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CHARLOTTE
MARY**

THE LITTLE DUKE:
RICHARD THE FEARLESS

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Charlotte M. Yonge

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CHAPTER I

On a bright autumn day, as long ago as the year 943, there was a great bustle in the Castle of Bayeux in Normandy.

The hall was large and low, the roof arched, and supported on thick short columns, almost like the crypt of a Cathedral; the walls were thick, and the windows, which had no glass, were very small, set in such a depth of wall that there was a wide deep window seat, upon which the rain might beat, without reaching the interior of the room. And even if it had come in, there was nothing for it to hurt, for the walls were of rough stone, and the floor of tiles. There was a fire at each end of this great dark apartment, but there were no chimneys over the ample hearths, and the smoke curled about in thick white folds in the vaulted roof, adding to the wreaths of soot, which made the hall look still darker.

The fire at the lower end was by far the largest and hottest. Great black cauldrons hung over it, and servants, both men and women, with red faces, bare and grimed arms, and long iron hooks, or pots and pans, were busied around it. At the other end, which was raised about three steps above the floor of the hall, other servants were engaged. Two young maidens were strewing fresh rushes on the floor; some men were setting up a long table of rough boards, supported on trestles, and then ranging upon it silver cups, drinking horns, and wooden trenchers.

Benches were placed to receive most of the guests, but in the middle, at the place of honour, was a high chair with very thick crossing legs, and the arms curiously carved with lions' faces and claws; a clumsy wooden footstool was set in front, and the silver drinking-cup on the table was of far more beautiful workmanship than the others, richly chased with vine leaves and grapes, and figures of little boys with goats' legs. If that cup could have told its story, it would have been a strange one, for it had been made long since, in the old Roman times, and been carried off from Italy by some Northman pirate.

From one of these scenes of activity to the other, there moved a stately old lady: her long thick light hair, hardly touched with grey, was bound round her head, under a tall white cap, with a band passing under her chin: she wore a long sweeping dark robe, with wide hanging sleeves, and thick gold ear-rings and necklace, which had possibly come from the same quarter as the cup. She directed the servants, inspected both the cookery and arrangements of the table, held council with an old steward, now and then looked rather anxiously from the window, as if expecting some one, and began to say something about fears that these loitering youths would not bring home the venison in time for Duke William's supper.

Presently, she looked up rejoiced, for a few notes of a bugle-horn were sounded; there was a clattering of feet, and in a few moments there bounded into the hall, a boy of about eight years old, his cheeks and large blue eyes bright with air and exercise, and his long light-brown hair streaming behind him, as he ran forward flourishing a bow in his hand, and crying out, "I hit him, I hit him!

Dame Astrida, do you hear? 'Tis a stag of ten branches, and I hit him in the neck."

"You! my Lord Richard! you killed him?"

"Oh, no, I only struck him. It was Osmond's shaft that took him in the eye, and—Look you, Fru Astrida, he came thus through the wood, and I stood here, it might be, under the great elm with my bow thus"—And Richard was beginning to act over again the whole scene of the deer-hunt, but Fru, that is to say, Lady Astrida, was too busy to listen, and broke in with, "Have they brought home the haunch?"

"Yes, Walter is bringing it. I had a long arrow—"

A stout forester was at this instant seen bringing in the venison, and Dame Astrida hastened to meet it, and gave directions, little Richard following her all the way, and talking as eagerly as if she was attending to him, showing how he shot, how Osmond shot, how the deer bounded, and how it fell, and then counting the branches of its antlers, always ending with, "This is something to tell my father. Do you think he will come soon?"

In the meantime two men entered the hall, one about fifty, the other, one or two-and-twenty, both in hunting dresses of plain leather, crossed by broad embroidered belts, supporting a knife, and a bugle-horn. The elder was broad-shouldered, sun-burnt, ruddy, and rather stern-looking; the younger, who was also the taller, was slightly made, and very active, with a bright keen grey eye, and merry smile. These were Dame Astrida's son, Sir Eric de Centeville, and her grandson, Osmond; and to their care Duke William of Normandy had committed his only child, Richard, to be fostered, or brought up.¹

It was always the custom among the Northmen, that young princes should thus be put under the care of some trusty vassal, instead of being brought up at home, and one reason why the Centevilles had been chosen by Duke William was, that both Sir Eric and his mother spoke only the old Norwegian tongue, which he wished young Richard to understand well, whereas, in other parts of the Duchy, the Normans had forgotten their own tongue, and had taken up what was then called the Languéd'ouï, a language between German and Latin, which was the beginning of French.

On this day, Duke William himself was expected at Bayeux, to pay a visit to his son before setting out on a journey to settle the disputes between the Counts of Flanders and Montreuil, and this was the reason of Fru Astrida's great preparations. No sooner had she seen the haunch placed upon a spit, which a little boy was to turn before the fire, than she turned to dress something else, namely, the young Prince Richard himself, whom she led off to one of the upper rooms, and there he had full time to talk, while she, great lady though she was, herself combed smooth his long flowing curls, and fastened his short scarlet cloth tunic, which just reached to his knee, leaving his neck, arms, and legs bare. He begged hard to be allowed to wear a short, beautifully ornamented dagger at his belt, but this Fru Astrida would not allow.

"You will have enough to do with steel and dagger before your life is at an end," said she, "without seeking to begin over soon."

"To be sure I shall," answered Richard. "I will be called Richard of the Sharp Axe, or the Bold Spirit, I promise you, Fru Astrida. We are as brave in these days as the Sigurds and Ragnars you sing of! I only wish there were serpents and dragons to slay here in Normandy."

"Never fear but you will find even too many of them," said Dame Astrida; "there be dragons of wrong here and everywhere, quite as venomous as any in my Sagas."

"I fear them not," said Richard, but half understanding her, "if you would only let me have the dagger! But, hark! hark!" he darted to the window. "They come, they come! There is the banner of Normandy."

