







OBITUARY. THE LATE VICE-ROY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM. His Majesty King Edward VII. died at Sandringham, Norfolk, England, on the 6th inst. at the age of 59 years.

THE EVIL MAY DAY. A FOOL AND HIS POLLY. A Tale of the Time of Henry VIII. CHAPTER I.—(CONTINUED.)

Nurse Joan had fought her battle, but with the same heart of one who was parting with her dearest treasure to see them again. She bade them doff their suits of mourning that she might make up their fardels, as they would travel in their Lincoln Green suits.

She advised leaving their valises packed up in the hands of my Lord Abbot, but they were averse to this, for they and their Uncle Randall, who had not seen them since they were little children, would not know them without some pledge.

She shook her head. 'The less you deal with Hal Randall the better,' she said. 'Come now, let me advise, and go no farther than Winchester, where Master Ambrose may get the book-learning he is ever craving for, and you, Master Stevie, may 'prentice yourself to some good trade.'

'Ay, ay, as good blood as this has been 'prenticed,' returned Nurse Joan, 'but as for an out-throat sword-and-buckler fellow, ever slaying some one else, or getting thyself slain—a terror to all passing folk! But this uncle will see to that—a steady mind had always been his—was Master Dick.'

CHAPTER II. THE CHARGE OF SILVERDINS. Very early in the morning, even according to the habits of the time, were Stephen and Ambrose Birkenholtz up. They were full of ardor to enter on the new and unknown world beyond the Forest, and much as they loved to see their change that kept them still to their altered life would have been distasteful.

Nurse Joan, asking no questions, folded up their fardels on their backs, and packed the wallet for the day's journey with ample provision. She charged them to be good lads, to say their Father, God and Ave daily, and never omit Mass on a Sunday. They bowed her like their mother and promised heartily—and Stephen took his crossbow. They had had some hope of settling forth to early as to avoid all other human favours, except that Ambrose wished to begin by going to Beaulieu to take leave of the Father, his blessing and commend. But Beaulieu was three miles out of their way, and Stephen had not the same desire, being less attached to his schoolmaster and more afraid of hindrance being thrown in his way.

Moreover, contrary to their expectation, their elder brother came forth, and quitted his intention of settling there on their way, bestowing a great quantity of good advice, to the same purport as that of Nurse Joan, namely, that they should let their Uncle Richard Birkenholtz find them some employment at Winchester, where, they, or at least Ambrose, might enjoy obtain admission into the famous College of St. Mary.

The old hound is half blind and past use. No man will take him in with him after this. 'Then they shall not take me in,' said Stephen. 'I'll not be taken in by a dog of that kind.' 'Who spoke of hanging him?' 'They will soon, if she hath not already.'

'Then will be for hanging him they said, ere their heat made a day's journey with him on the king's highway, which is not like these forest paths, I would have them know. Why, he hangs already.'

'I'll carry him,' said Stephen, doggedly. 'What hast thou to say to that?' 'Ambrose,' asked John, appealing to the elder and wiser brother. 'I'll help,' said John, who had no particular desire to retain the supped-up dog, and preferred, on the whole, to be spared sentencing him, no more was said on the subject as they went along, until all John's stock of good counsel had been lavished on his brothers' impatient ears.

The brothers looked with eyes uncertain to care for beauty, but with a certain love of the home scenes, tempered by youth's impatience for something new. The nightingales sang, the thrushes flew out before them, the wild duck and moorhen glauced on the pools. Here and there they came on the furrows left by the mow of the wild swine, and in the open tracts rose the graceful heads of the deer, but of inhabitants or travellers they scarce saw any, save when they halted at the little hamlet of Minstead, where a small ale-house was kept by one Will Purkiss, who claimed descent from the charcoal burner who had carried William Rufus' corpse to burial at Winchester—the one fact in history known to all New Foresters, though perhaps Ambrose and John were the only persons behind the walls of Beaulieu who did not suppose the affair to have taken place in the last generation.

