learns----"

"I pray that he does," broke in Emlyn, "for then ere long there will be a Spanish priest the less on earth and one the more in hell."

"And the child, Emlyn, the child!" she went on in a trembling voice, not heeding the interruption. "What will become of my son, the heir to so much if he had his rights, and yet so friendless? They'll murder him also, Emlyn, or let him die, which is the same thing, since how otherwise will they get title to his lands and goods?"

"If so, his troubles will be done and he will be better with you in

heaven," Emlyn answered, with a dry sob. "The boy and you in heaven midst the blessed saints, and the Abbot and I in hell settling our score there with the devil for company, that's all I ask. There, there, I blaspheme, for injustice makes me mad; it clogs my heart and I throw it up in bitter words, for your sake, dear, and his, not my own. Child, you are good and gentle, to such as you the Ear of God is open. Call to him; ask for light, He will not refuse. Do you remember in the fire at the Towers, when we crouched in that vault and the walls crumbled overhead, you said you saw His angel bending over us and heard his speech. Call to Him, Cicely, and if He will not listen, hear me. I have a means of death about me. Ask not what it is, but if at the end I turn on you and strike, blame me not here or hereafter, for it will be love's blow, my last service."

It seemed as though Cicely did not understand those heavy words, at the least she took no heed of them.

"I'll pray again," she whispered, "though I fear that heaven's doors are closed to me; no light comes through," and she knelt down.

For long, long she prayed, till at length weariness overcame her, and Emlyn heard her breathing softly like one asleep.

"Let her sleep," she murmured to herself. "Oh! if I were sure--she should never wake again to see the dawn. I have half a mind to do it, but there it is, I am not sure. If there is a God He will never suffer

such a thing. I'd have paid the jewels, but what's the use? They would have killed her all the same, for else where's their title? No, my heart bids me wait."

Cicely awoke.

"Emlyn," she said in a low, thrilling voice, "do you hear me, Emlyn? That angel has been with me again. He spoke to me," and she paused.

"Well, well, what did he say?"

"I don't know, Emlyn," she answered, confused; "it has gone from me. But, Emlyn, have no fear, all is well with us, and not only with us but with Christopher and the babe also. Oh, yes, with Christopher and the babe also," and she let her fair head fall upon the couch and burst into a flood of happy tears. Then, rising, she took up the child and kissed it, laid herself down and slept sweetly.

Just then the dawn broke, a glorious dawn, and Emlyn held out her arms to it in an ecstasy of gratitude. For with that light her terror passed away as the darkness passed. She believed that God had spoken to Cicely and for a while her heart was at peace.

When about eight o'clock that morning the door was opened to allow a nun to bring them their food, she saw a sight which filled her with amazement. Her own eyes, poor woman, were red with tears, for, like all in the Priory, she loved Cicely, whom as a child she had nursed on her knee, and with the other sisters had spent a sleepless night in prayer for her, for Emlyn, and for Bridget, who was to be burned with them. She had expected to find the victims prostrate and perhaps senseless with fear, but behold! there they sat together in the window-place, dressed in their best garments and talking quietly. Indeed, as she entered one of them--it was Cicely--laughed a little at something that the other had said.

"Good-morning to you, Sister Mary," said Cicely. "Tell me now, has the Prioress returned?"

"Nay, nay, we know not where she is; no word has come from her. Well, at least she will be spared a dreadful sight. Have you any message for her ear? If so, give it swiftly ere the guard call me."

"I thank you," said Cicely; "but I think that I shall be the bearer of my own messages."

"What? Do you, then, mean that our Mother is dead? Must we suffer woe upon woe? Oh! who could have told you these sorrowful tidings?"

"No, sister, I think that she is alive and that I, yet living, shall talk with her again."

Sister Mary looked bewildered, for how, she wondered, could close prisoners know these things? Staring round to see that she was not observed, she thrust two little packets into Cicely's hand.

"Wear these at the last, both of you," she whispered. "Whatever they say we believe you innocent, and for your sake we have done a great crime. Yes, we have opened the reliquary and taken from it our most precious treasure, a fragment of the cord that bound St. Catherine to the wheel, and divided it into three, one strand for each of you. Perhaps, if you are really guiltless, it will work a miracle. Perhaps the fire will not burn or the rain will extinguish it, or the Abbot may relent."

