

THE JUSTICE OF THE KING.

Some six hundred years ago, that gallant gentleman and wise prince, Edward I., set out for the conquest of the Holy Land, accompanied by his Queen. Among the many knights who followed the valiant king was one named Sir Francis D'Essal, an admirer of the beautiful Eva Clare, a young lady attendant upon the Queen. The fair maid did not reciprocate his attentions, but bestowed her smiles upon Sir Henry Courtenay, a young knight distinguished for his valor and judgment. D'Essal, jealous and mad with rage, determined to possess the young lady at all hazards. As Queen Eleanor and Eva, with an escort commanded by D'Essal, were proceeding on a pilgrimage to the Jordan, a band of his satellites, dressed as Arabs, suddenly attacked them, and carried off the maid to the castle of Old Man of the Mountain, where D'Essal shortly repaired. Soon Sir Henry Courtenay heard of the outrage, and comprehended the plot. He rescued his lady-love, took the false knight prisoner, and had him conveyed to Arca for the punishment he so richly deserved at the hands of his brother knights. The particulars of the awful ceremony of degradation are thus recorded:

The great Church of Arca was thrown open, and knights in brilliant armor, and Templars and Hospitallers in the habiliments of their orders, bishops and priests in their sacred robes, and vassals in their holiday array, crowded up the long aisles and filled the spacious church, as though eager to witness some splendid ceremonial. But, instead of gorgeous decorations, wainscot windows, draped with black, diffused a funeral gloom, and the solemn reverberation of the tolling bell seemed to sound a requiem over the grave of Hope.

Sir Francis D'Essal had been tried in a council of his peers and found guilty of treason to religion and knightly devoir; and this day, the anniversary of his admission to the rank of knighthood, his companions in arms, the vassals whom he despised, and all those actuated by curiosity or enmity, were assembled to witness his degradation. Eva shuddered at the fate of her former lover, and De Courtenay, with instinctive delicacy, had obtained permission to absent himself from the scene on a visit to the Holy Sepulchre. As king-at-arms and first in rank, it was the duty of King Edward to preside over this fearful ceremony, which, by the true and loyal, was regarded as more terrible than death itself.

At the first stroke of the great bell, the pursuivants, having robbed Sir Francis for the last time in his knightly habiliments, conducted him from the "Cursed Tower" towards the church. As they entered the door, the doleful peal sank in silence, and, after one awful moment, his fellow-knights, with broken voices, began to chant the burial service.

An elevated stage, hung with black, had been erected in the centre of the nave, and upon this the pursuivants, whose business it was to divest him of every outward insignia of courage and truth, placed the culprit in full view of all the vast concourse.

When the chanting ceased, King Edward spoke in a voice that thrilled to every heart; "Sir Francis D'Essal! thou who didst receive the sword of knighthood from the hand of the good St. Louis, dost stand before us this day attain to treason to thy God, thy truth, and the lady of thy love. Wherefore thy peers have willed that the order of knighthood, by which thou hast received all the honor and worship upon thy body, be brought to naught, and thy state be undone, and thou be driven forth out-cast and dishonored, according to thy base desert." Instantly the brazen tongue from the belfry ratified the fiat, and announced the hour of doom.

At the word, the squire with trembling hand removed the helmet, the defence of disloyal eyes, revealing the pale and haggard countenance of the recreant knight, and the choir resumed the mournful dirge. Then each pursuivant advanced in his order to the performance of his unwelcome duty. One by one the knightly trappings of D'Essal were torn from his body, and as cuirass, greaves, brassards, and gauntlets rang upon the pavements, the heralds exclaimed:

"Behold the harness of a miscreant!" Trembling and bent beneath the weight of shame the craven stood, while they smote the golden spurs from his heels, and broke his dishonored sword above his head, and the terrible requiem wailed over the perished emblems of his former innocence.

The Grand Master of the Templars then entered upon the stage, bearing a silver basin filled with tepid water, and the herald, holding it up, exclaimed: "By what name call men the knight before us?"

The pursuivants answered: "The name which was given him in baptism—the name by which his father was known—the name confirmed to him in chivalry in Sir Francis D'Essal."

The heralds again replied: "Falsehood sits upon his tongue and rules in his heart; he is a miscreant, traitor, and infidel."

Immediately, the Grand Master, in imitation of baptism, dashed water in his face, saying: "Henceforth be thou called by thy right name—'Traitor!'"

Then the heralds rang out a shrill note upon the trumpets, expressive of the demand, "What shall be done with the false-hearted knave?"

King Edward, in his majesty, arose, and in a

voice agitated with the sense of the awful penalty, replied: "Let him with dishonor and shame be banished from the kingdom of Christ, let his brethren curse him, and let not the angels of God intercede for him."

