POOR DOCUMENT

MC 2033

THE BRETHREN

H. Rider Haggard's Great Romance of the Crusades

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

Standing a while ago upon the flower-clad plain above Tiberius, by the Lake of Galilee, the writer gazed at the double peaks of the Hill of Hattin. Here, or so tradition says, Christ preached the sermon on the Mount—that perfect rule of gentleness and peace. Here too—and this is certain—fifty nearly twelve centuries had gone by, Yusuf Salah-ed-din(whom we know as the Sultan Saladin, crushed the Christian power in Palestine in perhaps the most terrible battle which that land of blood has known, and the Mount of the Beatitutudes became the Mount of Massacre.

It was while musing on these strangely-contrasted scenes enacted in one place that there arose in his mind a desire to weave, as best he might, atale wherein any who are drawn to the romance of that pregnant and mysterious epoch, when men by thousands were glad to lay down their lives for visions and spiritual hopes, could find a picture, however faint and broken, of the long war between Cross and Crescent waged among the Syrian plains and deserts. Of Christian knights and ladies also, and their loves and sufferings in England and the East; of the fearful lord of the Assassins whom the Franks called Old Man of the Mountain, and his fortress city, Masyaf; of the great-hearted, if at times cruel, Saladin and his fierce Saracenes; of the rout of Hattin itself, on whose rocky height the Holy Rood was set up as a standard and captured, to be seen no more by Christian eyes; and, amongst other matters, of the last surrender, whereby the Crusaders lost Jerusalem for ever.

O ffhat desire this story is the fruit.

PROLOGUE.

Salah-ed-din, Commander of the Faithful, the King Strong to aid, Sovereign of the East, sat at night in his palace at Damascus and brooded on the wonderful ways of God, by Whom he had been lifted to his high estate. He remembered how, when he was but small in the eyes of men, Nour-ed-din, King of Syria, forced him to accompany his uncle, Shirkuh, to Egypt, whither he went, "like on driven to his death," and how, against his own will, there he arose to greatness. He thought of his father, the wise Ayoub, and the brethren with whom he was brought up, all of them dead now save one; and of his sisters, whom he had cherished. Most of all did he think of her, Zobeide, who had been stolen away by the knight whom she loved even to the loss of her own soul—yes, by the English friend of his youth, his father's prisoner, Sir Andrew D'Arcy, who, led astray by passion, had done him and his house this grievous wrong. He had sworn, he remembered, that he would bring her back even from England, and already had planned to ill her husband and capture her when he learned her death. She had left a child, or so his spies told him, who, if she still lived, must be a woman now—his own niece, though half of noble English blood.

Then his mind wandered from this old half-forgotten story to the woe and blood in which his days were set, and to the last great struggle between the followers of the prophets, Jesus and Mohamet, that Jihad* for which he made ready—and he sighed—and he sighed. For he was a merciful man, who loved not slaughter, although his fierce faith drove him on from war to war.

Salah-ed-din slept and dreamed of peace. In his dream a maiden stood before him, and when she lifted her veil, he saw that she was beautiful, with features like his own, but fairer, and knew her surely for the daughter of his sister who had fled with the English knight. Now he wondered why she visited him thus, and in his vision prayed Allah to make the matter clear. Then suddenly he saw this same woman standing before him on a Syrian plain, and on either side of her a countless host of Saracens and Franks, of whom thousands and tens of thousands were appointed to death. Lo! he, Salah-ed-din, charged at the head of his squadrons, scimitar aloft, but she held up her hand and stayed him.

"What do you hear, my niece?" he asked.

"I am come to save the lives of men through you," she answered; "and therefore was I born of your blood, and therefore I am sent to you. Put up your sword, King, and spare them."

"Say, maiden, what ransom do you bring to buy this multitude from doom? What ransom, and what gift?"

"The ransom of my own blood freely offered, and Heaven's gift of peace of your sinful soul, O King." Then with that outstretched hand she drew down his keenedged scimitar until it rested upon her breast.

Salah-ed-din awoke, and marvelled on his dream, but said nothing of it to any man. The next night it returned to him, and the memory of it went with him all the day that followed, but still he said nothing.

When on the third night he dreamed it yet again, even more vividly, then he was sure that this thing was from God, and summoned his holy Imauns and his Diviners, and took counsel with them. These, after they had listened, prayed and consulted, spoke thus:

"O Sultan, Allah has warned you in shadows that the woman, your niece, who dwells far away in England, shall by her own nobleness and sacrifice, in some time to come, save you from shedding a sea of blood, and bring rest upon the land. We charge you, therefore, draw this lady to your court, and keep her ever by your side, since if she escapes you, her peace goes with her."