"That last would be the greatest miracle of all," broke in Emlyn, with grim humour. "Still we thank you from our hearts and will wear the relics if they do not take them from us. Hark! they are calling you. Farewell, and all blessings be on your gentle heads."

Again the loud voices of the guards called, and Sister Mary turned and fled, wondering if these women were not witches, how it came about that they could be so brave, so different from poor Bridget, who wailed and moaned in her cell below.

Cicely and Emlyn ate their food with good appetite, knowing that they

would need support that day, and when it was done sat themselves again by the window-place, through which they could see hundreds of people, mounted and on foot, passing up the slope that led to the green in front of the Abbey, though this green they could not see because of a belt of trees.

"Listen," said Emlyn presently. "It is hard to say, but it may be that your vision of the night was but a merciful dream, and, if so, within a few hours we shall be dead. Now I have the secret of the hiding-place of those jewels, which, without me, none can ever find; shall I pass it on, if I get the chance, to one whom I can trust? Some good soul--the nuns, perhaps--will surely shelter your boy, and he might need them in days to come."

Cicely thought a while, then answered--

"Not so, Emlyn. I believe that God has spoken to me by His angel, as He spoke to Peter in the prison. To do this would be to tempt God, showing that we have no trust in Him. Let that secret lie where it is, in your breast."

"Great is your faith," said Emlyn, looking at her with admiration.

"Well, I will stand or fall by it, for I think there is enough for two."

The Convent bell chimed ten, and they heard a sound of feet and voices below.

"They come for us," said Emlyn; "the burning is set for eleven, that after the sight folk may get away in comfort to their dinners. Now summon that great Faith of yours and hold him fast for both our sakes, since mine grows faint."

The door opened and through it came monks followed by guards, the officer of whom bade them rise and follow. They obeyed without speaking, Cicely throwing her cloak about her shoulders.

"You'll be warm enough without that, Witch," said the man, with a hideous chuckle.

"Sir," she answered, "I shall need it to wrap my child in when we are parted. Give me the babe, Emlyn. There, now we are ready; nay, no need to lead us, we cannot escape and shall not vex you."

"God's truth, the girl has spirit!" muttered the officer to his companions, but one of the priests shook his head and answered--

"Witchcraft! Satan will leave them presently."

A few more minutes and, for the first time during all those weary months, they passed the gate of the Priory. Here the third victim was waiting to join them, poor, old, half-witted Bridget, clad in a kind of sheet, for her habit had been stripped off. She was wild-eyed and her

grey locks hung loose about her shoulders, as she shook her ancient head and screamed prayers for mercy. Cicely shivered at the sight of her, which indeed was dreadful.

"Peace, good Bridget," she said as they passed, "being innocent, what have you to fear?"

"The fire, the fire!" cried the poor creature. "I dread the fire."

Then they were led to their place in the procession and saw no more of Bridget for a while, although they could not escape the sound of her lamentations behind them.

It was a great procession. First went the monks and choristers, singing a melancholy Latin dirge. Then came the victims in the midst of a guard of twelve armed men, and after these the nuns who were forced to be present, while behind and about were all the folk for twenty miles round, a crowd without number. They crossed the footbridge, where stood the Ford Inn for which the Flounder had bargained as the price of murder. They walked up the rise by the right of way, muddy now with the autumn rains, and through the belt of trees where Thomas Bolle's secret passage had its exit, and so came at last to the green in front of the towering Abbey portal.

Here a dreadful sight awaited them, for on this green were planted three fourteen-inch posts of new-felled oak six feet or more in height, such

as no fire would easily burn through, and around each of them a kind of bower of faggots open to the front. Moreover, to the posts hung new wagon chains, and near by stood the village blacksmith and his apprentice, who carried a hand anvil and a sledge hammer for the cold welding of those chains.

At a distance from these stakes the procession was halted. Then out from the gate of the Abbey came the Abbot in his robes and mitre, preceded by acolytes and followed by more monks. He advanced to where the condemned women stood and halted, while a friar stepped forward and read their sentence to them, of which, being in Latin or in crabbed, legal words, they understood nothing at all. Then in sonorous tones he adjured them for the sake of their sinful souls to make full confession of their guilt, that they might receive pardon before they suffered in the flesh for their hideous crime of sorcery.

