

## CHAPTER XVIII

### OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Through the black night sudden and red there shot a sheet of fire illumining all things as lightning does. Above the roaring of the gale there echoed a dull and heavy noise like to that of muffled thunder. Then after a moment's pause and silence the sky rained stones, and with them the limbs of men.

"The gateway's gone," shouted a great voice, it was that of Bolle. "Out with the ladders!"

Men who were waiting ran up with them and thrust them, four in all, athwart the moat. By the planks that were lashed along their staves they scrambled across and over the piles of shattered masonry into the courtyard beyond where none waited them, for all who watched here were dead or maimed.

"Light the lanterns," shouted Bolle again, "for it will be dark in yonder," and a man who followed with a torch obeyed him.

Then they rushed across the courtyard to the door of the refectory, which stood open. Here in the wide, high-roofed hall they met the mass of Maldon's people pouring back from the faggoted breach, where they had been gathered, expecting attack, some of them also bearing lanterns. For

a moment the two parties stood staring at each other; then followed a wild and savage scene. With shouts and oaths and battle-cries they fought furiously. The massive, oaken tables were overthrown, by the red flicker of the pole-borne lanterns men grappled and fell and slew each other upon the floor. A priest struck down a yeoman with a brazen crucifix, and next moment himself was brained with its broken shaft.

"For God and Grace!" shouted some; "For the King and Harflete!" answered others.

"Keep line! Keep line!" roared Bolle, "and sweep them out."

The lanterns were dashed down and extinguished till but one remained, a red and wavering star. Hoarse voices shouted for light, for none knew friend from foe. It came; some one had fired the tapestries and the blaze ran up them to the roof. Then fearing lest they should be roasted, the Abbot's folk gave way and fled to the farther door, followed by their foes. Here it was that most of them fell, for they jammed in the doorway and were cut down there are on the stair beyond.

While Bolle still plied his axe fiercely, some one caught his arm and screamed into his ear--

"Let be! Let be! The wretch is sped."

In his red wrath he turned to strike the speaker, and saw by the flare

that it was Cicely.

"What do you here?" he cried. "Get gone."

"Fool," she answered in a low, fierce voice, "I seek my husband. Show me the path ere it be too late, you know it alone. Come, Jeffrey Stokes, a lantern, a lantern!"

Jeffrey appeared, sword in one hand and lantern in the other, and with him Emlyn, who also held a sword which she had plucked from a fallen man, Emlyn still foul with the filth of the sewer and the mud of the moat.

"I may not leave," muttered Thomas Bolle. "I seek Maldon."

"On to the dungeons," shrieked Emlyn, "or I will stab you. I heard them give word to kill Harflete."

Then he snatched the light from Jeffrey's hand, and crying "Follow me," rushed along a passage till they came to an open door and beyond it to stairs. They descended the stairs and passed other passages which ran underground, till a sudden turn to the right brought them to a little walled-in place with a vaulted roof. Two torches flared in iron holders in the masonry, and by the light of them they saw a strange and fearful sight.

At the end of the open place a heavy, nail-studded door stood wide, revealing a cell, or rather a little cave beyond--those who are curious can see it to this day. Fastened by a chain to the wall of this dungeon was a man, who held in his hand a three-legged stool and tugged at his chain like a maddened beast. In front of him, holding the doorway, stood a tall, lank priest, his robe tucked up into his girdle. He was wounded, for blood poured from his shaven crown and he plied a great sword with both hands, striking savagely at four men who tried to cut him down. As Bolle and his party appeared, one of these men fell beneath the priest's blows, and another took his place, shouting--

"Out of the way, traitor. We would kill Harflete, not you."

"We die or live together, murderers," answered the priest in a thick, gasping voice.

At this moment one of them, it was he who had spoken, heard the sound of the rescuers' footsteps and glanced back. In an instant he turned and was running past them like a hare. As he went the light from the lantern fell upon his face, and Emlyn knew it for that of the Abbot. She struck at him with the sword she held, but the steel glanced from his mail. He also struck, but at the lantern, dashing it to the ground.