Away ran the happy child, and never rested till he stood at the bottom of the long, steep, stone stair, leading to the embattled porch. Thither came the Baron de Centeville, and his son, to receive their Prince. Richard looked up at Osmond, saying, "Let me hold his stirrup," and then sprang up and shouted for joy, as under the arched gateway there came a tall black horse, bearing the stately form of the Duke of Normandy. His purple robe was fastened round him by a rich belt, sustaining the mighty weapon, from which he was called "William of the long Sword," his legs and feet were cased in linked steel chain-work, his gilded spurs were on his heels, and his short brown hair was covered by his ducal cap of purple, turned up with fur, and a feather fastened in by a jewelled clasp.

¹ Richard's place of education was Bayeaux; for, as Duke William says in the rhymed Chronicle of Normandy,—"*Si à Roem le faz garderE norir, gaires longementIl ne saura parler neiantDaneis, kar nul n l'i parole.Si voil qu'il seit à tele escoleQù l'en le sache doctrienerQue as Daneis sache parler.Ci ne sevent riens fors RomanzMais à Baieux en à tanzQui ne sevent si Daneis non.*"

His brow was grave and thoughtful, and there was something both of dignity and sorrow in his face, at the first moment of looking at it, recalling the recollection that he had early lost his young wife, the Duchess Emma, and that he was beset by many cares and toils; but the next glance generally conveyed encouragement, so full of mildness were his eyes, and so kind the expression of his lips.

And now, how bright a smile beamed upon the little Richard, who, for the first time, paid him the duty of a pupil in chivalry, by holding the stirrup while he sprung from his horse. Next, Richard knelt to receive his blessing, which was always the custom when children met their parents. The Duke laid his hand on his head, saying, "God of His mercy bless thee, my son," and lifting him in his arms, held him to his breast, and let him cling to his neck and kiss him again and again, before setting him down, while Sir Eric came forward, bent his knee, kissed the hand of his Prince, and welcomed him to his Castle.

It would take too long to tell all the friendly and courteous words that were spoken, the greeting of the Duke and the noble old Lady Astrida, and the reception of the Barons who had come in the train of their Lord. Richard was bidden to greet them, but, though he held out his hand as desired, he shrank a little to his father's side, gazing at them in dread and shyness.

There was Count Bernard, of Harcourt, called the "Dane,"² with his shaggy red hair and beard, to which a touch of grey had given a strange unnatural tint, his eyes looking fierce and wild under his thick eyebrows, one of them mis-shapen in consequence of a sword cut, which had left a broad red and purple scar across both cheek and forehead. There, too, came tall Baron Rainulf, of Ferrières, cased in a linked steel hauberk, that rang as he walked, and the men-at-arms, with helmets and shields, looking as if Sir Eric's armour that hung in the hail had come to life and was walking about.

They sat down to Fru Astrida's banquet, the old Lady at the Duke's right hand, and the Count of Harcourt on his left; Osmond carved for the Duke, and Richard handed his cup and trencher.

All through the meal, the Duke and his Lords talked earnestly of the expedition on which they were bound to meet Count Arnulf of Flanders, on a little islet in the river Somme, there to come to some agreement, by which Arnulf might make restitution to Count Herluin of Montreuil, for certain wrongs which he had done him.

Some said that this would be the fittest time for requiring Arnulf to yield up some towns on his borders, to which Normandy had long laid claim, but the Duke shook his head, saying that he must seek no selfish advantage, when called to judge between others.

Richard was rather tired of their grave talk, and thought the supper very long; but at last it was over, the Grace was said, the boards which had served for tables were removed, and as it was still light, some of the guests went to see how their steeds had been bestowed, others to look at Sir Eric's horses and hounds, and others collected together in groups.

The Duke had time to attend to his little boy, and Richard sat upon his knee and talked, told about all his pleasures, how his arrow had hit the deer to-day, how Sir Eric let him ride out to the chase on his little pony, how Osmond would take him to bathe in the cool bright river, and how he had watched the raven's nest in the top of the old tower.

Duke William listened, and smiled, and seemed as well pleased to hear as the boy was to tell. "And, Richard," said he at last, "have you nought to tell me of Father Lucas, and his great book? What, not a word? Look up, Richard, and tell me how it goes with the learning."³

"Oh, father!" said Richard, in a low voice, playing with the clasp of his father's belt, and looking down, "I don't like those crabbed letters on the old yellow parchment."

"But you try to learn them, I hope!" said the Duke.

² Bernard was founder of the family of Harcourt of Nuneham. Ferrières, the ancestor of that of Ferrars.

³ In the same Chronicle, William Longsword directs that,—*"Tant seit apris qu'il lise un bref Kar ceo ne li ert pas trop gref."*

“Yes, father, I do, but they are very hard, and the words are so long, and Father Lucas will always come when the sun is so bright, and the wood so green, that I know not how to bear to be kept poring over those black hooks and strokes.”

“Poor little fellow,” said Duke William, smiling and Richard, rather encouraged, went on more boldly. “You do not know this reading, noble father?”

“To my sorrow, no,” said the Duke.

“And Sir Eric cannot read, nor Osmond, nor any one, and why must I read, and cramp my fingers with writing, just as if I was a clerk, instead of a young Duke?” Richard looked up in his father’s face, and then hung his head, as if half-ashamed of questioning his will, but the Duke answered him without displeasure.

“It is hard, no doubt, my boy, to you now, but it will be the better for you in the end. I would give much to be able myself to read those holy books which I must now only hear read to me by a clerk, but since I have had the wish, I have had no time to learn as you have now.”

“But Knights and Nobles never learn,” said Richard.

“And do you think it a reason they never should? But you are wrong, my boy, for the Kings of France and England, the Counts of Anjou, of Provence, and Paris, yes, even King Hako of Norway,⁴ can all read.”

“I tell you, Richard, when the treaty was drawn up for restoring this King Louis to his throne, I was ashamed to find myself one of the few crown vassals who could not write his name thereto.”