To this invitation Cicely and Emlyn shook their heads, saying that being innocent of any sorceries they had nothing to confess. But old Bridget gave another answer. She declared in a high, screaming voice that she was a witch, as her mother and grandmother had been before her. She described, while the crowd listened with intense interest, how Emlyn Stower had introduced her to the devil, who was clad in red hose and looked like a black boy with a hump on his back and a tuft of red hair hanging from his nose, also many unedifying details of her interviews with this same fiend.

Asked what he said to her, she answered that he told her to bewitch the Abbot of Blossholme because he was such a holy man that God had need of him and he did too much good upon the earth. Also he prevented Emlyn Stower and Cicely Foterell from working his, the devil's, will, and enabled them to keep alive the baby who would be a great wizard. He told her moreover that midwife Megges was an angel (here the crowd laughed) sent to kill the said infant, who really was his own child, as might be seen by its black eyebrows and cleft tongue, also its webbed feet, and that he would appear in the shape of the ghost of Sir John Foterell to save it and give it to her, which he did, saying the Lord's Prayer backwards, and that she must bring it up "in the faith of the Pentagon."

Thus the poor crazed thing raved on, while sentence by sentence a scribe wrote down her gibberish, causing her at last to make her mark to it, all of which took a very long time. At the end she begged that she might be pardoned and not burnt, but this, she was informed, was impossible. Thereon she became enraged and asked why then had she been led to tell so many lies if after all she must burn, a question at which the crowd roared with laughter. On hearing this the priest, who was about to absolve her, changed his mind and ordered her to be fastened to her stake, which was done by the blacksmith with the help of his apprentice and his portable anvil.

Still, her "confession" was solemnly read over to Cicely and Emlyn, who were asked whether, after hearing it, they still persisted in a denial of their guilt. By way of answer Cicely lifted the hood from her boy's

face and showed that his eyebrows were not black, but light-coloured. Also she bared his feet, passing her little finger between his toes, and asking them if they were webbed. Some of them answered, "No," but a monk roared, "What of that? Cannot Satan web and unweb?" Then he snatched the infant from Cicely's arms and laid it down upon the stump of an oak that had been placed there to receive it, crying out--

"Let this child live or die as God pleases."

Some brute who stood by aimed a blow at it with a stick, yelling, "Death to the witch's brat!" but a big man, whom Emlyn recognized as one of old Sir John's tenants, caught the falling stick from his hand and dealt him such a clout with it that he fell like a stone, and went for the rest of his life with but one eye and the nose flattened on the side of his face. Thenceforward no one tried to harm the babe, who, as all know, because of what befell him on this day, went in after life by the nickname of Christopher Oak-stump.

The Abbot's men stepped forward to tie Cicely to her stake, but ere they laid hands on her she took off her wool-lined cloak and threw it to the yeoman who had struck down the fellow with his own stick, saying--

"Friend, wrap my boy in this and guard him till I ask him from you again."

"Aye, Lady," answered the great man, bending his knee; "I have served

the grandsire and the sire, and so I'll serve the son," and throwing aside the stick he drew a sword and set himself in front of the oak boll where the infant lay. Nor did any venture to meddle with him, for they saw other men of a like sort ranging themselves about him.

Now slowly enough the smith began to rivet the chain round Cicely.

"Man," she said to him, "I have seen you shoe many of my father's nags. Who could have thought that you would live to use your honest skill upon his daughter!"

On hearing these words the fellow burst into tears, cast down his tools and fled away, cursing the Abbot. His apprentice would have followed, but him they caught and forced to complete the task. Then Emlyn was chained up also, so that at length all was ready for the last terrible act of the drama.

Now the head executioner--he was the Abbey cook--placed some pine splinters to light in a brazier that stood near by, and while waiting for the word of command, remarked audibly to his mate that there was a good wind and that the witches would burn briskly.

The spectators were ordered back out of earshot, and went at last, some of them muttering sullenly to each other. For here the company could not be picked as it had been at the trial, and the Abbot noted anxiously that among them the victims had many friends. It was time the deed was

done ere their smouldering love and pity flowed out into bloody tumult, he thought to himself. So, advancing quickly, he stood in front of Emlyn and asked her in a low voice if she still refused to give up the secret of the jewels, seeing that there was yet time for him to command that they should die mercifully and not by the fire.

"Let the mistress judge, not the maid," answered Emlyn in a steady voice.

He turned and repeated the question to Cicely, who replied--

"Have I not told you--never. Get you behind me, O evil man, and go, repent your sins ere it be too late."

