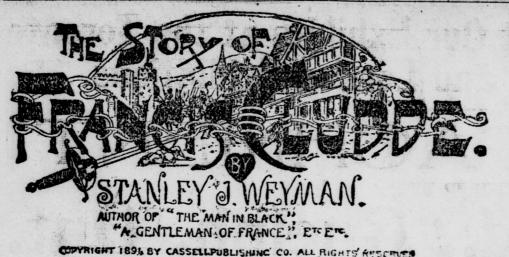
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(CONTINUED.)

The visitors had been in the house a month-and in that month an observant eye might have noted much change. though all things in seeming went on as before-when the queen's orders enjoining all priests to read the service, or a great part of it, in English, came down, being forwarded by the sheriff to Father Carey. The missive arrived on a Friday and had been indeed long expected.

"What shall you do?" Ferdinand asked Sir Anthony.

"As before!" the tall old man replied, gripping his staff more firmly. It was no new subject between them. A hundred times they had discussed it already, even as they were now discussing it, on the terrace by the fishpool, with the church which adjoins the house full in view across the garden. "I will have no mushroom faith at Coton End," the knight continued warmly. "It sprang up under King Henry, and how long did it last? A year or two. It came in again under King Edward, and how long did it last? A year or two. So it will be again. It will not last, Ferdinand."

"I am of that mind," the younger man emswered, nodding his head gravely.

"Of course you are!" Sir Anthony reioined as he rested one hand on the sundial. "For ten generations our forefathers have worshiped in that church after the old fashion, and shall it be changed in my day? Heaven forbid! The old fashion did for my fathers. It shall do for me. Why, I would as soon expect that the river yonder should flow backward as that the church which has stood for centuries, and more years to the back of them than I can count, should be swept away by these hot gospelers! I will have none of them! I will have no new fangled ways at Coton End

"Well, I think you are right!" the younger brother said. By what means he had brought the knight to this mind without committing himself more fully I cannot tell. Yet so it was. Ferdinand showed himself always the cautious doubter. Father Carey even must have done him that justice. But-and this was strange-the more doubtful he showed himself the more stubborn grow his brother. There are men aya so shrewd as to pass off stones for bread. and men so simple minded as to take somesathing less than the word for the deed. "Why should it come in our time?" oried Sir Anthony fractiously. ' quoth the subtle one. vny mueeur "I"I say, why should it come now? I have heard and read of the sect called Lollards who gave trouble awhile ago. But they passed, and the church stood. So will these gospelers pass, and the church will stand." "That is our experience certainly," said Ferdinand. "I hate change!" the old man continued, his eyes on the old church, the old timbered house-for only the gateway tower at Coton is of stone-the old yew trees in the churchyard. "I do not believe in it, and, what is more, I will not have it. As my fathers have worshiped so will I, though it cost me every rood of land! A fig for the order in council!".

end of it, for on that Saturday afternoon he took a remarkable walk. He called Petronilla after dinner and bade her get her hood and come with him, and the girl, who had seen so little of her father in the last month, and who, what with rumors and fears and surmises, was eating her heart out, obeyed him with joy. It was a fine frosty day near the close of December. Sir Anthony led the way over the plank bridge which crossed the moat in the rear of the house and tramped steadily through

the home farm toward a hill called the Woodman's View, which marked the Lorder of the forest. He did not talk, but neither was he sunk in reverie. As he entered each field he stood and scanned it, at times merely nodding, at times smiling: or again muttering a few words, such as, "The three acre piece! My father inclosed it!" or, "That is where Ferdinand killed the old mare!" or, "The best land for wheat on this side of the house!" The hill climbed, he stood a long time gazing over the landscape, eying first the fields and meadows which stretched away from his feet toward the house, the latter, as seen from this point, losing all its stateliness in the mass of stacks and ricks and barns and granaries which surrounded it. Then his eyes traveled farther in the same line to the broad expanse of woodland-Coton Chase-through which the road passed along a ridge as straight as an arrow. To the right were more fields, and here and there amid them a homestead with its smaller ring of stacks and barns. When he turned to the left, his eyes, passing over the shoulders of Brant hill and Mill Head copse and Beacon hill, all bulwarks of the forest, followed the streak of river as it wound away toward Stratford through luscious flood meadows, here growing wide and there narrow as the wood-

land advanced or retreated. "It is all mine," he said as much to himself as to the girl. "It is all Cludde land as far as you can see."

