

CASTING THE LOT:

A TRUE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE STORY OF "PLANTAGENET."

(Concluded.)

CHAPTER V.

"The lot is cast in the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."—Prov. xvi., 33.

The next day was the day of decision. Brother Walsingham drew his lot and handed it to Brother Benade to read.

"Grace—Grace Branigan." Every look was full of wonder.

"There is some sad mistake here," said Brother Benade, and he made a motion as if to lay the lot aside, saying, "Brother Walsingham, draw again."

The faintest dawning of a smile came on the face of Brother Walrave.

"Pardon, Brother Benade," interposed Brother Walsingham, "what is wrong with this lot?"

"It is irregular, not after the custom of our Church, which is a selection of those thought most suitable first, then the lot cast to ascertain which. This person is altogether unsuitable. I cannot conceive how such a thing chanced."

"Things trusted to the Lord can chance intermeddle with?" said Brother Walsingham. "I will draw again, but the name of this person must be put in lest we should be found withstanding God."

It was done. He drew again: "Grace Branigan!" The Bishop stood aghast.

"The lot is cast in the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord," quoted the soft voice of Sister Malilieu.

"Return it again," said Brother Walsingham.

"If I draw the same name this time, I call you all to witness that I will accept the maiden, if she so wills, as God's good gift to me, be she who she may."

He drew again—"Grace Branigan!"

Thus it was settled Grace was to be the wife of Reginald Walsingham.

Brother Benade felt both perplexed and grieved. He remembered who it was who

prepared the slips; so, after all was past, he sought Brother Walrave to enquire of the matter. He justified not himself, but confessed all—his love, and his doubts about the lot, his temptation, and what he had done. After he had thus confessed, he was forgiven; that is our rule. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him." He was made to see by reference to Acts 1st, chapter 24th, 25th and 26th verses, that we had Scripture example for our custom of selecting first and then appealing to the lot.

It devolved on Sister Malilieu to carry the tidings to Grace. They who noticed the quaint figure of the minister's wife in her best black silk dress and drab silk shawl, with a border of blonde quilling inside her cottage bonnet, surrounding her sweet face like a halo round a saint (and she is the most saintly woman I know), her cap ribbon tied into a bow under her chin, which bow as to how it could be tied by mortal fingers was a perpetual miracle in Himmel-en-erde—they who noticed the minister's wife in this garb, only assumed on special occasions, knew that her errand was of importance. Grace was in the kitchen peeling potatoes for dinner, her voice soaring up in the lines of a psalm:

"Since better is thy love than life,
My lips thee praise will give;
I, in thy name, will lift my hands,
And bless thee while I live."

She did not hear the soft footfall in the passage, or the silken rustle, till the clear voice of Sister Malilieu said, "Grace," and she turning saw the pastor's wife. She blushed guiltily; for, though caught singing a psalm, she had just finished "Aileen Aroon" before she commenced that verse whose sublime beauty had made it a great favorite with her, and she did not know