The Abbot stared at her, feeling that such constancy and courage were almost superhuman. He had an acute, imaginative mind which could fancy himself in like case and what his state would be. Though he was in such haste a great curiosity entered into him to know whence she drew her strength, which even then he tried to satisfy.

"Are you mad or drugged, Cicely Foterell?" he asked. "Do you not know how fire will feel when it eats up that delicate flesh of yours?"

"I do not know and I shall never know," she answered quietly.

"Do you mean that you will die before it touches you, building on some

promise of your master, Satan?"

"Yes, I shall die before the fire touches me; but not here and now, and I build upon a promise from the Master of us all in heaven."

He laughed, a shrill, nervous laugh, and called out loud to the people around--

"This witch says that she will not burn, for Heaven has promised it to her. Do you not, Witch?"

"Yes, I say so; bear witness to my words, good people all," replied Cicely in clear and ringing tones.

"Well, we'll see," shouted the Abbot. "Man, bring flame, and let Heaven--or hell--help her if it can!"

The cook-executioner blew at his brands, but he was nervous, or clumsy, and a minute or more went by before they flamed. At length one was fit for the task, and unwillingly enough he stooped to lift it up.

Then it was that in the midst of the intense silence, for of all that multitude none seemed even to breathe, and old Bridget, who had fainted, cried no more, a bull's voice was heard beyond the brow of the hill, roaring--

"In the King's name, stay! In the King's name, stay!"

All turned to look, and there between the trees appeared a white horse, its sides streaked with blood, that staggered rather than galloped towards them, and on the horse a huge, red-bearded man, clad in mail and holding in his hand a woodman's axe.

"Fire the faggots!" shouted the Abbot, but the cook, who was not by nature brave, had already let fall his torch, which went out on the damp ground.

By now the horse was rushing through them, treading them under foot. With great, convulsive bounds it reached the ring and, as the rider leapt from its back, rolled over and lay there panting, for its strength was done.

"It is Thomas Bolle!" exclaimed a voice, while the Abbot cried again--

"Fire the faggots! Fire the faggots!" and a soldier ran to fetch another brand.

But Thomas was before him. Snatching up the brazier by its legs he smote downwards with it so that the burning charcoal fell all about the soldier and the iron cage remained fixed upon his head, shouting as he smote--

"You sought fire--take it!"

The man rolled upon the ground screaming in pain and terror till some one dragged the cage off his head, leaving his face barred like a grilled herring. None took further heed of what became of him, for now Thomas Bolle stood in front of the stakes waving his great axe, and repeating, "In the King's name, stay! In the King's name, stay!"

"What mean you, knave?" exclaimed the furious Abbot.

"What I say, Priest. One step nearer and I'll split your crown."

The Abbot fell back and Thomas went on--

"A Foterell! A Foterell! A Harflete! A Harflete! O ye who have eaten their bread, come, scatter these faggots and save their flesh. Who'll stand with me against Maldon and his butchers?"

"I," answered voices, "and I, and I, and I!"

"And I too," halloed the yeoman by the oak stump, "only I watch the child. Nay, by God I'll bring it with me!" and, snatching up the screaming babe under his left arm, he ran to him.

On came the others also, hurling the faggots this way and that.

"Break the chains," roared Bolle again, and somehow those strong hands did it; indeed, the only hurt that Cicely took that day was from their hacking at these chains. They were loose. Cicely snatched the child from the yeoman, who was glad enough to be rid of it, having other work to do, for now the Abbot's men-at-arms were coming on.

"Ring the women round," roared Bolle, "and strike home for Foterell, strike home for Harflete! Ah, priest's dog, in the King's name--this!" and the axe sank up to the haft into the breast of the captain who had told Cicely that she would be warm enough that day without her cloak.

Then there began a great fight. The party of Foterell, of whom there may have been a score, captained by Bolle, made a circle round the three green oak stakes, within which stood Cicely and Emlyn and old Bridget, still tied to her post, for no one had thought or found time to cut her loose. These were attacked by the Abbot's guard, thirty or more of them, urged on by Maldon himself, who was maddened by the rescue of his victims and full of fear lest Cicely's words should be fulfilled and she herself set down henceforth, not as a witch, but as a prophetess favoured by God.