There were tears in her eyes, and she had to turn away to conceal them. Why she hardly knew, for he said nothing more, and he walked down the hill dry eyed, but all the way home he still looked sharply about, noting this or that, as if he were bidding farewell to the old familiar objects, the spinneys and copses-aye, and the very gates and gaps and the hollow trees where the owls built. It was the saddest and most pathetic walk the girl had ever taken. Yet there was nothing said. CHAPTER XXIII. The north wall of the church at Coton End is only four paces from the house, the church standing within the moat. Isolat ed as the sacred building, therefore, is from the outer world by the wide spread ing chase and close massed with the homestead, Sir Anthony had some excuse for considering it as much a part of his demesne as the mill or the smithy. Ir words he would have been willing to ad mit a distinction, but in thought I fancy he lumped it with the rest of his posses sions. It was with a lowering eye that on this Sunday morning he watched from his room over the gateway the unusual stream of people making for the church. Per chance he had in his mind other Sunday: -Sundays when he had walked out a this hour, light of heart and kind of eye, with his staff in his fist, and his glove dangling, and his dog at his heels, and free from care, had taken pleasure in each bonnet doffed and each old wife's "God bless ye, Sir Anthony!" Well, those days were gone. Now the rain dripped from the caves-for a thaw had come in the night-and the bells' that could on occa sion ring so cheerily sounded sad and forlorn. His daughter, when she came, according to custom, bringing his great service book, could scarcely look him in the face. I know not whether even then his resolution to dare all might not at sound of a word from her or at sight on her face have melted like yesterday's ice, but before the word could be spoken of the eyes meet another step rang on the stone staircase, and Brother Ferdinand entered. "They are here!" he said in a low voice. "Six of them, Anthony, and sturdy fel lows, as all Clopton's men are. If you dc not think your people will stand by you"--The knight fired at this suggestion. What," he burst out, turning from the window, "if Cludde men cannot meet Clopton men, the times are indeed gone mad! Make way and let me come! Though the mass be never said again in Coton church, it shall be said today!" And he swore a great oath. He strode down the stairs and under the gateway, where were arranged, according to the custom of the house on wet days, all the servants, with Baldwin and Martin Luther at their head. The knight stalked through them with a gloomy brow. His brother followed him, a faint smile flickering about the corners of his mouth. Then came Ferdinand's wife and Petronilla, the latter with her hood drawn close about her face; Anne, with her chin in the air and her eyes aglow. "It is not a bit of a bustle will scare her!" Baldwin muttered as he fell in behind her and eyed her back with no great favor. "No, so long as it does not touch her." Martin replied in a cynical whisper. "She is well mated-well mated and ill fated! Ha. ha!"

cently and in order, with a clattering of rustic boots indeed, but no gcrambling or ill words. The Clopton men were there. Baldwin had marked them well, and so had a dozen stout fellows, sons of Sir Anthony's tenants. But they behaved discreetly, and amid such a silence as Father Carey never remembered to have faces he began the Roman service.

The December light fell faintly through the east window on the father at his ministrations, on his small acolytes, on the four Cludde brasses before the altar. It fell everywhere-on gray dusty walls buttressed by gray tombs which left but a narrow space in the middle of the chancel. The marble crusader to the left matched the canopied bed of Sir Anthony's parents on the right, the abbess' tomb in the next row faced the plainer monument of Sir Anthony's wife, a vacant place by her side awaiting his own effigy, and there were others. The chancel was so smallnay, the church, too-so small and old and gray and solid and the tombs were so massive that they elbowed one another. The very dust which rose as men stirred was the dust of Cluddes. Sir Anthony's brow relaxed. He listened gravely and sadly.