Salah-ed-din said that his interpretation was wise and true, for thus also he had read his dream. Then he summoned a certain false knight who bore the Cross upon his breast, but in secret had accepted the Koran, a Frankish spy of his, who came from that country where dwelt the maiden, his niece, and from him learned about her, her father, and her home. With him and another spy who passed as a Christian palmer, by the aid of Prince Hassin, one of the greatest and most trusted of his Emirs, he made a cunning plan for the capture of the maiden if she would not come willingly, and for her bearing away to Syria. Moreover—that in the eyes of all men her dignity might be worthy of her high blood and fate—by his decree he created her, the niece whom he had never seen, Princess of Baalbec, with great possessions—a rule that her grandfather, Ayoub, and her uncle, Isseddin, had held before her. Also he purchased a stout galley of war, manning it with proved sailors and with chosen men at arms, under the command of the Prince Hassan, and wrote a letter to the English lord, Sir Andrew D'Arcy, and his daughter, and prepared a royal gift of jewels, and sent them to the lady, his niece, far away in England, and with it the Patent of her rank. Her he commanded this company to win by peace, or force, or fraud, as best they might, but that without her not one of them should dare to look upon his face again. And with these he sent the two Frankish spies, who knew the place where the lady lived, one of whom, the false knight, was a skilled mariner and the captain of the ship.

These things did Yusuf Salah-ed-din, and waited patiently till it should please God to accomplish the vision with whom God had filled his soul in sleep.

*Holy War.

CHAPTER ONE.

By the Waters of Death Creek.

From the sea-wall on the coast of Essex, Rosamund looked out across the ocean eastwards. To right and left, but a little behind her, like guards attending the person of their sovereign, stood her cousins, the twm brethren, Godwin and Wulf, tall and shapely men. Godwin was still as a statue, his hands folded over the hilt of the long scabbarded sword, of which the point was set on the ground before him, but Wulf, his brother, moved restlessly, and at length yawned aloud. They were beautiful to look at, all three of them, as they appeared in the splendor of their youth and health. The imperial Rosamund, dark haired and eyed, ivory skinned and slender waisted, a posy of marsh Mawcens in her hand; the pale, stately Godwin, with his dreaming face; and the bold-fronted, blue-eyed warrior, Wulf, Saxon to his finger-tips, notwithstanding his father's Norman blood.

At the sound of that unstifled yawn, Rosamund turned her head with the slow grace which marked her every movement.

"Would you sleep already, Wulf, and the sun not yet down?" she asked in her rich, low voice, which, perhaps because of its foreign accent, seemed quite different to that of any other woman.

"I think so, Rosamund," he answered. "It would serve to pass the time, and now that you have finished gathering those yellow flowers which we rode so far to seek, the time—is somewhat long."

"Shame on you, Wulf," she said, smiling. "Look upon yonder sea and sky, at that sheet of bloom all gold and purple—"

"I have looked for hard on half an hour, Cousin Rosamund; also at your back and at Godwin's left arm and side-face; till in truth I thought myself kneeling in Stangate Priory staring at my father's effigy upon his tomb, while Prior John pattered the Mass. Why, if you stood it on its feet, it is Godwin, the same crossed hands resting on the sword, the same cold, silent face staring at the sky."

"Godwin as Godwin will no doubt one day be, or so he hopes—that is, if the saints give him grace to do such deeds as did our sire," interrupted his brother.

Wulf looked at him, and a curious flash of inspiration shone in his blue eyes.

"No, I think not," he answered; "the deeds you may do, and greater, but surely you will lie wrapped not in a shirt of mail, but with a monk's cowl at the last—unless a woman robs you of it and the quickest road to heaven. Tell me now, what are you thinking of, you two—for I have been wondering in my dull way, and am curious to learn how far I stand from truth? Rosamund, speak first. Nay, not all the truth—a maid's thoughts are her own—but just the cream of it, that which rises to the top and can be skimmed."

Rosamund sighed.

"If I was thinking of the East, where the sun shines ever and the seas are blue as my girdle stones, and men are full of strange learning—"

"And women are men's slaves!" interrupted Wulf. "Still it is naturel that you should think of the East who have that blood in your veins, and high blood, if all tales be true. Say, Princess"—and he bowed the kneed to her with an affectation of mockery which could not hide his earnest reverence—"say, Princess, my cousin, grand-daughter of Ayoub and niece of the mighty monarch, Yusuf Salah-ed-din, do you wish to leave this pale land and visit your dominions in Egypt and in Syria?"

She listened, and at his words her eyes seemed to take fire, the stately form to erect itself, the breast to heave, and the thin nostrils to grow wider as though they scented some sweet, remembered perfume. Indeed, at that moment, standing there on the promontory above the seas, Rosamund looked a very queen.

Presently she answered him with another question.

"And how would they greet me there, Wulf, who am a Norman D'Arcy and a Christian maid?"

"They would first forgive you, since that blood is none so ill either, and for the second—why, faiths can be changed."