“But none is so wise or so good as you, father,” said Richard, proudly. “Sir Eric often says so.”

“Sir Eric loves his Duke too well to see his faults,” said Duke William; “but far better and wiser might I have been, had I been taught by such masters as you may be. And hark, Richard, not only can all Princes here read, but in England, King Ethelstane would have every Noble taught; they study in his own palace, with his brothers, and read the good words that King Alfred the truth-teller put into their own tongue for them.”

“I hate the English,” said Richard, raising his head and looking very fierce.

“Hate them? and wherefore?”

“Because they traitorously killed the brave Sea King Ragnar! Fru Astrida sings his death-song, which he chanted when the vipers were gnawing him to death, and he gloried to think how his sons would bring the ravens to feast upon the Saxon. Oh! had I been his son, how I would have carried on the feud! How I would have laughed when I cut down the false traitors, and burnt their palaces!”

Richard’s eye kindled, and his words, as he spoke the old Norse language, flowed into the sort of wild verse in which the Sagas or legendary songs were composed, and which, perhaps, he was unconsciously repeating.

Duke William looked grave.

“Fru Astrida must sing you no more such Sagas,” said he, “if they fill your mind with these revengeful thoughts, fit only for the worshippers of Odin and Thor. Neither Ragnar nor his sons knew better than to rejoice in this deadly vengeance, but we, who are Christians, know that it is for us to forgive.”

“The English had slain their father!” said Richard, looking up with wondering dissatisfied eyes.

“Yes, Richard, and I speak not against them, for they were even as we should have been, had not King Harold the fair-haired driven your grandfather from Denmark. They had not been taught the truth, but to us it has been said, ‘Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.’ Listen to me, my son, Christian as is this nation of ours, this duty of forgiveness is too often neglected, but let it not be so with you. Bear in mind, whenever you see the Cross⁵ marked on our banner, or carved in stone on the Churches, that

⁴ Hako of Norway was educated by Ethelstane of England. It was Foulques le Bon, the contemporary Count of Anjou, who, when derided by Louis IV. for serving in the choir of Tours, wrote the following retort: “The Count of Anjou to the King of France. Apprenez, Monseigneur, qu’un roi sans lettres est une âne couronné.”

⁵ The Banner of Normandy was a cross till William the Conqueror adopted the lion.

it speaks of forgiveness to us; but of that pardon we shall never taste if we forgive not our enemies. Do you mark me, boy?"

Richard hesitated a little, and then said, "Yes, father, but I could never have pardoned, had I been one of Ragnar's sons."

"It may be that you will be in their case, Richard," said the Duke, "and should I fall, as it may well be I shall, in some of the contests that tear to pieces this unhappy Kingdom of France, then, remember what I say now. I charge you, on your duty to God and to your father, that you keep up no feud, no hatred, but rather that you should deem me best revenged, when you have with heart and hand, given the fullest proof of forgiveness to your enemy. Give me your word that you will."

"Yes, father," said Richard, with rather a subdued tone, and resting his head on his father's shoulder. There was a silence for a little space, during which he began to revive into playfulness, to stroke the Duke's short curled beard, and play with his embroidered collar.

In so doing, his fingers caught hold of a silver chain, and pulling it out with a jerk, he saw a silver key attached to it. "Oh, what is that?" he asked eagerly. "What does that key unlock?"

"My greatest treasure," replied Duke William, as he replaced the chain and key within his robe.

"Your greatest treasure, father! Is that your coronet?"

"You will know one day," said his father, putting the little hand down from its too busy investigations; and some of the Barons at that moment returning into the hall, he had no more leisure to bestow on his little son.

The next day, after morning service in the Chapel, and breakfast in the hall, the Duke again set forward on his journey, giving Richard hopes he might return in a fortnight's time, and obtaining from him a promise that he would be very attentive to Father Lucas, and very obedient to Sir Eric de Centeville.

CHAPTER II

One evening Fru Astrida sat in her tall chair in the chimney corner, her distaff, with its load of flax in her hand, while she twisted and drew out the thread, and her spindle danced on the floor.

Opposite to her sat, sleeping in his chair, Sir Eric de Centeville; Osmond was on a low bench within the chimney corner, trimming and shaping with his knife some feathers of the wild goose, which were to fly in a different fashion from their former one, and serve, not to wing the flight of a harmless goose, but of a sharp arrow.

The men of the household sat ranged on benches on one side of the hall, the women on the other; a great red fire, together with an immense flickering lamp which hung from the ceiling, supplied the light; the windows were closed with wooden shutters, and the whole apartment had a cheerful appearance. Two or three large hounds were reposing in front of the hearth, and among them sat little Richard of Normandy, now smoothing down their broad silken ears; now tickling the large cushions of their feet with the end of one of Osmond's feathers; now fairly pulling open the eyes of one of the good-natured sleepy creatures, which only stretched its legs, and remonstrated with a sort of low groan, rather than a growl. The boy's eyes were, all the time, intently fixed on Dame Astrida, as if he would not lose one word of the story she was telling him; how Earl Rollo, his grandfather, had sailed into the mouth of the Seine, and how Archbishop Franco, of Rouen, had come to meet him and brought him the keys of the town, and how not one Neustrian of Rouen had met with harm from the brave Northmen. Then she told him of his grandfather's baptism, and how during the seven days that he wore his white baptismal robes, he had made large gifts to all the chief churches in his dukedom of Normandy.

"Oh, but tell of the paying homage!" said Richard; "and how Sigurd Bloodaxe threw down simple King Charles! Ah! how would I have laughed to see it!"