A draught of ale and a short rest were welcome as the 'heat of the day came on, making the old dog plod wearily on with his tongue out, so that Stephen began to consider whether he should indeed have to be his bearer—a serious matter, for the creature at a full length measured nearly as much as he did. They were hardly anyone, and they and Spring were alike too well known and trained for difficulties to arise as leading a dog through the Forest. Should they ever come to the town of the Forest? It was not easy to tell when they were, really beyond it, for the ground was much of the same kind. Only the smooth, treeless hills, where they had always been told Winchester lay, seemed more defined, and they saw no more deer, but here and there were inclusions where wheat and barley were growing, and black-timbered farm houses began to show themselves at intervals. Herd boys, as rough and unkempt as their charges, could be seen looking after little tawny cows, black-faced sheep, or spotted pigs, with curs which barked fiercely at poor werry Spring, even as their masters were more disposed to throw stones than to answer questions.

By and by, on the further side of a green valley, could be seen buildings with an enclosing wall of flint and mortar faced with ruddy brick, the dark, red-tiled roofs rising among walnut-trees, and an orchard in full bloom spreading into a long green field. 'Winchester must be nigh. The sun is getting low,' said Stephen. 'We will ask. The good folk will at least give us an answer,' said Ambrose, gravely.

As they reached the gate, a team of plough horses was passing in, led by a peasant lad, while a lay brother, with his gown tucked up, rode sideways on one, whistling. An Augustinian monk, robed in purple, stood in the doorway to receive an account of the day's work, and, doffing his cap, Ambrose asked whether Winchester were near.

'Three miles or thereabout, my good lad,' said the monk; 'thou'lt see the towers as ye mount the hill. Whence art thou?' he added, looking at the two young strangers. 'Scholar?' The silence about him was awful. 'We be from the Forest, so please your reverence, and are bound for Hyde Abbey, where our uncle, Master Richard Birkenholtz, dwells.'

'And oh, sir,' added Stephen, 'may we crave a drop of water for our dog?' The monk smiled as he looked at Spring, who lay flung himself down to take advantage of the halt, hanging out his tongue and panting vigorously. 'A noble beast!' he said, of the Windsor breed, is that? Then, laying his hand on the graceful head, 'Poor old hound, thou art werry travelled. He is aged for such a journey, if you came from the Forest since, more. Twelve years at the least, I should say, by his muzzle.'

'My lady, I have a call to Winchester tomorrow, you'd best tarry the night here at Silchester, George, and fare forward with us. The good boys are heartily glad to accept the invitation, and especially as Spring, happy as he was with the trough of water before him, seemed almost too tired to stand over it, and after the first, tried to lie by down Silchester was not a regular convent, only a grange or farmhouse, presided over by one of the monks, with five or four brethren under him, and a little colony of birds, in the surrounding outcrops, to cultivate the farm, and tend a few cattle and numerous sheep, the special care of the Augustinians.

Father Shovellet, as the good-natured friar who had received the travellers was called, took them into the spacious but homely chamber which served as refectory, lichen and hole. He called to the lay brother who was busy over the open hearth to fry a few more rashers of bacon; and after they had washed away the dust of their journey at the trough were Spring had slaked his thirst, they sat down with him to a hearty supper, which smacked more of the grange than of the monastery, spread on a large solid oak table, and washed down with good ale. The repast was shared by the lay brethren and farm servants, and also by two or three sheep dogs, who had to be taught their manners towards Spring.

There was none of the formality that Ambrose was accustomed to at Beaulieu in the great refectory, where no one spoke, but one of the brethren read aloud some theological book from a stone pulpit in the wall. Here Brother Shovellet conversed without stint, chiefly with the brother who seemed to be a kind of bailiff, with whom he discussed the sheep that were to be taken into market the next day, and the prices to be given for them by either the college, the castle, or the butchers of Bokerlow. He, however, found time to talk to the two guests, and, being sprung from a family in the immediate neighborhood, he knew the verdurer's name, and, ere he was a monk, had joined in the chase in the Forest.

There was a little oratory attached to the hall, where he and the lay brother kept the hours. Ambrose's response to their best cheer, as they went out: 'Thou hast thy Latin, my son, there's the making of a scholar in thee.'

Then they took their first night's rest away from home, in a small guest chamber, with a good bed, though bare in all other respects. Brother Shovellet likewise had a cell to himself, but the lay brethren slept promiscuously among the little dogs on the floor of the refectory.