And then the interruption came. protest!" a rough voice in rear of the crowd cried suddenly, ringing harshly and strangely above the father's accents and the solemn hush. "I protest against this service!"

A thrill of astonishment ran through the crowd, and all rose. Every man in the church turned round, Sir Anthony among the first, and looked in the direction of the voice. Then it was seen that the Clopton men had massed themselves about the door in the southwest corner, a strong position, whence retreat was easy. Father Carey, after a momentary glance, went on as if he had not heard, but his voice shook, and all still waited with their faces turned toward the west end.

"I protest in the name of the queen!" the same man cried sharply, while his fellows raised a mumur so that the priest's voice was drowned.

Sir Anthony stepped into the aisle, his face inflamed with anger. The interruption taking place there, in that place, seemed to him a double profanation. "Who is that brawler?" he said, his

hand trembling on his staff, and all the old dames trembled too. "Let him stand out."

The sheriff's spokesman was so concealed by his fellows that he could not be seen, but he answered civilly enough.

"I am no brawler," he said. "I only require the law to be observed, and that you know, sir. I am here on behalf of the sheriff, and I warn all present that a continuation of this service will expose them to grievous pains and penalties. If you desire it, I will read the royal order to prove that I do not speak without warrant."

"Begone, knave, you and your fellows!" Sir Anthony cried. A loyal man in all else, and the last to deny the queen's right or title, he had no reasonable answer to give and could only bluster. "Begone, do you hear?" he repeated, and he rapped h staff on the pavement, and then, raising it, pointed to the door.

his shoulders? Do you think, if there were danger, he and I would not have foreseen

He waved his hand and turned away expecting her to go, but Petronilla did not go. She had something else to say, and though the task was painful she was resolved to say it.

"Father, one word," she murmured. About my uncle." "Well, well? What about him?"

"I distrust him, sir," she ventured in a low tone, her color rising. "The servants

do not like him. They fear him and suspect him of I know not what." "The servants!" Sir Anthony answered in an awful tone.

Indeed it was not the wisest thing she could have said, but the consequences were averted by a sudden alarm and shouting outside. Half a dozen voices, shrill or threatening, seemed to rise at once. The knight strode to the window, but the noise appeared to come, not from the Chase upon which it looked, but from the courtyard or the rear of the house. Sir Anthony caught up his stick, and followed by the girl ran down the steps. He pushed aside half a dozen women who had likewise been attracted by the noise and hastened through the narrow passage which led to the wooden bridge in the rear of the

buildings. Here, in the close on the far side of the moat, a strange scene was passing. A dozen horsemen were grouped in the middle



'In heaven's name, do not carry the thing

farther!" of the field about a couple of prisoners. while round the gate by which they had entered stood as many stout men on foot, headed by Baldwin and armed with pikes and staves. These seemed to be taunting the cavaliers and daring them to come on. On the wooden bridge by which the knight stood were half a dozen of the servants, also armed. Sir Anthony recognized in the leading horseman Sir Philip Clopton, and in the prisoners Father Carey and one of the woodmen, and in a moment he comprehended what had happened.