"Nay, nay, Lord Richard," said the old lady, "I love not that tale. That was ere the Norman learnt courtesy, and rudeness ought rather to be forgotten than remembered, save for the sake of amending it. No, I will rather tell you of our coming to Centeville, and how dreary I thought these smooth meads, and broad soft gliding streams, compared with mine own father's fiord in Norway, shut in with the tall black rocks, and dark pines above them, and far away the snowy mountains rising into the sky. Ah! how blue the waters were in the long summer days when I sat in my father's boat in the little fiord, and—"

Dame Astrida was interrupted. A bugle note rang out at the castle gate; the dogs started to their feet, and uttered a sudden deafening bark; Osmond sprung up, exclaiming, "Hark!" and trying to silence the hounds; and Richard running to Sir Eric, cried, "Wake, wake, Sir Eric, my father is come! Oh, haste to open the gate, and admit him."

"Peace, dogs!" said Sir Eric, slowly rising, as the blast of the horn was repeated. "Go, Osmond, with the porter, and see whether he who comes at such an hour be friend or foe. Stay you here, my Lord," he added, as Richard was running after Osmond; and the little boy obeyed, and stood still, though quivering all over with impatience.

"Tidings from the Duke, I should guess," said Fru Astrida. "It can scarce be himself at such an hour."

"Oh, it must be, dear Fru Astrida!" said Richard. "He said he would come again. Hark, there are horses' feet in the court! I am sure that is his black charger's tread! And I shall not be there to hold his stirrup! Oh! Sir Eric, let me go."

Sir Eric, always a man of few words, only shook his head, and at that moment steps were heard on the stone stairs. Again Richard was about to spring forward, when Osmond returned, his face showing, at a glance, that something was amiss; but all that he said was, "Count Bernard of Harcourt, and Sir Rainulf de Ferrières," and he stood aside to let them pass.

Richard stood still in the midst of the hall, disappointed. Without greeting to Sir Eric, or to any within the hall, the Count of Harcourt came forward to Richard, bent his knee before him, took his hand, and said with a broken voice and heaving breast, "Richard, Duke of Normandy, I am thy liegeman and true vassal;" then rising from his knees while Rainulf de Ferrières went through the same form, the old man covered his face with his hands and wept aloud.

"Is it even so?" said the Baron de Centeville; and being answered by a mournful look and sigh from Ferrières, he too bent before the boy, and repeated the words, "I am thy liegeman and true vassal, and swear fealty to thee for my castle and barony of Centeville."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Richard, drawing back his hand in a sort of agony, feeling as if he was in a frightful dream from which he could not awake. "What means it? Oh! Fru Astrida, tell me what means it? Where is my father?"

"Alas, my child!" said the old lady, putting her arm round him, and drawing him close to her, whilst her tears flowed fast, and Richard stood, reassured by her embrace, listening with eyes open wide, and deep oppressed breathing, to what was passing between the four nobles, who spoke earnestly among themselves, without much heed of him.

"The Duke dead!" repeated Sir Eric de Centeville, like one stunned and stupefied.

"Even so," said Rainulf, slowly and sadly, and the silence was only broken by the long-drawn sobs of old Count Bernard.

"But how? when? where?" broke forth Sir Eric, presently. "There was no note of battle when you went forth. Oh, why was not I at his side?"

"He fell not in battle," gloomily replied Sir Rainulf.

"Ha! could sickness cut him down so quickly?"

"It was not sickness," answered Ferrières. "It was treachery. He fell in the Isle of Pecquigny, by the hand of the false Fleming!"

"Lives the traitor yet?" cried the Baron de Centeville, grasping his good sword.

"He lives and rejoices in his crime," said Ferrières, "safe in his own merchant towns."

"I can scarce credit you, my Lords!" said Sir Eric. "Our Duke slain, and his enemy safe, and you here to tell the tale!"

"I would I were stark and stiff by my Lord's side!" said Count Bernard, "but for the sake of Normandy, and of that poor child, who is like to need all that ever were friends to his house. I would that mine eyes had been blinded for ever, ere they had seen that sight! And not a sword lifted in his defence! Tell you how it passed, Rainulf! My tongue will not speak it!"

He threw himself on a bench and covered his face with his mantle, while Rainulf de Ferrières proceeded: "You know how in an evil hour our good Duke appointed to meet this caitiff, Count of Flanders, in the Isle of Pecquigny, the Duke and Count each bringing twelve men with them, all unarmed. Duke Alan of Brittany was one on our side, Count Bernard here another, old Count Bothon and myself; we bore no weapon—would that we had—but not so the false Flemings. Ah me! I shall never forget Duke William's lordly presence when he stepped ashore, and doffed his bonnet to the knave Arnulf."

"Yes," interposed Bernard. "And marked you not the words of the traitor, as they met? 'My Lord,' quoth he, 'you are my shield and defence.'⁶ Would that I could cleave his treason-hatching skull with my battle-axe."

"So," continued Rainulf, "they conferred together, and as words cost nothing to Arnulf, he not only promised all restitution to the paltry Montreuil, but even was for offering to pay homage to our Duke for Flanders itself; but this our William refused, saying it were foul wrong to both King Louis of France, and Kaiser Otho of Germany, to take from them their vassal. They took leave of each other in all courtesy, and we embarked again. It was Duke William's pleasure to go alone in a small boat,

⁶ "Sire, soiés mon escus, soiés mes defendemens." Histoire des Ducs de Normandie (Michel).

while we twelve were together in another. Just as we had nearly reached our own bank, there was a shout from the Flemings that their Count had somewhat further to say to the Duke, and forbidding us to follow him, the Duke turned his boat and went back again. No sooner had he set foot on the isle," proceeded the Norman, clenching his hands, and speaking between his teeth, "than we saw one Fleming strike him on the head with an oar; he fell senseless, the rest threw themselves upon him, and the next moment held up their bloody daggers in scorn at us! You may well think how we shouted and yelled at them, and plied our oars like men distracted, but all in vain, they were already in their boats, and ere we could even reach the isle, they were on the other side of the river, mounted their horses, fled with coward speed, and were out of reach of a Norman's vengeance."