Then it was that Godwin spoke for the first time.

"Wulf, Wulf," he said sternly, "keep watch upon your taongue, for there are things that should not be said even as a silly jest. See you, I love my cousin here better than aught else upon the earth—"

"There, at least, we agree," broke in Wulf.

"Better than aught else on the earth," repeated Godwin; "but, by the Holy Blood and by St. Peter, at whose shrine we stand, I would kill her by my own hand before her lips kissed the book of the false prophet."

"Or, any of his followers," muttered Fulf to himself, but fortunately, perhaps, too low for either of his companions to hear. Aloud he said, "You understand, Rosamund, you must be careful, for Godwin ever keeps his word, and that would be but a poor end for so much birth and beauty and wisdom."

"Oh, cease mocking, Wulf" she answered, laying her hand lightly on the tunic that hid his shirt of mail. "Cease mocking, and pray St. Chad, the builder of this shrine, that no such dreadful choice may ever be forced upon you, or me, or your beloved brother—who, indeed, in such a case would do right to slay me."

"Well, if it were," answered Wulf, and his fair face flushed as he spoke, "I trust that we should know how to meet it. After all, is it so very hard to choose between death and duty?"

"I know not," she replied; "but oftimes sacrifice seems easy when seen from far away; also, sometimes things may be lost that are more prized than life."

"What things? Do you mean place, or wealth, or—love?"

"Tell me," said Rosamund, changing her tone, "what is that boat rowing round the river's mouth? A while ago it hung upon its oars as though those within it watched us."

"Fisher-folk," answered Wulf carelessly. "I saw their nets."

"Yes; but beneath them something gleamed bright like swords."

"Fish," said Wulf; "we are at peace in Essex." Although Rosamund did not look convinced, he went on, "Now for Godwin's thoughts—what were they?"

"Brother, if you would know, of the East also—the East and its holy wars."

"Which has brought us no great luck," answered Wulf, "seeing that our sire was slain in them and naught of him came home again save his heart, which lies at Stangate yonder."

"How better could he die," asked Godwin, "that fighting for the Cross of Christ? Is not that death of his at Harenc told of to this day? By our Lady, I pray for one but half as glorious!"

"Aye, he died well, he died well," said Wulf, his blue eyes flashing and his hand creeping to his sword hilt. "But, brother, there is peace at Jerusalem, as in Essex."

"Peace? Yes; but soon there will be war again. The monk Peter, he whom we saw at Strangate last Sunday, and who left Syria but six months gone—told me that it was coming fast. Even now the Sultan Saladin, sitting at Damascus, summons his hosts from far and wide, while his priests preach battle amongst the tribes and barons of the East. And when it comes, my brother, shall we not be there to share it, as were our grandfather, our father, our uncle and so many of our kin? Shall we rot here in this dull land, as by our uncle's wish we have done these many years, yes, ever since we were home from the Scottish war, and count the kine and plough the fields like peasants, while our peers are charging on the pagans, and the banners wave and the blood runs red upon the holy sands of Palestine?"

Now it was Wulf's turn to take fire.

"By our Lady in Heaven, and our lady here!"—and he looked at Rosamund, who was watching the pair of them with her quiet thoughtful eyes—"go when you will, brother, and I go with you, and as our birth was one birth, so, if it is decreed, let our death be one death." And suddenly the hand that had been playing with the sword-hilt gripped it fast, and tore the long, lean blade from its scabbard and cast it high into the air, flashing in the sun-light, to catch it as it fell again, while in a voice that caused the wild fowl to rise in thunder from the Saltings beneath, Wulf shouted the old war-cry that had rung on so many a field—"A D'Arcy! a D'Arcy! Meet D'Arcy, meet Death!" Then he sheathed his sword again and added in a shamed voice, "Are we children that we fight where no foe is? Still, brother, may we find him soon!"

Godwin smiled grimly, but answered nothing; only Rosamund said:—

"So, my cousin, you would be away, perhaps to return no more, and that would part us. But,"—and her voice broke somewhat—"such is the woman's lot, since men like you ever love the bare sword best of all, nor should I think well of you were it otherwise. Yet, cousins, I know not why"—and she shivered a little—"it comes into my heart that Heaven often answers such prayers swiftly. Oh Wulf! your sword looked very red in the sunlight. I am afraid—of I know not what. Well, we must be going, for we have nine miles to ride, and the dark is not so far away. But first, my cousins, come with me into this holy place, and let us pray St. Peter and St. Chad to guard us on our journey home."

"Our journey?" said Wulf anxiously. "What is there for you to fear in a nine-mile ride along the shores of the Blackwater?"

"I said our journey home, Wulf; and home is not in the hall at Steeple, but yonder," and she pointed to the quiet, brooding sky.

"Well said," answered Godwin, "in this ancient place, whence so many have journeyed home; all the Romans who are dead, when it was their fortrees, and the Saxon who came after them, and others without count."