"Seize him," screamed Emlyn. "Seize Maldon, Jeffrey," and at the words Stokes bounded away, only to return presently, having lost him in the dark passages. Then with a roar Bolle leaped upon the two remaining

men-at-arms as they faced about, and very soon between his axe and the sword of the priest behind, they sank to the ground and died still fighting, who knew they had no hope of quarter.

It was over and done and dreadful silence fell upon the place, the silence of the dead broken only by the heavy breathing of those who remained alive. There the wounded monk leaned against the door-post, his red sword drooping to the floor. There Harflete, the stool still lifted, rested his weight against the chain and peered forward in amazement, swaying as though from weakness. And lastly there lay the three slain men, one of whom still moved a little.

Cicely crept forward; over the dead she went and past the priest till she stood face to face with the prisoner.

"Come nearer and I will dash out your brains," he said in a hoarse voice, for such light as there was came from behind her whom he thought to be but another of the murderers.

Then at length she found her voice.

"Christopher!" she cried, "Christopher!"

He hearkened, and the stool fell from his hand.

"The Voice again," he muttered. "Well, 'tis time. Tarry a while, Wife, I

come, I come!" and he fell back against the wall shutting his eyes.

She leapt to him, and throwing her arms about him kissed his lips, his poor, bloodless lips. The shut eyes opened.

"Death might be worse," he said, "but so I knew that we would meet."

Now Emlyn, seeing some change in his face, snatched one of the torches from its iron and ran forward, holding it so that the light fell full on Cicely.

"Oh, Christopher," she cried, "I am no ghost, but your living wife."

He heard, he stared, he stared again, then lifted his thin hand and stroked her hair.

"Oh God," he exclaimed, "the dead live!" and down he fell in a heap at her feet.

They thrust Cicely aside, Cicely who stood there shivering, she who thought he had gone again and this time for ever. With difficulty they broke the chain whereby he had been held like a kennelled hound, and bore him, still senseless, up the long passages, Bolle going ahead as guard and Jeffrey Stokes following after. Behind them came Emlyn supporting the wounded monk Martin, for it was he and no other who had saved the life of Christopher.

As they went up towards the stairs they heard a roaring noise.

"Fire!" said Cicely, who knew that sound well, and next instant the light of it burst upon them and its smoke wrapped them round. The Abbey was ablaze, and its wide hall in front looked like the mouth of hell.

"Did I not prophesy that it would be so--yonder at Cranwell burning?" asked Emlyn, with a fierce laugh.

"Follow me!" shouted Bolle. "Be swift now ere the roof falls and traps us."

On they went desperately, leaving the hall on their left, and well for them was it that Thomas knew the way. One little chamber through which they passed had already caught, for flakes of fire fell among them from above and here the smoke was very thick. They were through it, who even a minute later could never have walked that path and lived. They were through it and out into the open air by the cloister door, which those who fled before them had left wide. They reached the moat just where the breach had been mended with faggots, and mounting on them Bolle shouted till one of his own men heard him and dropped the bow that he had raised to shoot him as a rebel. Then planks and ladders were brought, and at last they escaped from danger and the intolerable heat.

Thus it was that Cicely who lost her love in fire, in fire found him once again.

For Christopher was not dead as at first they feared. They carried him to the Priory, and there Emlyn, having felt his heart and found that it still beat, though faintly, sent Mother Matilda to fetch some of that Portugal wine of hers which Commissioner Legh had praised. Spoonful by spoonful she poured it down his throat, till at length he opened his eyes, though only to shut them again in natural sleep, for the wine had taken a hold of his starved body and weakened brain. For hour after hour Cicely sat by him, only rising from time to time to watch the burning of the great Abbey church, as once she had watched that of its dormers and farm-steading.

About three in the morning the lead ceased to pour down in a silvery molten shower, its roofs fell in, and by dawn it was nothing but a fire-blackened shell much as it remains to-day. Just before daybreak Emlyn came to her, saying--

"There is one who would speak with you."