"But they shall not be so long!" cried Richard, starting forward; for to his childish fancy this dreadful history was more like one of Dame Astrida's legends than a reality, and at the moment his thought was only of the blackness of the treason. "Oh, that I were a man to chastise them! One day they shall feel—"

He broke off short, for he remembered how his father had forbidden his denunciations of vengeance, but his words were eagerly caught up by the Barons, who, as Duke William had said, were far from possessing any temper of forgiveness, thought revenge a duty, and were only glad to see a warlike spirit in their new Prince.

"Ha! say you so, my young Lord?" exclaimed old Count Bernard, rising. "Yes, and I see a sparkle in your eye that tells me you will one day avenge him nobly!"

Richard drew up his head, and his heart throbbed high as Sir Eric made answer, "Ay, truly, that will he! You might search Normandy through, yea, and Norway likewise, ere you would find a temper more bold and free. Trust my word, Count Bernard, our young Duke will be famed as widely as ever were his forefathers!"

"I believe it well!" said Bernard. "He hath the port of his grandfather, Duke Rollo, and much, too, of his noble father! How say you, Lord Richard, will you be a valiant leader of the Norman race against our foes?"

"That I will!" said Richard, carried away by the applause excited by those few words of his. "I will ride at your head this very night if you will but go to chastise the false Flemings."

"You shall ride with us to-morrow, my Lord," answered Bernard, "but it must be to Rouen, there to be invested with your ducal sword and mantle, and to receive the homage of your vassals."

Richard drooped his head without replying, for this seemed to bring to him the perception that his father was really gone, and that he should never see him again. He thought of all his projects for the day of his return, how he had almost counted the hours, and had looked forward to telling him that Father Lucas was well pleased with him! And now he should never nestle into his breast again, never hear his voice, never see those kind eyes beam upon him. Large tears gathered in his eyes, and ashamed that they should be seen, he sat down on a footstool at Fru Astrida's feet, leant his forehead on his hands, and thought over all that his father had done and said the last time they were together. He fancied the return that had been promised, going over the meeting and the greeting, till he had almost persuaded himself that this dreadful story was but a dream. But when he looked up, there were the Barons, with their grave mournful faces, speaking of the corpse, which Duke Alan of Brittany was escorting to Rouen, there to be buried beside the old Duke Rollo, and the Duchess Emma, Richard's mother. Then he lost himself in wonder how that stiff bleeding body could be the same as the father whose arm was so lately around him, and whether his father's spirit knew how he was thinking of him; and in these dreamy thoughts, the young orphan Duke of Normandy, forgotten by his vassals in their grave councils, fell asleep, and scarce wakened enough to attend to his prayers, when Fru Astrida at length remembered him, and led him away to bed.

When Richard awoke the next morning, he could hardly believe that all that had passed in the evening was true, but soon he found that it was but too real, and all was prepared for him to go to Rouen with the vassals; indeed, it was for no other purpose than to fetch him that the Count of

Harcourt had come to Bayeux. Fru Astrida was quite unhappy that “the child,” as she called him, should go alone with the warriors; but Sir Eric laughed at her, and said that it would never do for the Duke of Normandy to bring his nurse with him in his first entry into Rouen, and she must be content to follow at some space behind under the escort of Walter the huntsman.

So she took leave of Richard, charging both Sir Eric and Osmond to have the utmost care of him, and shedding tears as if the parting was to be for a much longer space; then he bade farewell to the servants of the castle, received the blessing of Father Lucas, and mounting his pony, rode off between Sir Eric and Count Bernard. Richard was but a little boy, and he did not think so much of his loss, as he rode along in the free morning air, feeling himself a Prince at the head of his vassals, his banner displayed before him, and the people coming out wherever he passed to gaze on him, and call for blessings on his name. Rainulf de Ferrières carried a large heavy purse filled with silver and gold, and whenever they came to these gazing crowds, Richard was well pleased to thrust his hands deep into it, and scatter handfuls of coins among the gazers, especially where he saw little children.

They stopped to dine and rest in the middle of the day, at the castle of a Baron, who, as soon as the meal was over, mounted his horse, and joined them in their ride to Rouen. So far it had not been very different from Richard’s last journey, when he went to keep Christmas there with his father; but now they were beginning to come nearer the town, he knew the broad river Seine again, and saw the square tower of the Cathedral, and he remembered how at that very place his father had met him, and how he had ridden by his side into the town, and had been led by his hand up to the hall.

His heart was very heavy, as he recollected there was no one now to meet and welcome him; scarcely any one to whom he could even tell his thoughts, for those tall grave Barons had nothing to say to such a little boy, and the very respect and formality with which they treated him, made him shrink from them still more, especially from the grim-faced Bernard; and Osmond, his own friend and playfellow, was obliged to ride far behind, as inferior in rank.

They entered the town just as it was growing dark. Count Bernard looked back and arrayed the procession; Eric de Centeville bade Richard sit upright and not look weary, and then all the Knights held back while the little Duke rode alone a little in advance of them through the gateway. There was a loud shout of “Long live the little Duke!” and crowds of people were standing round to gaze upon his entry, so many that the bag of coins was soon emptied by his largesses. The whole city was like one great castle, shut in by a wall and moat, and with Rollo’s Tower rising at one end like the keep of a castle, and it was thither that Richard was turning his horse, when the Count of Harcourt said, “Nay, my Lord, to the Church of our Lady.”⁷

It was then considered a duty to be paid to the deceased, that their relatives and friends should visit them as they lay in state, and sprinkle them with drops of holy water, and Richard was now to pay this token of respect. He trembled a little, and yet it did not seem quite so dreary, since he should once more look on his father’s face, and he accordingly rode towards the Cathedral. It was then very unlike what it is now; the walls were very thick, the windows small and almost buried in heavy carved arches, the columns within were low, clumsy, and circular, and it was usually so dark that the vaulting of the roof could scarcely be seen.