Immediately each knight drew his sword, and presenting its gleaming point against the now defenceless D'Essal, crowded him down the steps to the altar, where the pursuivants seized him, forced him into his coffin, and placed him on the bier, and the attendant priests completed the burial service over his polluted name and his perjured soul. At a sign from the King, the bearers took up the bier, and all the vast congregation followed in sad procession to the city gates, where they thrust him out, a thing accursed, while the great bell from the lofty tower of the cathedral told the tale of his infamy in tones of terrible significance: "Gone—gone—gone—virtue, faith, and truth! Lost—lost—lost—honor, fame, and love!" From Carmel's hoary height to Tabor's sacred top, each hallowed hill and vale reverberated the awful knell: "Gone and lost—lost and gone!" and the breeze that swept the plain of Esdrulon caught up the dismal echo, and seemed hurrying across the Mediterranean to whisper to the chivalry of Europe the dreadful story of his degradation.

Stung by the weight of woe that had fallen upon him, the miserable D'Essal rose and gazed across the plain. An arid waste spread out before him like the prosperity of his own dreary future, blackened and desolate by the reign of evil passions.

Life!—what had it been to him? A feverish dream, a burning thirst, a restless, unsatisfied desire! Virtue—honor—truth—idle words; their solemn mockery yet rang in his ears. He ran—he flew, anywhere, to flee the haunting thoughts that trooped like fiends upon his track! He neared the banks of the river; its cooling waters, rolling on in their eternal channel, promised to allay his fever and bury his dishonored name in oblivion. He plunged in—that ancient river swept away, the river Kishon; and as he sank to rise no more a deep voice exclaimed: "So perish thine enemies, O Lord!"—Days of Chivalry.

THE AUNT'S PRESENT.

"A rag carpet? For a wedding present!" cried Mrs. Blythe Barrington.

"I never heard of such a thing in my life," said Miss Florella Arnold, the first bridesmaid. While Zenobia Barrington, the bride elect, sat among her frills, laces and muslins with an expression of the supremest scorn on her pretty doll face.

And the obnoxious roll, enveloped in packing canvas and safely secured with twine at either end, lay on the floor in the centre of the little circle.

"For mercy's sake!" hissed Miss Arnold, "who is this Aunt Tribulation or Despondency, or whatever her name is?"

"Aunt Consolation Peck," corrected Zenobia. "Why, she's mamma's maiden aunt, and she's very rich, and—and I do think she might have sent me a set of diamonds, at the very least. Mean old thing!"

"Where does she live?" asked Helen Delancey, the second bridesmaid, who sat by the table, stitching white ribbon into jaunty little bows.

"She don't live anywhere," disconsolately answered the bride. "She died last month; and she was always telling people that mamma was her favorite niece—horrid, treacherous old woman—and now she's gone and served me so!"

"Shall I call John to open it?" suggested Miss Arnold.

"No!" cried Mrs. Barrington, with emphasis. "A rag carpet opened here! Let it be taken up into the lumber-room at once. It's the strangest idea—but Aunt Consolation always was the most eccentric old being in creation."

"But if she's so rich, I dare say she's left you a snug little sum of money," said Miss Delancey, rather enviously.

"That she hasn't," Mrs. Barrington answered, biting her lip. "It has all gone to be divided among a swarm of relations, to most of whom Aunt Consolation would not speak while she was alive. Too provoking for anything!"

"What's that, John?" as the servant came into the room. "A gentleman and lady with a carpet-bag downstairs? Mr. and Mrs. Docktop? My goodness gracious!" with a despairing glance at her daughter, "if it isn't your cousin Ruth Ann, that married a farmer, and lives in Aunt Consolation's very house! And we shall have to ask her to stay to the wedding, I suppose."

Mrs. Docktop, a stout little body in a dyed black silk dress, and atrocious yellow butter-fles on her hat, looked admiringly at the wedding preparations.

"You've got an elegant house, to be sure, Cousin Barrington," said she. "But," with a dubious glance at the handsome Brussels carpet, "I don't nowhere see the rag carpet that Aunt Consolation left to Zenoby."

"Humph!" sniffed the bride's mother. "As if we would use that thing."

"You don't mean to use it?" "Of course not."

"Well, phaps then," said Cousin Ruth, with a shrewd eye to business, "you'd sell it to me cheap. I need something for the best room floor, and if two pounds—"

Mrs. Blythe Barrington hesitated. They were a family who made a great show

on a small foundation, and, although two pounds was not much, still it would help to pay the outrageous dressmaking bill which she so dreaded to submit to her husband's supervision.

"Well," she began, "I am sure I have no objections, if Zenobia—"

"Oh, do get the old thing out of the house, no matter how," exclaimed Zenobia, petulant; and so the matter was settled.

Mr. and Mrs. Docktop remained to the wedding, and when they returned home, they bore with them the rag carpet.

"It's as cheap as dirt," said Mrs. Docktop. "For Aunt Consolation wove it herself, and whatever she made was well made."

"Wasn't good enough for them Barringtons, though," reflectively added her husband. "I wouldn't put it down afore autumn, if I was you, Ruth Ann."