On came the soldiers and were beaten back. Thrice they came on and thrice they were beaten back with loss, for Bolle's axe was terrible to face and, now that they had found a leader and their courage, the yeoman lads who stood with him were sturdy fighters. Also tumult broke out among the hundreds who watched, some of them taking one side and some

the other, so that they fell upon each other with sticks and stones and fists, even the women joining in the fray, biting and tearing like bagged cats. The scene was hideous and the sounds those of a sacked city, for many were hurt and all gave tongue, while shrill and clear above this hateful music rose the yells of Bridget, who had awakened from her faint and imagined all was over and that she fathomed hell.

Thrice the attackers were rolled back, but of those who defended a third were down, and now the Abbot took another counsel.

"Bring bows," he cried, "and shoot them, for they have none!" and men ran off to do his bidding.

Then it was that Emlyn's wit came to their aid, for when Bolle shook his red head and gasped out that he feared they were lost, since how could they fight against arrows, she answered--

"If so, why stand here to be spitted, fool? Come, let us cut our way through ere the shafts begin to fly, and take refuge among the trees or in the Nunnery."

"Women's counsel is good sometimes," said Bolle. "Form up, Foterells, and march."

"Nay," broke in Cicely, "loose Bridget first, lest they should burn her after all; I'll not stir else."

So Bridget was hacked free, and together with the wounded men, of whom there were several, dragged and supported thence. Then began a running fight, but one in which they still held their own. Yet they would have been overwhelmed at last, for the women and the wounded hampered them, had not help come. For as they hewed their path towards the belt of trees with the Abbot's fierce fellows, some of whom were French or Spanish, hanging on their flanks, suddenly, in the gap where the roadway ran, appeared a horse galloping and on it a woman, who clung to its mane with both hands, and after her many armed men.

"Look, Emlyn, look!" exclaimed Cicely. "Who is that?" for she could not believe her eyes.

"Who but Mother Matilda," answered Emlyn; "and by the saints, she is a strange sight!"

A strange sight she was indeed, for her hood was gone, her hair, that was ever so neat, flew loose, her robe was ruckled up about her knees, the rosary and crucifix she wore streamed on the air behind her and beat against her back, and her garb had burst open at the front; in short, never was holy, aged Prioress seen in such a state before. Down she came on them like a whirlwind, for her frightened horse scented its Blossholme stable, clinging grimly to her unaccustomed seat, and crying as she sped--

"For God's love, stop this mad beast!"

Bolle caught it by the bridle and threw it to its haunches so that, its rider speeding on, flew over its head on to the broad breast of the yeoman who had watched the child, and there rested thankfully. For, as Mother Matilda said afterwards with her gentle smile, never before did she know what comfort there was to be found in man.

When at length she loosed her arms from about his neck the yeoman stood her on her feet, saying that this was worse than the baby, and her wandering eyes fell upon Cicely.

"So I am in time! Oh! never more will I revile that horse," she exclaimed, and sinking to her knees then and there she gasped out some prayer of thankfulness. Meanwhile, those who followed her had reined up in front, and the Abbot's soldiers with the accompanying crowd had halted behind, not knowing what to make of these strangers, so that Bolle and his party with the women were now between the two.

From among the new-comers rode out a fat, coarse man, with a pompous air as of one who is accustomed to be obeyed, who inquired in a laboured voice, for he was breathless from hard riding, what all this turmoil meant.

"Ask the Abbot of Blossholme," said some one, "for it is his work."

"Abbot of Blossholme? That's the man I want," puffed the fat stranger.

"Appear, Abbot of Blossholme, and give account of these doings. And you fellows," he added to his escort, "range up and be ready, lest this said priest should prove contumacious."

Now the Abbot stepped forward with some of his monks and, looking the horseman up and down, said--

"Who may it be that demands account so roughly of a consecrated Abbot?"

"A consecrated Abbot? A consecrated peacock, a tumultuous, turbulent, traitorous priest, a Spanish rogue ruffler who, I am told, keeps about him a band of bloody mercenaries to break the King's peace and slay loyal English folk. Well, consecrated Abbot, I'll tell you who I am. I am Thomas Legh, his Grace's Visitor and Royal Commissioner to inspect the Houses called religious, and I am come hither upon complaint made by yonder Prioress of Blossholme Nunnery, as to your dealings with certain of his Highness's subjects whom, she says, you have accused of witchcraft for purposes of revenge and unlawful gain. That is who I am, my fine fowl of an Abbot."

Now when he heard this pompous speech the rage in Maldon's face was replaced by fear, for he knew of this Doctor Legh and his mission, and understood what Thomas Bolle had meant by his cry of, "In the King's name!"