"I cannot see him," she answered, "I bide by my husband."

"Yet you should," said Emlyn, "since but for him you would now have no husband. The monk Martin, who held off the murderers, is dying and



desires to bid you farewell."

Then Cicely went to find the man still conscious, but fading away with the flow of his own blood, which could not be stayed by any skill they had.

"I have come to thank you," she murmured, who knew not what else to say.

"Thank me not," he answered faintly, pausing often between his words, "who did but strive to repay part of a great debt. Last winter I shared in awful sin, in obedience, not to my heart, but to my vows. I who was set to watch the body of your husband found that he lived, and by my help he was borne away upon a ship. That ship was taken by the Infidels, and afterwards he and I and Jeffrey served together upon their galleys. There I fell sick, and your husband nursed me back to life. It was I who brought you the deeds and wrote the letter which I gave to Emlyn Stower. My vows still held me fast, and I did no more. This night I broke their bonds, for when I heard the order given that he should be slain I ran down before the murderers and fought my best, forgetting that I was a priest, till at length you came. Let this atone my crimes against my Country, my King and you that I died for my friend at last, as I am glad to do who find this world--too difficult."

"I will tell him if he lives," sobbed Cicely.

He opened his eyes, which had shut, and answered--

"Oh, he'll live, he'll live. You have had many troubles, but, save for the creep of age and death, they are over. I can see and know."

Again he shut his eyes and the watchers thought that all was done, till of a sudden once more he opened them and added in broken tones--

"The Abbot--show him mercy--if you can. He is wicked and cruel, but I have been his confessor and know his heart. He strove for a good end--by an evil road. Queen Catherine was the King's lawful wife. To seize the monasteries is shameless theft. Also his blood is not English; he sees otherwise, and serves the Pope as I do, and Spain, as I do not. As I have helped you, help him. Judge not, that ye be not judged. Promise!" and he raised himself a little on the bed and looked at her earnestly.

"I promise," answered Cicely, and as she spoke Martin smiled. Then his face turned quite grey, all the light went out of his eyes and a moment later Emlyn threw a linen cloth over his head. It was finished.

Cicely returned to Christopher to find him sitting up in bed drinking a bowl of broth.

"Oh, my husband, my husband," she said, casting her arms about him. Then she took her son and laid him upon his father's breast.

Three days had gone by and Christopher and Cicely were walking in the shrubbery of Shefton Hall. By now, although still weak, he was almost recovered, whose only sickness had been grief and famine, for which joy and plenty are wonderful medicines. It was evening, a pleasant and beautiful early winter evening just fading into night. Seated on a bench he had been telling her his adventures, and they were a moving tale worthy, as Cicely wrote afterwards in a letter to old Jacob Smith that is still extant in her fine, quaint handwriting, to be recorded in a book, though this it would seem was never done.

He told her of the great fight on the ship Great Yarmouth, when they were taken by the two Turkish pirates, and of how bravely Father Martin bore himself. Afterwards when they came to the galleys, by good fortune Martin, Jeffrey and he served on the same bench. Then Martin fell sick of some Southern fever, and being in port at Tunis at the time, where they could get fruit, they nursed him back to life and strength. Four months later the Emperor Charles attacked Tunis, and when it fell, through God's mercy, they were rescued with the other Christian slaves, after which Martin returned to England taking old Sir John's writings to be delivered to his next heir, for they all believed Cicely to be dead.

But Christopher and Jeffrey, having nothing to seek at home, stayed to fight with the Spaniards against the Turks, who had oppressed them so sorely. When that war was over they made their way back to England, not knowing where else to go and having a score to settle against the Spanish Abbot of Blossholme, and--well, she knew the rest.