Then they turned and entered the old church—one of the first that ever was in Britain, rough-built of Roman stone by the very hands of Chad, the Saxon saint, more than five hundred years before their day. Here they knelt a while at the rude altar and prayed, each of them in his or her fashion, then crossed themselves, and rose to seek their horses, which were tied in the shed hard by.

Now there were two roads, or rather tracks, back to the Hall at Steeple—one a mile or so inland, that ran through the village of Blackwell, and the other, the shorter way, along the edge of the Saltings to the narrow water known as Death Creek, at the head of which the traveler to Steeple must strike inland, leaving the Priory of Stangate on his right. It was this latter path they choose, since at low tide the going there is good for horses—which even in the summer, that of the inland track was not. Also they wished to be at home by supper-time, lest the old knight, Sir Andrew D'Arcy, the father of Rosamund and the uncle of the orphan brethren, should grow anxious, and perhaps, come out to seek them.

For the half of an hour or more they rode along the edge of the Saltings, for the most part in silence, that was broken only by the cry of curlew and the lap of the turning tide. No human being did they see, indeed, for this place was very desolate and unvisited, save now and again by fishermen. At length, just as the sun began to sink, they approached the shore of Death Creek—a sheet of tidal water which ran a mile or more inland, growing even narrower, but was here some three hundred yards in breath. They were well mounted, all three of them. Indeed, Rosamund's horse, a great grey, her father's gift to her, was famous in that country-side for its swiftness and power, also because it was so docile that a child could ride it; while those of the brethren were heavy-built but well-trained war steeds, taught to stand where they were left, and to charge when they were urged, without far of shouting men or flashing steel.

Now the ground lay thus. Some seventy yards from the shore of the creek and parallel to it, a tongue of land, covered with scrub and a few oaks, ran down into the Saltings, its point ending on their path, beyond which were a swamp and a broad river. Between this tongue and the shore of the creek the track wended its way to the uplands. It was an ancient track; indeed the reason of its existence was that here the Romans or some other long dead hands had built a narrow mole or quay of rough stone, forty or fifty yards in length, out into the water of the creek, doubtless to serve as a convenience for fisher boats, which could lie along side of it even at low tide. This mole had been much destroyed by centuries of washing, so that the end of it lay below water, although the landward part was still almost sound and level.

Coming over the little rise at the tip of the wooded tongue, the quick eyes of Wulf who rode first—for here the path along the border of the swamp was so narrow that they must go in single file—caught sight of a large empty boat moored to an iron ring set in the wall of the mole.

"Your fishermen have landed, Rosamund," he said, "and doubtless gone up to Bradwell."

"That is strange," she added anxiously, "since here no fishermen ever come." And she checked her horse as though to turn.

"Whether they come or not, certainly they have gone," said Godwin, craning forward to look about him; "so, as we have nothing to fear from an empty boat, let us push on."

On the rode accordingly until they came to the root of the stone quay or pier, when a sound behind them caused them to look back. Then they saw a sight that sent the blood to their hearts, for there behind them, leaping down one by one on that narrow footway, were men armed with naked swords, six or eight of them, all of whom, they noted, had strips of linen pierced with eyelet holes tied beneath their helms or leather caps, so as to conceal their faces.

"A snare! a snare!" cried Wulf, drawing his sword. "Swift! follow me up the Bradwell path," and he struck the spurs into his horse. It bounded forward, to be dragged next second with all the weight of his powerful arm almost to its haunches. "God's mercy!" he cried, "there are more of them!" And more there were, for another band of men armed and linen-hooded like the first, had leapt down on to that Bradwell path, among them a stout man, who seemed to be unarmed, except for a long crooked knife at his girdle and a coat of ringed mail, which showed through the opening of his loose tunic.

"To the boat!" shouted Godwin, whereat the stout man laughed—a light, penetrating laugh, which even then all three of them heard and noted.

Along the quay they rode, since there was nowhere else that they could go, with both paths barred and swamp and water on one side of them, and a steep wooded bank upon the other. When they reached it, they found why the man had laughed, for the boat was made fast with a strong chain that could not be cut; more, her sail and oars were gone.

"Get into it," mocked a voice; "or, at least, let the lady get in; it will save us the trouble of carrying her there."

Now Rosamund turned very pale, while the face of Wulf went red and white, and he gripped his swordhilt. But Godwin, calm as ever, rode forward a few paces, and said quietly:

"Of your courtesy, say what you need of us. If it be money, we have none—nothing but our arms and horses, which I think may cost you dear."

Now the man with the crooked knife advanced a little, accompanied by another man, a tall, supple-looking knave, into whose ear he whispered.