Now, however, a whole flood of light poured forth from every window, and when Richard came to the door, he saw not only the two tall thick candles that always burnt on each side of the Altar, but in the Chancel stood a double row ranged in a square, shedding a pure, quiet brilliancy throughout the building, and chiefly on the silver and gold ornaments of the Altar. Outside these lights knelt a row of priests in dark garments, their heads bowed over their clasped hands, and their chanted psalms sounding sweet, and full of soothing music. Within that guarded space was a bier, and a form lay on it.

Richard trembled still more with awe, and would have paused, but he was obliged to proceed. He dipped his hand in the water of the font, crossed his brow, and came slowly on, sprinkled the

⁷ The Cathedral was afterwards built by Richard himself.

remaining drops on the lifeless figure, and then stood still. There was an oppression on his breast as if he could neither breathe nor move.

There lay William of the Long Sword, like a good and true Christian warrior, arrayed in his shining armour, his sword by his side, his shield on his arm, and a cross between his hands, clasped upon his breast. His ducal mantle of crimson velvet, lined with ermine, was round his shoulders, and, instead of a helmet, his coronet was on his head; but, in contrast with this rich array, over the collar of the hauberk, was folded the edge of a rough hair shirt, which the Duke had worn beneath his robes, unknown to all, until his corpse was disrobed of his blood-stained garments. His face looked full of calm, solemn peace, as if he had gently fallen asleep, and was only awaiting the great call to awaken. There was not a single token of violence visible about him, save that one side of his forehead bore a deep purple mark, where he had first been struck by the blow of the oar which had deprived him of sense.

“See you that, my Lord?” said Count Bernard, first breaking the silence, in a low, deep, stern voice.

Richard had heard little for many hours past save counsels against the Flemings, and plans of bitter enmity against them; and the sight of his murdered father, with that look and tone of the old Dane, fired his spirit, and breaking from his trance of silent awe and grief, he exclaimed, “I see it, and dearly shall the traitor Fleming abide it!” Then, encouraged by the applauding looks of the nobles, he proceeded, feeling like one of the young champions of Fru Astrida’s songs. His cheek was coloured, his eye lighted up, and he lifted his head, so that the hair fell back from his forehead; he laid his hand on the hilt of his father’s sword, and spoke on in words, perhaps, suggested by some sage. “Yes, Arnulf of Flanders, know that Duke William of Normandy shall not rest unavenged! On this good sword I vow, that, as soon as my arm shall have strength—”

The rest was left unspoken, for a hand was laid on his arm. A priest, who had hitherto been kneeling near the head of the corpse, had risen, and stood tall and dark over him, and, looking up, he recognized the pale, grave countenance of Martin, Abbot of Jumièges, his father’s chief friend and councillor.

“Richard of Normandy, what sayest thou?” said he, sternly. “Yes, hang thy head, and reply not, rather than repeat those words. Dost thou come here to disturb the peace of the dead with clamours for vengeance? Dost thou vow strife and anger on that sword which was never drawn, save in the cause of the poor and distressed? Wouldst thou rob Him, to whose service thy life has been pledged, and devote thyself to that of His foe? Is this what thou hast learnt from thy blessed father?”

Richard made no answer, but he covered his face with his hands, to hide the tears which were fast streaming.

“Lord Abbot, Lord Abbot, this passes!” exclaimed Bernard the Dane. “Our young Lord is no monk, and we will not see each spark of noble and knightly spirit quenched as soon as it shows itself.”

“Count of Harcourt,” said Abbot Martin, “are these the words of a savage Pagan, or of one who has been washed in yonder blessed font? Never, while I have power, shalt thou darken the child’s soul with thy foul thirst of revenge, insult the presence of thy master with the crime he so abhorred, nor the temple of Him who came to pardon, with thy hatred. Well do I know, ye Barons of Normandy, that each drop of your blood would willingly be given, could it bring back our departed Duke, or guard his orphan child; but, if ye have loved the father, do his bidding—lay aside that accursed spirit of hatred and vengeance; if ye love the child, seek not to injure his soul more deeply than even his bitterest foe, were it Arnulf himself, hath power to hurt him.”

The Barons were silenced, whatever their thoughts might be, and Abbot Martin turned to Richard, whose tears were still dropping fast through his fingers, as the thought of those last words of his father returned more clearly upon him. The Abbot laid his hand on his head, and spoke gently to him. “These are tears of a softened heart, I trust,” said he. “I well believe that thou didst scarce know what thou wert saying.”

“Forgive me!” said Richard, as well as he could speak.

“See there,” said the priest, pointing to the large Cross over the Altar, “thou knowest the meaning of that sacred sign?”

Richard bowed his head in assent and reverence.

“It speaks of forgiveness,” continued the Abbot. “And knowest thou who gave that pardon? The Son forgave His murderers; the Father them who slew His Son. And shalt thou call for vengeance?”

“But oh!” said Richard, looking up, “must that cruel, murderous traitor glory unpunished in his crime, while there lies—” and again his voice was cut off by tears.

“Vengeance shall surely overtake the sinner,” said Martin, “the vengeance of the Lord, and in His own good time, but it must not be of thy seeking. Nay, Richard, thou art of all men the most bound to show love and mercy to Arnulf of Flanders. Yes, when the hand of the Lord hath touched him, and bowed him down in punishment for his crime, it is then, that thou, whom he hath most deeply injured, shouldst stretch out thine hand to aid him, and receive him with pardon and peace.

If thou dost vow aught on the sword of thy blessed father, in the sanctuary of thy Redeemer, let it be a Christian vow.”

Richard wept too bitterly to speak, and Bernard de Harcourt, taking his hand, led him away from the Church.

CHAPTER III

Duke William of the Long Sword was buried the next morning in high pomp and state, with many a prayer and psalm chanted over his grave.