Aye, answered Cicely, she knew it and never would forget it, but it was chill for him sitting on that bench, he must come in. Christopher laughed at her, and answered--

"Sweetheart, if you could have seen the bench on which it was my lot to sit yonder off the coast of Africa, but new recovered from the wound which I had of Maldon's men at Cranwell Towers, you would not be anxious for me here. There for six long months chained to Jeffrey and to Father Martin, for it pleased those heathen devils to keep the three of us together, perhaps that they might watch us better, through the hot days that scorched us, and the chill, wet nights, we laboured at our oars, while infidel overseers ran up and down the boards and thrashed us with their whips of hide. Yes," he added slowly, "they thrashed us as though we were oxen in a yoke. You have seen the scars upon my back."

"Oh, God! to think of it," she murmured; "you, a noble Englishman, beaten by those savage wretches like a brute? How did you bear it, Christopher?"

"I know not, Wife. I think that had it not been for that angel in man's form, the priest Martin--peace be to his noble soul--that angel who thrice at least has saved my life, I should have dashed out my brains against the thwarts, or starved myself to death, or provoked the Moors to kill me; I, who, thinking you dead, had no hope to live for. But Martin taught me otherwise; he preached patience and submission,

saying that I did not suffer for nothing--of his own miseries he never spoke--and that he was sure that fearful as was my lot, all things worked together for good to me."

"And therefore it was that you lived on, Husband? Oh! I'll build a shrine to that saint Martin."

"Not altogether, dear. I'll tell you true; I lived for vengeance--vengeance on Clement Maldon, the man, or the devil, who wrought me all this ill, and, being yet young, made me old with grief and pain," and he pointed to his scarred forehead and the hair above, that was now grizzled with white, "and vengeance, too, upon those worshippers of Mohammed, my masters. Yes; though Martin reproved me when I made confession to him, I think it was for that I lived, and the saints know," he added grimly, "afterwards at the sack, and elsewhere, I took it on the Turks. Oh! you should have seen the last meeting of Jeffrey and myself with the captain of that galley and his officers who had so often beaten us. No, I am glad you did not see it, for it was fierce and bloody; even the hard-hearted Spaniards stared."

He paused, and perhaps to change the current of his mind--for during all his after-life, when Christopher brooded on these things he grew gloomy for hours, and even days--Cicely said hurriedly--

"I wonder what has chanced to our enemy, the Abbot. The search has been close, the roads are watched, and we know that he had none with him, for

all his foreign soldiers are slain or taken. I think he must be dead in the fire, Christopher."

He shook his head.

"A devil does not die in fire. He is away somewhere, to plot fresh murders--perhaps our own and our boy's. Oh!" he added savagely, "till my hands are about his throat and my dagger is in his heart there's no peace for me, who have a score to pay and you both to guard."

Cicely knew not what to answer; indeed, when this mood was on him it was hard to reason with Christopher, who had suffered so fearfully, and, like herself, been saved but by a miracle or the mandate of Heaven.

Of a sudden a hush fell upon the place. The blackbirds ceased their winter chatter in the laurels; it grew so still that they heard a dead leaf drop to the ground. The night was at hand. One last red ray from the set sun struck across the frosty sky and was reflected to the earth. In the light of that ray Christopher's trained eyes caught the gleam of something white that moved in the shadow of the beech tree where they sat. Like a tiger he sprang at it, and the next moment haled out a man.

"Look," he said, twisting the head of his captive so that the glow fell on it. "Look; I have the snake. Ah! Wife, you saw nothing, but I saw him, and here he is at last--at last!"

"The Abbot!" gasped Cicely.

The Abbot it was indeed, but oh! how changed. His plump, olive-coloured countenance had shrunk to that of a skeleton still covered by yellow skin, in which the dark eyes rolled bloodshot and unnaturally large. His tonsure and jaws showed a growth of stubbly grey hair, his frame had become weak and small, his soft and delicate hands resembled those of a woman dead of some wasting disease, and, like his garments, were clogged with dirt. The mail shirt he wore hung loose upon him; one of his shoes was gone, and the toes peeped through his stockinged foot. He was but a living misery.

"Deliver your arms," growled Christopher, shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat, "or you die. Do you yield? Answer!"