"My master says," answered the tall man, "that you have with you that which is of more value than all the king's gold—a fair lady, of whom someone has urgent need. Give her up now, and go your way with your arms and horses, for you are gallant young men, whose blood we do not wish to shed."

At this it was the turn of the brethren to laugh, which both of them did together.

"Give her up," answered Goodwin, "and go our ways dishonored? Aye, with our breath, but not before. Who has then such urgent need of Lady Rosamund?"

Again there was whispering between the pair.

"My master says," was the answer, "he thinks that all who see her will have need of her, since such lovliness is rare. But if you wish a name, well, one comes into his mind; the name of the knight Lozelle!"

"The knight Lozelle!" murmured Rosamund, turning even paler than before, as well she might. For this Lozelle was a powerful man and Essex-born. He owned ships of whose doings upon the seas and in the East evil tales were told, and once had sought Rosamund's hand in marriage, but being rejected, uttered threats for which Godwin, as the elder of the twins, had fought and wounded him. Then he vanished—none knew where.

"Is Sir Hugh Lozelle here then?" asked Godwin, "masked like you common cowards? If so, I desire to meet him, to finish the work I began in the snow last Christmas twelvemonths."

"Find that out if you can," answered the tall man. But Wulf said, speaking low between his clenched teeth:

"Brother, I see but one chance. We must place Rosemund between us and charge them."

The captain of the band seemed to read their thoughts, for again he whispered into the ear of his companion, who called out:

"My master says that if you try to charge, you will be fools, since we shall stab and hamstring your horses, which are too good to waste, and take you quite easily as you fall. Come, then, yield as you can do without shame, seeing that there is no escape, and that two men, however brave, cannot stand against a crowd. He gives you one minute to surrender."

Now Rosamund spoke for the first time.

"My cousins," she said, "I pray you not to let me fall living into the hands of Sir Hugh Lozelle, or of yonder men, to be taken to what fate I know not. Kill me then, and strive to cut your way through, and live to avenge me."

The brethren made no answer, only they looked at the water and then at one another, and nodded. It was Godwin who spoke again, for now that it had come to this struggle for life and their lady's honor, Wulf, whose tongue was commonly so ready, had grown strangely silent, and fierce-faced also.

"Listen, Rosamund, and do not turn your eyes," said Godwin. "There is but one chance for you, and, poor as it is, you must choose between it and capture, since we cannot kill you. The grey horse you ride is strong and true. Turn him now, and spur into the water of Death Creek and swim it. It is broad, but the incoming tide will help you, and perchance you will not drown."

Rosamund listened and moved her head backwards towards the boat. Then Wulf spoke—few words and sharp:—

"Begone, girl! we guard the boat."

She heard, and her dark eyes filled with tears, and her stately head sank for a moment almost to the horses mane.

"Oh, my knights! my knights! And would you die for me? Well, if God wills it, so it must be. But this I swear, that if you die, no man shall be aught to me who have your memory, and if you live—" And she looked at them confusedly, then stopped.

"Bless us, and begone," said Godwin.

So she blessed them in words low and holy; then of a sudden wheeled round the great, grey horse, and striking the spur into its flank, drove straight at the deep water. A moment the stallion hung, then from the quay-head sprang out wide and clear. Deep it sank, but not for long, for presently its rider's head rose above the water, and regaining the saddle, from which she had floated, Rosamund sat firm and headed it straight for the distant bank. Now a shout of wonderment went up from the woman thieves, for this was a deed that they had never dreamed a girl would dare. But the brethren laughed as they saw that the horse swam well, and, leaping from their saddles, ran forward a few paces—eight or ten—along the mole to where it was narrowest, as they went tearing the cloaks from their shoulders, and, since they had none, throwing them over their left arms to serve as bucklers. The band cursed sullenly, only their captain gave an order to his spokesman, who cried out:—

"Cut them down, and to the boat! We shall take her before she reaches shore or drowns."

For a moment they wavered, for the tall twin warriors who barred the way had eyes that told of wounds and death. Then with a rush they came, scrambling over the rough stones, but here the causeway was so narrow that while their strength lasted two men were as good as twenty, nor, because of the mud and water, could they be got at from either side. So after all it was but two to two, and the brethren were the better two. Their long swords flashed and smote, and then Wulf's was lifted again, once more it was red as it had been when he tossed it high in the sunlight, and a man fell with a heavy splash into the waters of the creek, and wallowed there till he died. Godwin's foe was down also, and, as it seemed, sped.

Then, at a muttered word, not waiting to be attacked by others, the brethren sprang forward. The huddled mob in front of them saw them come, and shrank back, but before they had gone a yard, the swords were at work behind. They swore strange oaths, they caught their feet among the rocks, and rolled upon their faces. In their confusion three of them were pushed into the water, where two sank in the mud and were drowned, the third only dragging himself ashore, while the rest made good their escape from the causeway. But two had been cut down, and three had fallen, for whom there was no escape. They strove to rise and fight, but the linen masks flapped about their eyes, so that their blows went wide, while the long swords of the brothers smote and smote again upon their helms and harness as the hammers of smiths smite upon an anvil, until they rolled over silent and stirless.