When this was over, little Richard, who had all the time stood or knelt nearest the corpse, in one dull heavy dream of wonder and sorrow, was led back to the palace, and there his long, heavy, black garments were taken off, and he was dressed in his short scarlet tunic, his hair was carefully arranged, and then he came down again into the hall, where there was a great assembly of Barons, some in armour, some in long furred gowns, who had all been attending his father's burial. Richard, as he was desired by Sir Eric de Centeville, took off his cap, and bowed low in reply to the reverences with which they all greeted his entrance, and he then slowly crossed the hall, and descended the steps from the door, while they formed into a procession behind him, according to their ranks—the Duke of Brittany first, and then all the rest, down to the poorest knight who held his manor immediately from the Duke of Normandy.

Thus, they proceeded, in slow and solemn order, till they came to the church of our Lady. The clergy were there already, ranged in ranks on each side of the Choir; and the Bishops, in their mitres and rich robes, each with his pastoral staff in his hand, were standing round the Altar. As the little Duke entered, there arose from all the voices in the Chancel the full, loud, clear chant of *Te Deum Laudamus*, echoing among the dark vaults of the roof. To that sound, Richard walked up the Choir, to a large, heavy, crossed-legged, carved chair, raised on two steps, just before the steps of the Altar began, and there he stood, Bernard de Harcourt and Eric de Centeville on each side of him, and all his other vassals in due order, in the Choir.

After the beautiful chant of the hymn was ended, the service for the Holy Communion began.

When the time came for the offering, each noble gave gold or silver; and, lastly, Rainulf of Ferrières came up to the step of the Altar with a cushion, on which was placed a circlet of gold, the ducal coronet; and another Baron, following him closely, carried a long, heavy sword, with a cross handle.

The Archbishop of Rouen received both coronet and sword, and laid them on the Altar. Then the service proceeded. At that time the rite of Confirmation was administered in infancy, and Richard, who had been confirmed by his godfather, the Archbishop of Rouen, immediately after his baptism, knelt in solemn awe to receive the other Holy Sacrament from his hands, as soon as all the clergy had communicated.⁸

When the administration was over, Richard was led forward to the step of the Altar by Count Bernard, and Sir Eric, and the Archbishop, laying one hand upon both his, as he held them clasped together, demanded of him, in the name of God, and of the people of Normandy, whether he would be their good and true ruler, guard them from their foes, maintain truth, punish iniquity, and protect the Church.

“I will!” answered Richard's young, trembling voice, “So help me God!” and he knelt, and kissed the book of the Holy Gospels, which the Archbishop offered him.

It was a great and awful oath, and he dreaded to think that he had taken it. He still knelt, put both hands over his face, and whispered, “O God, my Father, help me to keep it.”

The Archbishop waited till he rose, and then, turning him with his face to the people, said, “Richard, by the grace of God, I invest thee with the ducal mantle of Normandy!”

Two of the Bishops then hung round his shoulders a crimson velvet mantle, furred with ermine, which, made as it was for a grown man, hung heavily on the poor child's shoulders, and lay in heaps on the ground. The Archbishop then set the golden coronet on his long, flowing hair, where it hung so loosely on the little head, that Sir Eric was obliged to put his hand to it to hold it safe; and, lastly, the

⁸ Sus le maistre autel del igliseLi unt sa feauté jurée.

long, straight, two-handed sword was brought and placed in his hand, with another solemn bidding to use it ever in maintaining the right. It should have been girded to his side, but the great sword was so much taller than the little Duke, that, as it stood upright by him, he was obliged to raise his arm to put it round the handle.

He then had to return to his throne, which was not done without some difficulty, encumbered as he was, but Osmond held up the train of his mantle, Sir Eric kept the coronet on his head, and he himself held fast and lovingly the sword, though the Count of Harcourt offered to carry it for him.

He was lifted up to his throne, and then came the paying him homage; Alan, Duke of Brittany, was the first to kneel before him, and with his hand between those of the Duke, he swore to be his man, to obey him, and pay him feudal service for his dukedom of Brittany. In return, Richard swore to be his good Lord, and to protect him from all his foes. Then followed Bernard the Dane, and many another, each repeating the same formulary, as their large rugged hands were clasped within those little soft fingers. Many a kind and loving eye was bent in compassion on the orphan child; many a strong voice faltered with earnestness as it pronounced the vow, and many a brave, stalwart heart heaved with grief for the murdered father, and tears flowed down the war-worn cheeks which had met the fiercest storms of the northern ocean, as they bent before the young fatherless boy, whom they loved for the sake of his conquering grandfather, and his brave and pious father. Few Normans were there whose hearts did not glow at the touch of those small hands, with a love almost of a parent, for their young Duke.

The ceremony of receiving homage lasted long and Richard, though interested and touched at first, grew very weary; the crown and mantle were so heavy, the faces succeeded each other like figures in an endless dream, and the constant repetition of the same words was very tedious. He grew sleepy, he longed to jump up, to lean to the right or left, or to speak something besides that regular form. He gave one great yawn, but it brought him such a frown from the stern face of Bernard, as quite to wake him for a few minutes, and make him sit upright, and receive the next vassal with as much attention as he had shown the first, but he looked imploringly at Sir Eric, as if to ask if it ever would be over. At last, far down among the Barons, came one at whose sight Richard revived a little.

It was a boy only a few years older than himself, perhaps about ten, with a pleasant brown face, black hair, and quick black eyes which glanced, with a look between friendliness and respect, up into the little Duke's gazing face. Richard listened eagerly for his name, and was refreshed at the sound of the boyish voice which pronounced, "I, Alberic de Montémar, am thy liegeman and vassal for my castle and barony of Montémar sur Epte."

When Alberic moved away, Richard followed him with his eye as far as he could to his place in the Cathedral, and was taken by surprise when he found the next Baron kneeling before him.

The ceremony of homage came to an end at last, and Richard would fain have run all the way to the palace to shake off his weariness, but he was obliged to head the procession again; and even when he reached the castle hall his toils were not over, for there was a great state banquet spread out, and he had to sit in the high chair where he remembered climbing on his father's knee last Christmas-day, all the time that the Barons feasted round, and held grave converse. Richard's best comfort all this time was in watching Osmond de Centeville and Alberic de Montémar, who, with the other youths who were not yet knighted, were waiting on those who sat at the table. At last he grew so very weary, that he fell fast asleep in the corner of his chair, and did not wake till he was startled by the rough voice of Bernard de Harcourt, calling him to rouse up, and bid the Duke of Brittany farewell.