"How can he," broke in Cicely, "when you have him by the throat?"

Christopher loosed his grip of the man's windpipe, and instead seized his wrists, whereon the Abbot drew a great breath, for he was almost choked, and fell to his knees, in weakness, not in supplication.

"I came to you for mercy," he said presently, "but, having overheard your talk, know that I can hope for none. Indeed, why should I, who showed none, and whose great cause seems dead, that cause for which I fought and lived? Let me die with it. I ask no more. Still, you are a gentleman, and therefore I beg a favour of you. Do not hand me over to

be drawn, hanged and quartered by your brute-king. Kill me now. You can say that I attacked you, and that you did it in self-defence. I have no arms, but you may set a dagger in my hand."

Christopher looked down at the poor creature huddled at his feet and laughed.

"Who would believe me?" he asked; "though, indeed, who would question, seeing that your life is forfeit to me or any who can take it? Yet that is a matter of which the King's Justices shall judge."

Maldon shivered. "Drawn, hanged and quartered," he repeated beneath his breath. "Drawn, hanged and quartered as a traitor to one I never served!"

"Why not?" asked Christopher. "You have played a cruel game, and lost."

He made no answer; indeed, it was Cicely who spoke, saying--

"How came you in such a case? We thought you fled."

"Lady," he answered, "I've starved for three days and nights in a hole in the ground like an earthed-up fox; a culvert in your garden hid me. At last I crept out to see the light and die, and heard you talking, and thought that I would ask for mercy, since mortal extremity has no honour."



"Mercy!" said Cicely. "Of your treasons I say nothing, for you are not English, and serve your own king, who years ago sent you here to plot against England. But look on this man, my husband. Did he not starve for three days and nights in your strong dungeon ere you came thither to massacre him? Did you not strive to burn him in his Hall, and ship him wounded across the seas to doom? Did you not send your assassin to kill my babe, who stood between you and the wealth you needed for your plots, and bind me, the mother, to the stake--a food for fire? Did you not shoot down my father in the wood, fearing lest he should prove you traitor, and after rob me of my heritage? Did you not compel your monks to work evil and bring some of them to their deaths? Oh! have done! Worm dressed up as God's priest, how can you writhe there and ask for mercy?"

"I said I came to seek for mercy because the agony of sleepless hunger drove me, who now seek only death. Insult not the fallen, Cicely Foterell, but take the vengeance that is your due, and kill," replied the Abbot, looking up at her with his hollow eyes, adding, with a laugh that sounded like a groan, "Come, Sir Christopher; you have got a sword, and it is time you went to supper. The air is cold; your wife--if such she be--said it but now."

"Cicely," said Christopher, "go to the Hall and summon Jeffrey Stokes. Emlyn will know where to find him."

"Emlyn!" groaned the Abbot. "Give me not over to Emlyn. She'd torture

me."

"Nay," said Christopher, "this is not Blossholme Abbey; though what may chance in London I know not. Go now, Wife."

But Cicely did not stir; she only stared at the wretched creature at her feet.

"I bid you go," repeated Christopher.

"And I'll not obey," she answered. "Do you remember what I promised Martin ere he died?"

"Martin dead! Is Martin, who saved your husband, dead?" exclaimed the Abbot, lifting his face and letting it fall again. "Happy Martin, to be dead."

"I was not there, and I am not bound by your promises, Cicely."

"But I am, and you and I are one. I vowed mercy to this man if he should fall into our power, and mercy he shall have."

"Then you spare him to destroy us. The wheels go round quick in England, Wife."