"Back!" said Godwin; "for here the road is wide, and they will get behind us."

So back they moved slowly, with their faces to the foe, stepping just in front of the first man whom Godwin had seemed to kill, and who lay face upwards and with arms outstretched.

"So far we have done well," said Wulf with a short laugh. "Are you hurt?"

"Nay," answered his brother, "but boast not till the battle is over, for many are left and they will come on thus no more. Pray God they have no spears or blows."

Then he turned and looked behind him, and there, far from the shore now, swam the grey horse steadily, and there upon its back sat Rosamund. Yes, and she had seen, since the horse must swim somewhat sideways with the tide, for look, she took the kerchief from her throat and waved it to them. Then the breathern knew that she was proud of their great deeds, and thanked the saints that they had lived to do even so much as this for her dear sake.

Godwin was right. Although their leader commanded them in a stern voice, the band sank from the reach of those awful swords, and, instead, sought for stones to hurl at them. But there was more mud than pebbles, and the rocks of which the causeway was built were too heavy for them to lift, so that they found but few, which when thrown either missed the brethern or did but little hurt. Now, after some while, the man called "master" spoke through his lieutenant, and certain of them ran into the thorn thicket, and thence appeared again bearing the long oars of the boat.

"Their council is to batter us down with the oars. What shall we do now, brother?" asked Godwin.

"What we can," answered Wulf. "It matters little if Rosamund is spared by the waters, for they will scarcely take her now, who must loose the boat ano man it after we are dead."

As he spoke Wulf heard a sound behind him, and of a sudden Godwin threw up his hands and sank to his knees. Round he sprang, and there upon his feet stood that man whom they had thought dead, and in his hand a bloody sword. At him leapt Wulf, and so fierce were the blows he smote that the first swept through his sword arm and the second shore through cloak and mail deep into the thief's side; so that this time he fell, never to stir again. Then he looked at his brother and saw that the blood was running down his face and blinding him.

"Save yourself, Wulf, for I am sped," murmured Godwin.

"Nay, or you could not speak." And he cast his arm round him and kissed him on the brow.

Then a thought came into his mind, and lifting Godwin as though he were a child, he ran back to where the horses stood, and heaved him onto the saddle.

"Hold fast!" he cried, "by mane and pommel. Keep your mind, and hold fast, I will save you yet."

Then, passing the reins over his left arm, Wulf leapt upon the back of his own horse, and turned it. Ten seconds more, and the pirates, who were gathering with the oars where the paths joined at the foot of the causeway, saw the two great horses thundering down upon them, on one a sore wounded man, his bright hair dabbled with blood, his hands gripping mane and saddle, and on the other the warrior Wulf, with starting eyes and a face like the face of a flame, shaking his red sword, and for the second time that day shouting aloud: "A D'Arcy! a D'Arcy! Contre D'Arcy, contre Mort!"

They saw, they shouted, they massed themselves together and held up the oars to meet them. But Wulf spurred fiercely, and, short as was the way, the heavy horses, trained to tourney, gathered their speed. Now they were on them, and the oars were swept aside like reeds, and all round them flashed the swords, and Wulf felt that he was hurt, he knew not where. But his sword flashed also, one blow—there was no time for more—yet the man beneath it sank like an empty sack.

By St. Peter! They were through, and Godwin still swayed upon the saddle, and yonder, nearing the further shore, the grey horse with its burden still battled in the tide. They were through! they were through! while to Wulf's eyes the air swam red, and the earth seemed as though it rose up to meet them, and everywhere was flaming fire.

But the shouts had died away behind them, and the only sound was the sound of the golloping of their horses' hoofs. Then that also grew faint and died away, and silence and darkness fell upon the mind of Wulf.

CHAPTER II.

Sir Andrew D'Arcy.

Godwin dreamed that he was dead, and that beneath him floated the world, a glowing ball, while he was borne to and fro through the blackness, stretched upon a couch of ebony. There were bright watchers by his couch also. watchers twain, and he knew them for his guardian angels, given him at birth. Moreover, now and again presences would come and ask questions of the watchers who sat at his head and foot. One asked:

"Has this soul sinned?" And the angel at his head answered:

"It has sinned."

Again the voice asked: "Did it die shriven of its sins?"

The angel answered: "It died unshriven, red sword aloft, fighting a good fight."

"Fighting for the Cross of Christ?"

"Nay; fighting for a woman."

"Alas! poor soul, sinful and unshriven, who died fighting for a woman's love. How shall such a one find mercy?" wailed the questioning voice, growing ever fainter, till it was lost far, far away.