The sheriff, in the most unneighborly manner, instead of challenging his front Gooz, had stolen up to the rear of the house, and without saying with your leave or by your leave had snapped up the poor priest, who happened to be wandering in that direction. Probably he had intended to force an entrance, but he had laid aside the plan when he saw his only retreat monaced by the watchful Baldwin, who was not to be caught napping. The knight took all this in at a glance, and his gorge rose as much at the Clonton men's trick as at the danger in which Father Carey stood. So he lost his head and made mat ters worse. "Who are these villains," he cried in a rage, his face aflame, "who come attacking men's houses in time of peace? Begone, or I will have at ye!" "Sir Anthony," Clopton cried, interrupting him, "in heaven's name, do not carry the thing farther! Give me way in the queen's name, and I will"-What he would do was never known for at that last word, away at the house, behind Sir Anthony, there was a puff of smoke, and down went the sheriff headlong, horse and man, while the report of an arquebus rang dully round the building. The knight gazed, horrified, but the damage was done and could not be undone-nay, more, the Coton men took the sound for a signal. With a shout, before Sir Anthony could interfere, they made a dash for the group of horsemen. The lat-ter, uncertain and hampered by the fall of their leader, who was not hit, but was stunned boyond giving orders, did the best they could. They let their prisoners go with a curse, and then, raising Sir Philip and forming a rough line, they charged toward the gate by which they. had entered. The footmen stood the brunt gallantly, and for a moment the sharp ringing of quarter staves and the shivering of steel told of as pretty a combat as ever took place on level sward in full view of an English home. The spectators could see Baldwin doing wonders. His men backed him up bravely, but in the end the impetus of the horses told, the footmen gave way and fled aside, and the strangers passed them. A little more skirmishing took place at the gateway, Sir Anthony's men being deaf to all his attempts to call them off, and then the Clopton horse got clear, and shaking their fists and vowing vengeance rode off toward the forest. They left two of their men on the field, however, one with a broken arm and one with a shattered kneecap, while the house party on their side, besides sundry knocks and bruises, could show one deep sword cut, a broken wrist and half a dozen nasty wounds. "My pcor little girl!" Sir Anthony whispered to himself as he gazed with scared eyes at the prostrate men and the dead horses and comprehended what had happened. "This is a hanging business! In arms against the queen! What am I to do?" And as he went back to the house in a kind of stupor he muttered again: 'My little girl! My poor little girl!" I fancy that in this terrible crisis he looked to get support and comfort from his brother, that old campaigner who had seen so many vicissitudes and knew by heart so many shifts. But Ferdinand, though he thought the event unlucky, had little to say and less to suggest and seemed indeed to have become on a sudden flaccid and lukewarm. Sir Anthony felt himself thrown on his own resources, "Who fired the shot?" he asked, looking about the room in a dazed fashion. "It was that which did the mischief," he continued, forgetting his own hasty challenge "I think it must have been Martin Luther," Ferdinand answered. But Martin Luther, when he was accused, denied this stoutly. He had been so far along the Ridgeway, he said, that,

altered. "Go to the Mere farm?" he said, not angrily now, but firmly and quietly. "No, girl, I cannot. I have been in fault, and I must stay and pay for it. If I left these poor fellows to bear the brunt, I could never hold up my head again. But do you go now and tell Baldwin to come to me.'

She went and told the stern, down looking steward, and he came up.

"Baldwin," said the knight when the door was shut and the two were alone, "you are to dismiss to their homes all the tenants-who have indeed been called out without my orders. Bid them go and keep the peace, and I hope they will not be molested. For you and Father Carey, you must go into hiding. The Mere farm will be best."

"And what of you, Sir Anthony?" the steward asked, amazed at this act of folly. "I shall remain here," the knight re-

plied, with dignity. "You will be taken," said Baldwin, after a pause.

"Very well," said the knight. The man shrugged his shoulders and wassilent.

'What do you mean?" asked Sir Anthony in anger.

"Why, just that I cannot do it." Baldwin answered, glowering at him, with a flush on his dark cheek. "That is what I mean. Let the priest go. I cannot go and

will not." "Then you will be hanged!" quoth the knight warmly. "You have been in arms against the queen, you fool! You will be hanged as sure as you stay here!"

Then I shall be hanged," replied the steward sullenly. "There never was a Cludde hanged yet without one to keep him company. To hear of it would make my grandsire turn in his grave out there. I dare not do it, Sir Anthony, and that is the fact. But for the rest I will do as you bid me."

And he had his way. But never had evening fallen more strangely and sadly at Coton before. The rain pattered drearily in the courtyard. The drawbridge, by Baldwin's order, had been pulled up, and the planks over the moat in the rear removed.

"They shall not steal upon us again!" he muttered. "And if we must surrender they shall see we do it willingly."