"So be it. What I vowed, I vowed. With God be the rest. He has watched

us well heretofore, and I think," she added, with one of her bursts of triumphant faith, "will do so to the end. Abbot Maldon, sinful, fallen Abbot Maldon, you are as you were made, and Martin, the saint, said that there is good in your heart, though you have shown none of it to me or mine. Now, look you; yonder is a wooden summer-house, thatched and warm. Get you there, and I'll send you food and wine and new clothing by one who will not talk; also a pass to Lincoln. By to-morrow's dawn you will be refreshed, and then you will find a good horse tied to yonder tree, and so away to sanctuary at Lincoln, and, if aught of ill befalls you afterwards, know it is not our doing, but that of some other enemy, or of God, with Whom I pray you make your peace. May He forgive you, as I do, Who knows all hearts, which I do not. Now, farewell. Nay, say nothing. There is nothing to be said. Come, Christopher, for this once you obey me, not I you."

So they went, and the wretched man raised himself upon his hands and looked after them, but what passed in his heart at that moment none will ever learn.

Some months had gone by and Blossholme, with all the country round, was once more at peace. The tide of trouble had rolled away northward, whence came rumours of renewed rebellion. Abbot Maldon had been seen no more, and for a while it was believed that although he never took sanctuary at Lincoln, he had done a wiser thing and fled to Spain. Then

Emlyn, who heard everything, got news that this was not so, but that he was foremost among those who stirred up sedition and war along the Scottish border.

"I can well believe it," said Cicely. "The sow must to its wallowing in the mire. Nature made him a plotter, and he will follow his heart to the end."

"Ere long he may find it hard to follow his head," answered Emlyn grimly. "Oh, to think that you had that wolf caged and turned him loose again to prey on England and on us!"

"I did but show mercy to the fallen, Nurse."

"Mercy? I call it madness. Why, when Jeffrey and Thomas heard of it I thought they would burst with rage, especially Jeffrey, who loved your father well and loved not the infidel galleys," answered the fierce Emlyn.

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord," murmured Cicely in a gentle voice.

"The Lord also said that whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed. Why, I've heard this Maldon quote it to your husband at Cranwell Towers."

"So will it be, Emlyn, if so it is to be, only let others shed that cruel blood. I would not have it on my hands or on those of any of my house, for after all he is an ordained priest of my own faith. Moreover, I had promised. Still, talk not of the matter lest it should bring trouble on us all, who had no right to loose him. Also these are ill thoughts for your wedding day. Go, deck yourself in those fine clothes which Jacob Smith has sent from London, since the clergyman will be at Blossholme church by four, and I think that Thomas has waited long enough for you."

Emlyn smiled a little, and shrugged her broad shoulders, muttering something that would have angered Thomas if he could have heard it, as Cicely went off to join Christopher, who called to her from another room.

She found him adding up figures on paper, a very different Christopher to the broken man they had rescued from the dungeon, though still much aged by the terrors of the past year and just now looking rueful.

"See, Sweet," he said, "we should give a marriage portion to Emlyn, who has earned it if ever woman did, but where it is to come from I know not. Those Abbey lands Jacob Smith bought from the King are not yours yet, nor Henry's either, though doubtless he will have them soon.

Neither have any rents been paid to you from your own estates, and when they come they are promised up in London, while the Abbot's razor has shaved my own poor parsimony bare as a churchyard skull. Also Mother

Matilda and her nuns must be kept till we can endow them with their lands again. One day we, or our boy yonder, may be rich, but till it comes there are hard times for all of us."

"Not so hard as some we have known, Husband," she answered, laughing, "for at least we are free and have food to eat, and for the rest we will borrow from Jacob Smith on the jewels that remain over. Indeed, I have written to him and he will not refuse."

"Aye, but how about Thomas and Emlyn?"

"They must do as their betters do. Though there is little stock on it, Thomas has the Manor Farm at low rent, which he may pay when he can, while Jacob put a present in the pocket of Emlyn's wedding dress. What's more, I think he will make her his heir, and if so she will be rich indeed, so rich that I shall have to curtsy to her. Now, go make ready for this marriage, and as you have no fine doublet, bid Jeffrey put on your mail, for you look best in that, or so at least I think, who to my mind look best in anything you chance to wear."