When autumn had come, showering its red leaves down on the roof of the old house, and painting the blackberry vines with scarlet, Mr. Docktop came home one day, to where his wife was absorbed in the periodical whirl of house cleaning.

"Heard the news?" he asked with a straw in his mouth.

"News. No. What news?" "That there fellow that Zenoby Barrington married; he's failed."

"Failed? No!"

"But he has though. Smashed clean up. Not a copper left to bless himself with."

Poor Zenobia Arran sat alone in her elegantly-furnished boudoir, with the traces of tears on her cheeks, and hands, whereupon the wedding ring yet shone with all the gloss of newness, clasped dejectedly on her lap.

"It's no use, Bridget," she cried, reluctantly, to the girl who came slowly up from answering the bell. "I can't see any one. Why didn't you tell them 'not at home?'"

"It's your relations, ma'am," said Bridget, in a whisper. "Mr. and Mrs. Docktop, ma'am, they told me to say."

"Oh, dea-a-r!" sighed Mrs. Arran. "Why can't people stay away? But I suppose I have got to see them."

And slowly and unwillingly enough she went down stairs to the elegant drawing-room, where, upon the extreme edge of one of the satin damask chairs, with his hat balanced between his knees, and his wife opposite, sat Mr. Reuben Docktop.

"Well, Cousin Zenoby," he began, "I don't s'pose you expected to see me here."

"No, I did not," said Mrs. Arran, rather brusquely.

"Well, you see, me and Ruth Ann, we was a puttin' down our new rag carpet—the one we bought of your mother for two pounds—well, we was unrollin' it, and out fell a paper. 'What's that?' says Ruth Ann. 'I'm blessed if I know!' says I. 'Well, look,' says she. And I looked—and I'll be jiggered, added Mr. Docktop, with extreme positiveness, "if it wasn't Aunt Consolation's will!"

"Will!" vaguely repeated Mrs. Arran.

"Last will and testament ye know," explained Mr. Docktop, with a wave of his hand. "And I've got it, done up in brown paper, in the breast pocket of my overcoat," tapping the spot with a brown, stubbed forefinger. "I won't say but there was a temptation just at the first to destroy the old paper, and not say nothin' about it. But Ruth Ann, says she, 'Reuben, you know 'twouldn't be no pleasure livin' in a place we knowed wasn't fairly our'n.' And I b'lieve she was right."

"Mr. Docktop," cried Zenobia, "what do you mean?"

"I mean," said Reuben, coming to the point at last—"and I said so, didn't I?—that Aunt Consolation Peck she writ a will, and left all her property—all, mind—to you, and hid it right in the middle of the rag carpet she sent you as a weddin' present the week afore she died."

"It cannot be possible!" gasped Zenobia, feeling as if a golden shower were falling around her, for Aunt Consolation was rich in land and gold.

"Ef you don't b'lieve it, here is the will itself," said honest Reuben, producing it from its place of safe keeping.

And Zenobia's heart reproached her for the obloquy with which she had treated Aunt Consolation Peck's wedding gift.

She was rich again—this time with none of the fleeting wealth that turns to dead leaves in the grasp, but real substantial possessions.

But Reuben Docktop and Ruth Ann his wife dwelt on in the farmhouse under the hill.

"For it is the least I can do, Cousin Docktop," said Mrs. Arran, "to beg you to accept the old homestead as a reward for your magnanimous conduct."

"Laud!" cried Reuben, "I ain't done nothin' but my duty."

But we do not all of us do that in this world.

On the anniversaries of remarkable events, and on great occasions, Louis-Philippe was accustomed to give grand dinners, to which members of the National Guard were always invited. As the invitations were sent out somewhat haphazard, comic scenes sometimes occurred—as, for instance, when a certain captain swallowed, without moving a muscle, the contents of his finger-glass, believing that a Spanish liqueur had been set before him. One day, after Fleesch's attempt upon the sovereign's life, the king gave a grand banquet, at which the National Guard from all parts was well represented, a colonel of most military aspect being seated on the right of the king. Dish after dish had been

served, with wines to match, when a servant whispered in the guest's ear, "Château Lafitte 1822, sir?" The colonel assented, and, when his glass was full, he "sighted" it carefully, scented it en connaisseur, raised it to his lips, took a mouthful, passed it slowly over his palate, swallowed it, and then, smacking his lips, and turning to the king, said, "Well, if they give you that for Lafitte of 1822, they are just humbugging you!" The king's surprise may be imagined. The colonel was the principal "taster" of Bordeaux—one of those men who, in tasting blended wines, will tell infallibly of what growths they are composed.

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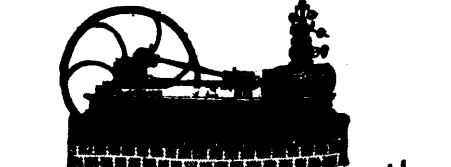
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