All were about in the early morning, and Stephen and Ambrose were awakened by the tumultuous bleatings of the flock of sheep that were being driven from their fold to meet their way to Winchester market. They heard brother Shovellet shouting his orders to the shepherds, and they made haste to dress themselves and join him, observing that they might be in time to hear Mass at one of the city churches, but the sheep might delay them, and they had best break their fast ere starting.

The breakfast was of oatmeal porridge, flavored with honey, and washed down with mead, after which Brother Shovellet mounted his mule, a sleek creature, whose long ears had an air of great contentment and repose, accompanied his party to that of his young companions up a steep track which soon led them to the top of a chalk down, whence, as in a map, they could see Winchester, surrounded by its walls, lying in a hollow between the smooth green hills. At one end rose the castle, its fortifications covering its own towers and towers, the long, low massive Cathedral, the college buildings and tower with its pinnacles, and, nearer at hand, among the trees, the Almshouse of Noble Poverty at St. Cross, beneath the shadow of St. Catherine. Churches and monastic buildings stood thickly in the town, and indeed, Brother Shovellet said, that he had seen here, where he was well-liked as many churches as folk to go to them; the place was decayed since the time he remembered when Prince Arthur was born there. Hyde Abbey he could not show them, from where they stood, as it lay further off by the river side.

Brother Shovellet asked the boys whether they were expected there at St. Grimbald. 'No,' they said; 'things of our father's death, and the only answer that had been returned was that Master Richard Birkenholtz was ill at ease, but would have Mass said for his brother's soul.'

At that moment they came up with the sheep, and his attention was wholly absorbed by them, as he joined the lay brothers in directing the shepherds who were driving them across the down, assuring them over the high ground towards the archway West Gate close to the royal castle. The street rolled rapidly down, and Brother Shovellet accompanied his young companions between the overhanging houses, with stalls between serving as shops, till they reached the open space round the Market Cross, on the steps of which women sat with baskets of eggs, but not going, mingling their noisy throng of cattle and sheep with their dogs and drivers, the various cries of man and beast forming an incongruous accompaniment to the bells of the churches that surrounded the market-place.

Clutton's wiser-in-hood and wimple were there, straggling for provision for their households, equines and groans in quest of hay for their master's stable, preparing morning food for the garden, lay brothers and their dogs for their convent, and with the usual margin of begging birds, wandering glaucous, jinglers and poddies, though in no great numbers, as this was only a Wednesday market day, not a fair. Ambrose recognized one or two who made part of the crowd at Beaulieu only two days previously, when he had 'seen through' the beggars' law, and the jingling tone of one was playing on a rebeck

brought back associations of almost unbearable pain. Happily, Father Shovellet having seen his sheep already bestowed in a pen, brought him to bidding the lay brother in attendance show the young gentlemen the way to Hyde Abbey, and turning up a street at right angles to the principal one, they were soon out of the throng.

It was a lonely place, with a decayed, uninhabited appearance, and Brother Pater told them it had been the property of King Edward had bestowed all the Jews, and where no one chose to dwell after this.

Soon they came in sight of a large extent of assanitic buildings, partly of stone, but the more domestic offices of flint and brick or mortar. Large madows stretched away to the banks of the Itchen, with cattle grazing in them.

Through a gate between two little red-ochre towers, Brother Pulpot led the two visitors, and calling to one of the monks, 'Benedicite, Sir Purter, here be two striplings wanting speech of Old Birkenholtz.'

'Looking after dead men's shoes, I trow,' muttered the porter, with a sour look at the lads, as he led them through the outer court, where some fine broads were being groomed, and then across a second court surrounded with a beautiful cloister, with flower beds in front of it. Here, on a stone bench, in the sun, clad in a gown furled with rabbit skin, sat a decrepit old man, both his hands clasped on his staff. Into his deaf ears they were your kindred, Master Birkenholtz.'

'Anan? The old man, trembling with palsy. The lads knew him to be older than their father, but they were taken by surprise at such feebleness, and the monk did not aid them, only saying roughly: 'There he is. Tell your crum.'

'How fares it with you, uncle?' ventured Ambrose. 'Who be ye? I know none of ye, muttered the old man, shaking his head still more.

'We are Ambrose and Stephen, from the Forest,' shouted Ambrose. 'Ah! Steve! Poor Steve! The accused hour has rent his goodly face so as I could never have known him, Steve! Steve! his soul!

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