The tenants had gone to their homes and their wives. Only the servants remained. They clustered, solemn and sorrowful, about the hearth in the great hall, starting if a dog howled without or a coal flew from the fire within. Sir Anthony remained brooding in his own room, Petronilla sitting beside him silent and fearful, while Ferdidnand and his wife moved restlessly about listening to the wind. But the evening and the night wore peacefully away, and so, to the surprise of everybody, did the next day and the next. Could the sheriff be going to overlook the master? Alas! on the third day the Col. was resolved. Two or three boys, whe had been sent out as scouts, came in with news that there was a strong watch set or the Ridgeway, that the paths through th forest were guarded, that bodies of armee men were arriving in the neighboring vil lages, and that soldiers had been demand ed-or so it was said-from Warwick and Worcester, and even from a place as fa away as Oxford. Probably it was only th sheriff's prudence which had postponed the crisis, and now it had come. The ne was drawn all round. As the day closet in on Coton and the sun set angril among the forest trees the boys' tale which grow no doubt in the telling, passed from one to another, and men swore and looked out of window, and women wep in corners. In the tower room Sir An thony sat awaiting the summons and wondered what he could do to save his daughter from possible rudeness, or ever hurt, at the hands of these strangers. There was one man missing from hal and kitchen, but few in the suspense no ticed his absence. The fool had heard the boys' story and, unable to remain inactive under such excitement, he presently stole off in the dusk to the rear of the house Here he managed to cross the moat by means of a plank, which he then drew over and hid in the grass. This quietly managed-Baldwin, be it said, had strict ly forbidden any one to leave the house-Martin made off with a grim chuckle to ward the forest, and following the mair track loading toward Wootton Wawer presently came among the trees upon a couple of sentinels. They heard him, saw him indistinctly and made a rush for him, but this was just the sport Martin liked and the fun he had come for. His quick ear apprised him of the danger, and in a second he was lost in the underwood, his mocking laugh and shrill taunts keeping the poor men on the shudder for the next ten minutes. Then the uncanny accents died away, and satisfied with his sport and the knowledge he had gained the fool made for home. As he sped quickly across the last field, however, he was astonished by the sight of a dark figure in the very act of launching his (Martin's) plank across the moat. "Ho, ho!" the fool muttered in a fierce undertone. 'That is it, is it? And only one! If they will come one by one, like the plums in the kitchen porridge, I shall make a fine meal!" He stood back, crouching down on the grass, and watched the unknown, his eyes glittering. The stranger was a tall, big fellow, a formidable antagonist. But Martin cared nothing for that. Had he not his long knife, as keen as his witswhen they were at home, which was not always. He drew it out now, and under cover of the darkness crept nearer and nearer, his blood glowing pleasantly, though the night was cold. How lucky it was he had come out! He could hardly restrain the "Ho, ho!" which rose to his lips. He meant to leap upon the man on this side of the water, that there might be no telltale traces on the farther bank. But the stranger was too quick for him in this. He got his bridge fixed and began to cross before Martin could crawl near enough. As he crossed, however, his feet made a slight noise on the plank, and under cover of it the fool rose and ran forward, then followed him over with the stealthiness of a cat. And, like a cat, too, the moment the stranger's foot touched the bank Martin sprang on him with his knife raised-sprang on him silently, with his teeth grinning and his eyes aflame.

cut, upon his forehead. What is it. . erdinand cried sharply.""Who did it, man?" Baldwin had already thrown his light on the fool's face, and Martin, seeming to become conscious of their presence, looked at them, but in a dazed fashion. "What?" he muttered, "what is what?"

By this time nearly every one in the house had hurried to the spot, among them not only Petronilla, clinging to her father's arm, but Mistress Anne, her face pale and gloomy, and half a dozen wom-enfolk who clutched one another tightly and screamed at regular intervals.

"What is it?" Baldwin repeated roughly, laying his hand on Martin's arm and slightly shaking him. "Come, who struck you, man?"

"I think," the fool answered slowly, gulping down something and turning a dull eye on the group, "a-a swallow flew by and hit me!"