"Poor child!" said Duke Alan, as Richard rose up, startled, "he is over-wearied with this day's work. Take care of him, Count Bernard; thou a kindly nurse, but a rough one for such a babe. Ha! my young Lord, your colour mantles at being called a babe! I crave your pardon, for you are a fine spirit. And hark you, Lord Richard of Normandy, I have little cause to love your race, and little right, I trow, had King Charles the Simple to call us free Bretons liegemen to a race of plundering Northern pirates. To Duke Rollo's might, my father never gave his homage; nay, nor did I yield it for all Duke

William's long sword, but I did pay it to his generosity and forbearance, and now I grant it to thy weakness and to his noble memory. I doubt not that the recreant Frank, Louis, whom he restored to his throne, will strive to profit by thy youth and helplessness, and should that be, remember that thou hast no surer friend than Alan of Brittany. Fare thee well, my young Duke."

"Farewell, Sir," said Richard, willingly giving his hand to be shaken by his kind vassal, and watching him as Sir Eric attended him from the hall.

"Fair words, but I trust not the Breton," muttered Bernard; "hatred is deeply ingrained in them."

"He should know what the Frank King is made of," said Rainulf de Ferrières; "he was bred up with him in the days that they were both exiles at the court of King Ethelstane of England."

"Ay, and thanks to Duke William that either Louis or Alan are not exiles still. Now we shall see whose gratitude is worth most, the Frank's or the Breton's. I suspect the Norman valour will be the best to trust to."

"Yes, and how will Norman valour prosper without treasure? Who knows what gold is in the Duke's coffers?"

There was some consultation here in a low voice, and the next thing Richard heard distinctly was, that one of the Nobles held up a silver chain and key, ⁹ saying that they had been found on the Duke's neck, and that he had kept them, thinking that they doubtless led to something of importance.

"Oh, yes!" said Richard, eagerly, "I know it. He told me it was the key to his greatest treasure."

The Normans heard this with great interest, and it was resolved that several of the most trusted persons, among whom were the Archbishop of Rouen, Abbot Martin of Jumièges, and the Count of Harcourt, should go immediately in search of this precious hoard. Richard accompanied them up the narrow rough stone stairs, to the large dark apartment, where his father had slept. Though a Prince's chamber, it had little furniture; a low uncurtained bed, a Cross on a ledge near its head, a rude table, a few chairs, and two large chests, were all it contained. Harcourt tried the lid of one of the chests: it opened, and proved to be full of wearing apparel; he went to the other, which was smaller, much more carved, and ornamented with very handsome iron-work. It was locked, and putting in the key, it fitted, the lock turned, and the chest was opened. The Normans pressed eagerly to see their Duke's greatest treasure.

It was a robe of serge, and a pair of sandals, such as were worn in the Abbey of Jumièges.

"Ha! is this all? What didst say, child?" cried Bernard the Dane, hastily.

"He told me it was his greatest treasure!" repeated Richard.

"And it was!" said Abbot Martin.

Then the good Abbot told them the history, part of which was already known to some of them.

About five or six years before, Duke William had been hunting in the forest of Jumièges, when he had suddenly come on the ruins of the Abbey, which had been wasted thirty or forty years previously by the Sea-King, Hasting. Two old monks, of the original brotherhood, still survived, and came forth to greet the Duke, and offer him their hospitality.

"Ay!" said Bernard, "well do I remember their bread; we asked if it was made of fir-bark, like that of our brethren of Norway."

William, then an eager, thoughtless young man, turned with disgust from this wretched fare, and throwing the old men some gold, galloped on to enjoy his hunting. In the course of the sport, he was left alone, and encountered a wild boar, which threw him down, trampled on him, and left him stretched senseless on the ground, severely injured. His companions coming up, carried him, as the nearest place of shelter, to the ruins of Jumièges, where the two old monks gladly received him in the remaining portion of their house. As soon as he recovered his senses, he earnestly asked

⁹ Une clef d'argent unt troveeA sun braiol estreit noee.Tout la gent se merveillontQue cete clef signifiont.* * * *Ni la cuoule e l'estamineEn aveit il en un archete,Que disfermeront ceste claveteDe sol itant ert tresorierKar nul tresor n'vait plus cher.The history of the adventures of Jumièges is literally true, as is Martin's refusal to admit the Duke to the cloister:—Dun ne t'a Deus mis e poséPrince gardain de sainte igliseE cur tenir leial justise.

their pardon for his pride, and the scorn he had shown to the poverty and patient suffering which he should have revered.

William had always been a man who chose the good and refused the evil, but this accident, and the long illness that followed it, made him far more thoughtful and serious than he had ever been before; he made preparing for death and eternity his first object, and thought less of his worldly affairs, his wars, and his ducal state. He rebuilt the old Abbey, endowed it richly, and sent for Martin himself from France, to become the Abbot; he delighted in nothing so much as praying there, conversing with the Abbot, and hearing him read holy books; and he felt his temporal affairs, and the state and splendour of his rank, so great a temptation, that he had one day come to the Abbot, and entreated to be allowed to lay them aside, and become a brother of the order. But Martin had refused to receive his vows. He had told him that he had no right to neglect or forsake the duties of the station which God had appointed him; that it would be a sin to leave the post which had been given him to defend; and that the way marked out for him to serve God was by doing justice among his people, and using his power to defend the right. Not till he had done his allotted work, and his son was old enough to take his place as ruler of the Normans, might he cease from his active duties, quit the turmoil of the world, and seek the repose of the cloister. It was in this hope of peaceful retirement, that William had delighted to treasure up the humble garments that he hoped one day to wear in peace and holiness.

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