

IN THE DAYS OF THE GREAT ARMADA.

(By Crona Temple in Sunday at Home.)



NEWS OF VICTORY.

CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

Was it worse to meet and grapple with actual pain, she wondered, than to stand safe and helpless while her dearest and best might be dying or dead? Could the old times of torture and of martyrdom be harder to bear than her own bootless wretchedness?

She thought only of herself, and of Robert, whose love was part of herself. The molehills of her misery hid from her eyes the mountains on the horizon of wider interests and nobler aims. But she was so young, this little Doris; and as yet she had only gathered life's flowers, and basked in its sunshine; and flowers and sunshine, beautiful as they are, do not fulfil all of the needs of the inner or the outer life. The time was coming when she would get some faint idea, some dim understanding of the events which work out the far-reaching plans of God.

Of which Divine planning all human knowledge must needs be faint and dim.

This morning, as she searched restlessly over the prospect for sign or sound of the news for which she had spent so many days in watching, she was aware of some unusual stir in the little town. She could see the people gathered like bees on the quay, though, as far as she could tell, no vessel had newly entered the port. How she wished for Earle just then! The boy's long legs would have made short work of the distance; but Earle himself was helping to make up the substance of the "story," whatever it was, that had drifted down to Exmouth from the scene of the great doings against the Spanish invaders. If Doris wished to get tidings from the town she must go thither on her own two feet.

She paused, and hesitated for a minute or two, turning her slender neck, peering and listening like a bird about to take flight. It was not her habit to go down amongst the rude frequenters of the quays, being a creature with much weight of household duty on her youthful shoulders, and having, besides, a sick father to tend and cheer. Furthermore, it was not reckoned seemly in those days for a decorous maiden in the position of Master Clatworthy's daughter to go unattended into the thronged places where gossips congregated and revellers might be making riot.

She never bethought her of her father, who would soon be watching for her coming, nor of his anxiety if her usual hour for reading passed without her appearance. For a minute or two she lingered to make sure her eyes did not deceive her, to be certain that there really was something unusual stirring in the town.

And then down the field-path she sped, through the acres of the rye where the poppies' glowing blots of crimson showed gorgeous against the silvery green: across the strip of common where the cotters' cows looked up astonished at the flying vision, and started back, half indignant, from out of her headlong way. Cows are contemplative and mild by nature, and choose to chew their quiet cud unstirred by hurrying steps of thoughtless girls: it is very little indeed to them what any

Armada might do! Just where the street came stretching into the common, with small houses scattering themselves as if humbly and with apologies, in broken dots and lines amidst the green ways, Doris ran right into a group of children who were threading daisies, or moulding the dust-cakes dear to childhood of all countries and centuries. She was rushing too fast to stop herself, and more than one unlucky bairn was rolled amongst the daisies and the dust.

Contrition somewhat sobered her. She stopped to wipe away the tears she had caused, although she was too breathless to have many words of comfort to bestow. But she went onward at a moderate speed, and entered the market-place as composedly as might be.

Her heart was beating as though it would knock a hole in her side, yet it gave a bound that almost suffocated her as she caught the words "great losses," "ships taken and blown into the air"—"Ark-Raleigh," and our own brave men. Which side had lost? Which ships were taken? What had befallen the "Ark-Raleigh" and her crew?

A mist came over her eyes, and a dulness on her ears. She stood quite still. A sorry gleaner of news, in truth, since she could not so much as gasp forth a question!

Then, suddenly, the clash of bells filled the air: bells swinging and pealing as if the ringers were mad with the joy they caused these iron tongues to fling wide upon the world.

How they rang, those bells! and already over half England like music was echoing. Every hour the sound swelled and spread. Just as the beacon-fires flashing from hill to hill had roused the land to the sense of its danger, so the bells proclaimed England's deliverance—towers and steeples catching the sound in their turn and passing it on over town and shire—the joyful sound of victory.

And now Doris was aware of other meanings in men's words.

It was "Victory," and "bravo Sir Francis Drake," and again "Victory." While these there were who reverently doffed their caps, and gave "Glory to God, who had not delivered them over for a prey to the teeth of the foemen."

And the girl drew her hand across her eyes, wondering how she could have failed to see at the very first the glad expression on all faces! Men were handshaking with each other, and laughing into one another's eyes—startled for once, by very joy, out of the sober ways of English reticence.

Back up the field-road ran Doris, her young feet winged now with glad tidings. And even as she ran her ears were filled with the sound of the bells, the broken, irregular chiming, as they thrilled and jangled, and caught them-

selves into time and tune again, only to fall out once more into most uneven and joyous clangors.