They shrank away from him instinctively, and some crossed themselves. "He is in one of his mad fits," Baldwin muttered. Still the steward showed no fear. "A swallow, man!" he cried aloud. 'Come, talk sense. There are no swallows flying at this time of year, and if there were they do not fly by night nor give men wounds like that. What was it? Out with it now! Do you not see, man," he added, giving Martin an impatient shake, "that Sir Anthony is waiting?"

The fool nodded stupidly. "A swallow," he muttered. "Aye, 'twas a swal-low, a great hig swallow. I-I nearly put by foot on him."

"And he flew up and hit you in the face?" Baldwin said, with huge contempt in his tone.

Martin accepted the suggestion placidly. "Aye, 'twas so. A great big swallow, and he flew in my face," he repeated.

Sir Anthony looked at him compassionately. "Poor fellow!" he said. "Baldwin, see to him. He has had one of his fits and hurt himself."

"I never knew him to hurt himself," Baldwin muttered darkly.

"Let somebody see to him," the knight said, disregarding the interruption. "And now come, Petronilla. Why, where has the girl gone?"

Not far. Only round to the other side of him, that she might be a little nearer to Martin. The curiosity in the other women's faces was a small thing in comparison with the startled, earnest look in hers. She gazed at the man with eyes not of affright, but of eager, avid questioning while through her parted lips her breath came in gasps. Her cheek was red and white by turns, and for her heart-well, it had seemed to stand still a moment and now was beating like the heart of some poor captured bird held in the hand She did not seem to hear her father speak to her, and he had to touch her sleeve. Then she started as though she were awakening from a dream and followed him sadly into the house.

Sadly, and yet there was a light in her eyes which had not been there five minuter before. A swallow? A great big swallow And this was December, when the swallows were at the bottom of the horse ponds. "She only knew of one swallow whose return was possible in winter. But snow should lie inches deep in the chase and the water should freeze in her room would make a summer for her. Could it be that one? Could it be? Petronilla's heart was beating so loudly as she went up stairs after her father that she wondered he did not hear it. The group left round Martin gradually melted away. Baldwin was the only man who could deal with him in his mad fits. and the other servants, with a shudde and a backward glance, gladly left him to the steward. Mistress Anne had gone in some time. Only Ferdinand Cludde remained, and he stood a little apart and seemed more deeply engaged in listening for any sound which might betoken the sheriff's approach than in hearkening to their conversation. Listen as he might he would have gained little from the latter, for it was made up entirely of scolding on one side and stupid reiteration on the other. Yet Ferdinand, ever suspicious and on his guard, must have felt some interest in it, for he presently called the steward to him. "Is he more fool or knave?" he muttered, pointing under hand at Martin, who stood in the gloom a few paces away. Baldwin shrugged his shoulders, but remained silent. "What happened? What is the meaning of it all?" Ferdinand persisted, his keen eyes on the steward's face. "Did he do it himself, or who did it?" Baldwin turned slowly and nodded to ward the moat. "I expect you will find him who did it there," he said grimly. "I never knew a man save Sir Anthony or Master Francis hit Martin yet but he paid for it, and when his temper is up he is mad, or as good as mad, and better than two sane men!" "He is a dangerous fellow," Ferdinand said thoughtfully, shivering. a little, It was unlike him to shiver and shake, but the bravest have their moods. "Dangerous?" the steward answered. "Aye, he is to some and sometimes." Ferdinand Cludde looked sharply at the speaker, as if he suspected him of a covert sneer. But Baldwin's gloomy face betrayed no glint of intelligence or amusement, and the knight's brother, reassured and yet uneasy, turned on his heel and went into the house, meeting at the door a servant who came to tell him that Sir Anthony was calling for him. Baldwin Moor, left alone, stood a moment think ing and then turned to speak to Martin. But Martin was gone and was nowhere to be seen. The lights in the hall windows twinkled cheerily, and the great fire cast its glow half way across the courtyard; as lights and fire had twinkled and glowed at Coton End on many a night before. But neither in hall nor chamber was there any answering merriment. Baldwin, coming in, cursed the servants who were in his way, and the men moved meekly and without retort, taking his oaths for what they were-a man's tears. The women folk sat listening, pale and frightened, and one or two of the grooms, those who had done least in the skirmish, had visions of a tree and a rope and looked sickly. The rest scowled and blinked at the fire or kicked up a dog if it barked in its sleep.