Now came another visitor. It was his father—the warrior sire whom he had never seen, who fell in Syria. He knew him well, for the face was the face carven on the tomb in Stangate church, and he wore the blood-red cross upon his mail, and the D'Arcy-Death's hand was on his shield, and in his hand shone a naked sword.

"Is this the soul of my son?" he asked of the white-robed watchers. "And how died he?"

Then the angel at his foot answered: "He died, red sword aloft, fighting a good fight."

"Fighting for the Cross of Christ?"

"Nay; fighting for a woman."

"Fighting for a woman's love who should have fallen in the holy War? Alas! poor son; alas! poor son! Alas! that we must part again forever!" and his voice too passed away.

Lo! a Glory advanced through the blackness, and the angels at head and foot stood up and saluted with their flaming spears.

"How died this child of God?" asked a voice, speaking out of the Glory, a low and awful voice.

"He died by the sword," answered the angel.

"By the sword of the children of the enemy, fighting in the war of Heaven?"

And the angels were silent.

"What has Heaven to do with him, if he fought not for Heaven?" asked the voice again.

"Let him be spared," pleaded the guardians, "who was young and brave, and knew not. Send him back to earth, there to retrieve his sins and be our charge once more."

"So be it," said the voice. "Knight, live on, but live as a knight of Heaven if thou would'st win Heaven."

"Must he then put the woman from him?" asked the angels.

"It was not said," answered the voice speaking from the Glory. And all the wild vision vanished.

Then a space of oblivion, and Godwin awoke to hear other voices around him, voices human, well-beloved, remembered; and to see a face bending over him—a face most human, most well-beloved, most remembered—that of his cousin, the Lady Rosamund. He babbled some questions, but they brought him food, and told him to sleep, so he slept. Thus it went on, waking and sleep, sleep and waking, until at length one morning he woke up truly in the little room that opened out of the solar or sitting place of the Hall of Steeple, where he and Wulf had slept since their uncle took them to his home as infants. More, on the trestle bed opposite to him, his leg and arm bandaged, and a crutch by his side, sat Wulf himself, somewhat paler and thinner than of yore, but the same jovial, careless, yet at times fierce-faced Wulf.

"Do I still dream, my brother, or is it you indeed?"

A happy smile spread upon the face of Wulf, for now he knew that Godwin was himself again.

"Me sure enough," he answered. "Dream-folks don't have lame legs; they are the gifts of swords and men."

"And Rosamund? What of Rosamund? Did the grey horse swim the creek, and how came we here? Tell me quick—I faint for news!"

"Herself shall tell you." And hobbling to the curtained door, he called, "Rosamund, my—nay, our—Lady Rosamund, Godwin is himself again. Hear you, Godwin is himself again, and would speak with you!"

There was a swift rustle of robes and a sound of quick feet among the rushes that strewed the floor, and then—Rosamund herself, lovely as ever, but all her stateliness forgot in joy. She saw him, the gaunt Godwin sitting up upon the pallet, his grey eyes shining in the white and sunken face. For Godwin's eyes were grey, while Wulf's were blue, which was the only difference between them whereof a stranger would take note, although in truth Wulf's lips were fuller than Godwin's, and his chin more marked; also he was a larger man. She saw him, and with a little cry of delight ran and cast her arms about him, and kissed him on the brow.

"Be careful," said Wulf roughly, turning his head aside, "or, Rosamund, you will loose the bandages, and bring his trouble back again; he has had enough of blood-letting."

"Then I will kiss him on the hand—the hand that saved me," she said, and did so. More, she pressed that poor, pale hand against her heart.

"Mine had something to do with that business also, but I don't remember that you kissed it, Rosamund. Well, I will kiss him too, and oh! God be praised, and the holy Virgin, and the holy Peter, and the holy Chad, and all the other holy dead folk whose names I can't recall, who between them, with the help of Rosamund here, and the prayers of the Prior John and the brethern at Stangate, and of Matthew, the village priest, have given you back to us, my brother, my most beloved brother." And he hopped to the bedside, and threw his long, sinewy arms about Godwin and embraced him again and again.

"Be careful," said Rosamund drily," or, Wulf, you will disturb the bandages, and he has had enough of blood-letting."

Then before he could answer, which he seemed minded to do, there came the sound of a slow step, and swinging the curtain aside, a tall and noble-looking knight entered the little place. The man was old, but looked older than he was, for sorrow and sickness had wasted him. His snow-white hair hung upon his shoulders, his face was pale, and his features were pinched but finely chiseled, and notwithstanding the difference of their years, wonderfully like to those of the daughter Rosamund. For this was her father, the famous lord, Sir Andrew D'Arcy. Rosamund turned and bent one knee to him with a strange and Eastern grace, while Wulf bowed his head, and Godwin, since his neck was too stiff to stir, held up his hand in greeting. The old man looked at him, and there was pride in his eye.