It was not only for victory they rang, not only because the proud had fallen, and the strong had been discomfited; but it was in thanksgiving for freedom, and for more than freedom—for their honor, and their fatherland, and their faith!

CHAPTER VI.

"That hideous tempest which so thundered and threatened out of Spain"—to use the term of the old writer before quoted—did not die down into harmless quiet all at once.

The terror of the Spanish fleet lasted intensely all the time that the Duke of Medina kept on his way, for who could tell that he would not make good his plan of joining the Duke of Parma off Netherlands, and yet succeed in throwing the united armies upon the English coast?

Queen Elizabeth had given her fleet into the hands of her captains tried and true, but she reserved the control of her army for herself.

The nominal commandant was Robert, Earl of Leicester; a man who, while clever enough at marshalling tournaments and pageants, had not come off with much glory from his solitary experience in real soldiering. The queen, though she was foolishly fond of this bad, untrustworthy man, had no idea of trusting the honor of England in his hands at this crisis. She knew that her handful of troops, undisciplined, and hastily raised as they mostly were, could ill stand the onslaught of so formidable a foe. But she knew that every man of them was aware of the issues at stake; she knew they would fight "as long as they could see or stand."

She rode down the ranks one morning—the very morning that Drake's guns were pounding away at the Armada then rounding Beechly Head—and many historians have loved to tell how her army welcomed their stout-hearted liege-lady.

She forbade her retinue to follow her, and with only Leicester bearing the sword of state at her side, and a page boy following her with her plumed helmet, she rode along the lines amidst the rapturous applause of the soldiery.

She was fifty-five years old, and had ruled England for thirty years. Age had faded her youthful beauty, and cares had furrowed her brow, but her piercing eye was as full of fire as ever it had been, her tall figure as erect and queenly. She looked, every inch, what the daughter of the long line of England's kings should be, and as royal as any Plantagenet of them all!

The words she spoke that day have been conned over and over by every boy and girl who has read their history; but they are noble words, and will bear a good deal of re-reading.

"My loving people," said she, "we have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery. Let tyrants fear! I place, under God, my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts of my subjects.

And therefore am I come among you at this time, not for my recreation or disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live or to die amongst you all—to lay down, for God and my kingdoms, my honor and my blood in the dust. I know that I have the body of a weak, feeble woman, but I have the heart of a king—and of a king of England, too! And I think foul scorn that Parma, or Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare invade the borders of my realm; to which, rather than any dishonor should grow by me, I myself will take up arms! I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder. Not doubting but by your obedience to my generals, your concord in the camp, and your valor in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory over these enemies of my God, of my kingdoms, and of my people."

Was it any wonder that the shouts that rent the air were long and loud? Was it any marvel that, one and all, those men resolved to die for such a cause, for such a queen?

But it was not the queen and the army that won the victory. That was left for Effingham, Drake, and their seamen; for the crews of the ships that fought on, day after day, untiringly, from the Start to Calais-roads.

There were many gallant deeds done in that stretch of blue water. On the twenty-fifth, off the Needles, the "Santa Anna," a galleon from Portugal, had her main-mast shot away, and fell behind her consorts. Three small English ships surrounded her, and cannonaded her with tremendous effect until a detachment of the enemy turned to the rescue, and the admiral in the "Ark-Raleigh" came to the help of his ships. Then the wind fell.

So great was the calm that there lay the big Spaniard, motionless on the water, and there lay the English, just out of gun-range, as helpless, seemingly, as their foes; while, still feeling the breeze, the Armada and its pursuers went sailing, hull down, towards the horizon.

(To be Continued.)

THE CHILD AND THE YEAR.

Said the child to the youthful year:
"What hast thou in store for me,
O giver of beautiful gifts, what cheer,
What joy dost thou bring with thee?"

"My seasons four shall bring
Their treasures: the winter's snows,
The autumn's store, and the flowers of spring,
And the summer's perfect rose.

"All these and more shall be thine,
Dear Child,—but the last and best
Thyself must earn by a strife divine,
If thou wouldst be truly blest.

"Wouldst know this last, best gift?
'T is a conscience clear and bright,
A peace of mind which the soul can lift
To an infinite delight.

"Truth, patience, courage, and love
If thou unto me canst bring,
I will set thee all earth's ills above,
O Child, and crown thee a King!"

—Celia Thaxter.



ELIZABETH AT TILBURY.