Then while he demurred, saying that there was now no need to bear arms in Blossholme, also that Jeffrey was away settling himself as landlord of the Ford Inn, the same that the Abbot had once promised to Flounder Megges, she kissed him, and seizing her boy, who lay crowing in the sunlight, danced with him from the room. For oh, Cicely's heart was merry.

There were many folk at the marriage of Emlyn Stower and Thomas Bolle, for of late Blossholme had been but a sorry place, and this wedding came to it like the breath of spring to the woods and meads around, a hint of happiness after the miseries of winter. The story of the pair had got about also. How they had been pledged in youth and separated by scheming men for their own purposes. How Emlyn had been married off against her will to an aged partner whom she hated, and Thomas, who was set down as a fool, forced to serve the monastery as a lay-brother, a strong hind skilled in the management of cattle and such matters, but half crazy, as indeed it had suited him to feign himself to be.

People knew the end of the thing also; that Emlyn had cursed the Abbot, and that her curse had been fulfilled. That Thomas Bolle had shaken off his superstitious fears and risen up against him and at last been given the commission of the King, and, as his Grace's officer, shown himself no fool but a man of mettle who had taken the Abbey by storm and rescued Sir Christopher Harflete from its dungeons. Emlyn also, like her mistress, had been bound to the stake as a witch, and saved from burning by this same Thomas, who with her had been concerned in many remarkable events whereof the countryside was full of tales, true or false. Now at last after all these adventures they came together to be wed, and who was there for ten miles round that would not see it done?

The monks being gone Father Roger Necton, the old vicar of Cranwell, he who had united Christopher and his wife Cicely in strange circumstances, and for that deed been obliged to fly for his life when the last Abbot of Blossholme burned Cranwell Towers, came to tie the knot before his great congregation. Notwithstanding that they were both of middle age, Emlyn in her grand gown and the brawny, red-haired Thomas in his yeoman's garb of green, such as he had worn when he wooed her many years before he put on the monk's russet robe, made a fine and handsome pair at the altar. Or so folk thought, though some friend of the monks, remembering Bolle's devil's livery and Emlyn's repute as a sorceress, cried out from the shadow that Satan was marrying a witch, and for his pains got his head broken by Jeffrey Stokes.

So the white-haired and gentle Father Necton, having first read the King's order releasing Thomas from his vows, tied them fast according to the ancient rites and blessed them both. At length it was finished, and the pair walked from the old church to the Manor Farm, where they were to dwell, followed, as was the custom, by a company of their friends and well-wishers. As they went they passed through a little stretch of woodland by the stream, where on this spring day the wild daffodils and lilies of the valley were abloom making sweet the air. Here Emlyn paused a moment and said to her husband, Captain Bolle--

"Do you remember this place?"

"Aye, Wife," he answered, "it was here that we plighted our troth in



youth, and looked up to see Maldon passing us just beyond that same oak, and felt the shadow of him strike cold to our hearts. You spoke of it yonder in the Priory chapel when I came up by the secret way, and its memory made me mad."

"Yes, Thomas, I spoke of it," answered Emlyn in a rich and gentle voice, a new voice to him. "Well, now let its memory make you happy, as, notwithstanding all my faults, I will if I can," and swiftly she bent towards him and kissed him, adding, "Come on, Husband, they press behind us and I hope that we have done with perils and plottings."

"Amen," answered Bolle, and as he spoke certain strange men who wore the King's colours and carried a long ladder went by them at a distance. Wondering what was their business at Blossholme, the pair passed through the last of the woodland and reached the rise whence they could see the gaunt skeleton of the burnt-out Abbey that appeared within fifty paces of them. At this they paused to look, and presently were joined there by Christopher and Cicely, Mother Matilda and her good nuns, Jeffrey Stokes, and others. The place seemed grim and desolate in the evening light, and all of them stood staring at it filled with their separate thoughts.

"What is that?" said Cicely, with a start, pointing to a round black object new set over the ruin of the gateway tower.

Just then a red ray from the sunset struck upon the thing.

It was the severed head of Clement Maldon the Spaniard.