"So you will live after all, my nephew," he said, "and for that I thank the giver of life and death, since 'fore God you are a gallant man—a worthy child of the bloods of the Norman D'Arcy and of Uluin the Saxon. Yes, one of the best of them.

"Speaking not so, my uncle," said Godwin; "or at least, here is a worthier,"—and he patted the hand of Wulf with his lean fingers. "Wulf it was who bore me through. Oh, I remember as much as that—how he lifted me onto the black horse and bade me to cling fast to mane and pommel. Aye, and I remember the charge, and his cry of "Contre D'Arcy, contre Mort!" and the flashing of swords about us, and after that—nothing."

"Would that I had been there to share that fight," said the Lord D'Arcy, tossing his white hair. "Oh, my children, it is hard to be sick and old and to feel that never again may the ancient cry pass my lips, and never again shall I lift brand in battle. A log am I—nothing but a rotting log. Still, had I known, had I only known——"

"Father, father," said Rosamund, casting her white arm about his neck. You should not speak thus. You have done your share."

"Yes, my share; but I should like to do more. Oh, St. Andrew, grant it to me to die with my sword aloft and my grandsire's cry upon my lips. Yes, yes; thus, not like a worn-out war horse in his stall. There, pardon me; but in truth, my children, I am jealous of you. Why, when I found you lying in each other's arms I could have wept for rage to think that such a fray had been within a league of my own doors and I not in it."

"I know nothing of all that story," said Godwin.

"No, in truth, how can you, who have been senseless this month or more? But Rosamund knows, and she shall tell it you. Speak on Rosamund. Lay you back, Godwin, and listen."

"The tale is yours, my cousins, and not mine," said Rosamund. "You bade me take the water, and into it I spurred the grey horse, and we sank deep, so that the waves closed above my head. Then up we came, I floating from the saddle, but I regained it, and the horse answered to my voice and bridle, and swam out for the further shore. On it swam, somewhat slantwise with the tide, so that by turning my head I could see all that passed upon the mole. I saw them come at you, and men fall before your swords; I saw you charge them, and run back again, and, lastly, after what seemed a very long while, and I was far away I saw Wulf lift Godwin into the saadle—I knew it must be Godwin, because he set him on the black horse—and the pair of you galloped down the quay and vanished. By then I was not a hundred yards from the home shore, and the grey grew very weary and sank deep in the water. But I cheered it on with my voice, and although twice its head went beneath the waves, in the end it found a footing, though a soft one. After resting awhile, it plunged forward with short rushes through the mud, and so at length came safe to land, where it stood shaking with fear and weariness. So soon as the horse got its breath again, I pressed forward, and came home here as the dark closed in, to meet your uncle watching for me at the gate—and now, father, do you take up the tale."

"There is little more to tell," said Sir Andrew. "You will remember, nephews, that I was against this ride of Rosamund's to seek flowers, or I know not what, at St. Peter's shrine, nine miles away, but as the maid had set her heart on it, and there are but few pleasures here, why, I let her go with the pair of you for escort. You will mind also that you were starting without your mail, and how foolish you thought me when I called you back and made you gird it on. Well, my patron saint—or yours—put it into my head to do so, for had it not been for those same shirts of mail, you were both of you dead men today. But that morning I had been thinking of Sir Hugh Lozelle—if such a false pirate rogue can be called a knight, not but that he is stout and brave enough—and his threats after he recovered from the wound you gave him, Godwin; how that he would come back and take your cousin for all we could do to stay him. True, we have heard that he had sailed for the East to war against Saladin—or with him, for he was ever a traitor—but even if this were so, men return from the East. Therefore I bade you arm, having some foresight of what was to come, for doubtless this onslaught must have been planned by him."

"I think so," said Wulf, "for, as Rosamund here knows, the tall knave who interpreted for the foreigner whom he called his master, gave us the name of the knight Lozelle as the man who sought to carry her off."

"Was this master a Saracen?" askd Sir Andrew anxiously.

"Nay, uncle, how can I tell, seeing that his face was masked like the rest and he spoke through an interpreter? But I pray you go on with the story, which Godwin has not heard."

"It is short. When Rosamund told her tale whereof I could make little—for the girl was crazed with grief and cold and fear—save that you had been attacked upon the old quay, and she had escaped by swimming Death Creek, which seemed a thing incredible, I got together what men I could. Then, bidding her stay behind and nurse herself, which she was loth to do, I set out to find you or your bodies. It was dark, but we rode hard, having lanterns with us, as we went rousing men at every stead, until we came to where the roads join at Moats. There we found a black horse—your horse, Godwin—so sorely wounded the he could travel no further, and I groaned, thinking that you were dead. Still we went on, till we heard another horse whinny, and presently found the roan, also riderless, standing by the path-side with his head down.

(To be Continued.)

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