"If you really will no change with the "I will not!" replied the old knight

istesharply. "There is an end of it!"

Today the reformed church in England in has seen many an anniversary and grown nistronger with each year, and we can afford wonto laugh at Sir Anthony's arguments. We and know better than he did, for the proof of the pudding is in the eating. But in him and his fellows, who had only the knowledge of their own day, such arguments were natural enough. All time, all experience, all history and custom and habit as known to them were on their side. Only it was once again to be the battle of David and the giant of Gath. Sir Anthony had said, "There is an end of it!" But his companion, as he presently strolled up to the house with a smile on his saturnine face, well knew that this was only the beginning of it. This was Friday.

On the Sunday, a rumor of the order having gone abroad, a larger congregation than usual streamed across the chase to church, prepared to hear some new thing. They were disappointed. Sir Anthony stalked in, as of old, through the double ranks of people waiting at the door to receive him, and after him Ferdinand and his wife and Petronilla and Baldwin and every servant from the house save a cook or two and the porter. The church was full. Seldom had such a congregation been seen in it. But all passed as of old. Father Carey's hand shook indeed, and his voice quavered, but he went through the ceremony of the mass, and all was done in Latin. A little change would have been pleasant, some thought. But no one in this country place on the borders of the forest held very strong views. No bishop had come heretic hunting to Coton End No abbey existed to excite dislike by its extravagance, or by its license, or by the swarm of ragged idlers it supported. Father Carey was the most harmless and kindest of men. The villagers did not care one way or the other. To them Sir Anthony was king, and if any one felt tempted to interfere the old knight's face, as he gazed steadfastly at the brass effigy of a Cludde who had fallen in Spain fighting against the Moors, warned the meddler to be silent.

And so on that Sunday all went well. But some one must have told tales, for early in the week there came a strong letter of remonstrance from the sheriff, who was an old friend of Sir Anthony, and of his own free will, I fancy, would have winked. But he was committed to the Protestants and bound to stand or fall with them. The choleric knight sent back an answer by the same messenger. The sheriff replied, the knight rejoined-having his brother always at his elbow. The upshot of the correspondence was an announcement on the part of the sheriff that he should send his officers to the next service to see that the queen's order was obeyed and a reply on the part of Sir An-thony that he should as certainly put the men in the duck pond. Some inkling of this state of things got abroad and spread

"Silence, fool!" growled his companion angrily. "Is this a time for antics?"

"Aye, it is!" Martin retorted swiftly, though with the same caution, "for, when wise men turn fools, fools are put to it to act up to their profession! You see, brother?" And he deliberately cut a caper. His eyes were glistening, and the nerves on one side of his face twitched oddly. Baldwin looked at him and muttered that Martin was going to have one of his mad fits. What had grown on the fool of late?

The knight reached the church porch But she did not quail. Indeed she had and passed through the crowd which her suggestion ready. awaited him there. Save for its unusual "To the Mere farm in the forest, sir," size and some strange faces to be seen on she answered earnestly. "They will not its skirts, there was no indication of troulook for you there, and Martin says"ble. He walked, tapping his stick on the "Martin? The fool!" pavement a little more loudly than usual, His face grew redder and redder. This to his place in the front pew. The housewas too much. He loved order and discihold, the villagers, the strangers, pressed pline, and to be advised in such matters by in behind him until every seat was filled. a woman and a fool! It was intolerale! ber life lies through a wood. so that there was like to be such a congre-Even the table monument of Sir Piers "Go to, girl!" he cried, fuming. "I Cludde, which stood lengthwise in the wondered where you had got your tale so gation as the next service to witness the trial of strength as would throw the last aisle, was seized upon, and if the two sim- pat. So you and the fool have been put-Sunday's gathering altogether into the hast bade. It was clear at last that Sir Anthony is the been invaded. Yet all was done de-baye been invaded. Yet all was done de-

All Coton thought the men must go, but the men, perhaps because they were Clopton, did not go. And Sir Anthony had not so completely lost his head as to proceed to extremities, except in the last resort. Affecting to consider the incident at an end, he stepped back into his pew without waiting to see whether the man obeyed him or no and resumed his devotions. Father Carey, at a nod from him, went on with the interrupted service. But again the priest had barely read a dozen lines before the same man made the congregation start by crying loudly, 'Stop!"

"Go on!" shouted Sir Anthony in a voice of thunder.

"At your peril!" retorted the intervener. "Go on!" from Sir Anthony again. Father Carey stood silent, trembling and looking from one to the other. Many a priest of his faith would have risen on the storm, and in the spirit of Hildebrand hurled his church's curse at the intruder. But the father was not of these, and he hesitated, fumbling with his surplice with his feeble white hands. He feared as much for his patron as for himself, and it was on the knight that his eyes finally rested. But Sir Anthony's brow was black. He got no comfort there. So the father took courage and a long breadth, opened his mouth and read on amid the hush of suppressed excitement and of such anger and stealthy defiance as surely English church had never seen before. As he read, however, he gathered courage and his voice strength. The solemn words, so ancient, so familiar, fell on the stillness of the church and awed even the sheriff's men. To the surprise of nearly every one, there was no further interruption. The service

ended quietly. So, after all, Sir Anthony had his way and stalked out, stiff and unbending. Nor was there any falling off, but rather an increase, in the respect with which his people rose, according to custom, as he passed. Yet under that increase of respect lay a something which cut the old man to the heart. He saw that his dependents pitied him while they honored him; that they thought him a fool for running his head against a stone wall-as Martin Luther put it-even while they felt that there was something grand in it too.

During the rest of the day he went about his usual employments, but probably with little zest. He had done what he had done without any very clear idea how he was going to proceed. Between his loyalty in all else and his treason in this it would not have been easy for a Solomon to choose a consistent path. And Sir Anthony was no Solomon. He chose at last to carry himself as if there were no danger, as if the thing which happened were unimportant. He ordered no change and took no precautions. He shut his cars to the whispering which went on among the servants and his eyes to the watch which by some secret order of Baldwin was kept upon the Ridgeway.

It was something of a shock to him, therefore, when his daughter came to him after breakfast next morning, looking pale and heavy eyed, and breaking through the respect which had hitherto kept her silent begged him to go away.

'To go away?" he cried. He rose from his oak chair and glared at her. Then his feelings found their easiest vent in anger. "What do you mean, girl?" he blustered. "Go away? Go where?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

A moment later the servants in the hall heard a scream-a scream of such horror and fear that they scarcely recognized a human voice in the sound. They sprang to their feet scared and trembling, and for a few seconds looked into one another's though he had returned at once on hear-ing the shot fired, he had arrived too late hand, the boldest took the lead and all for the fight. The fool's stomach for a hurried pellmell to the door, issuing in a fight was so well known that this seemed mob into the courtyard, where Ferdinand

"Hasn't Martin come in?" Baldwin growled presently, setting his heavy wet boot on a glowing log, which hissed and sputtered under it. "Where is he?"

"Don't know!" one of the men took on himself to answer. "He did not come in here."

"I wonder what he is up to now? Baldwin exclaimed, with gloomy irritation, for which, under the circum he had ample excuse. He knew that resistance was utterly hopeless and could only make matters worse and twist the probable enough, and though some still Cludde, who happened to be near and had rope more tightly about his neck, to put Where the thought as he framed it. The suspicion, therefore, that this madman-for such in his worst fits the fool becameswered. He alone had had the coolness to might be hanging round the place in dark bring out a lantern, and he now led the corners, doing what deadly mischief he could to the attacking party, was not a pleasant one. (To be continued.)

nate signal was never clearly determined, was it, Baldwin?" he exclaimed. though in after days shrewd guesses were "At the back, I think," the steward anmade by some.