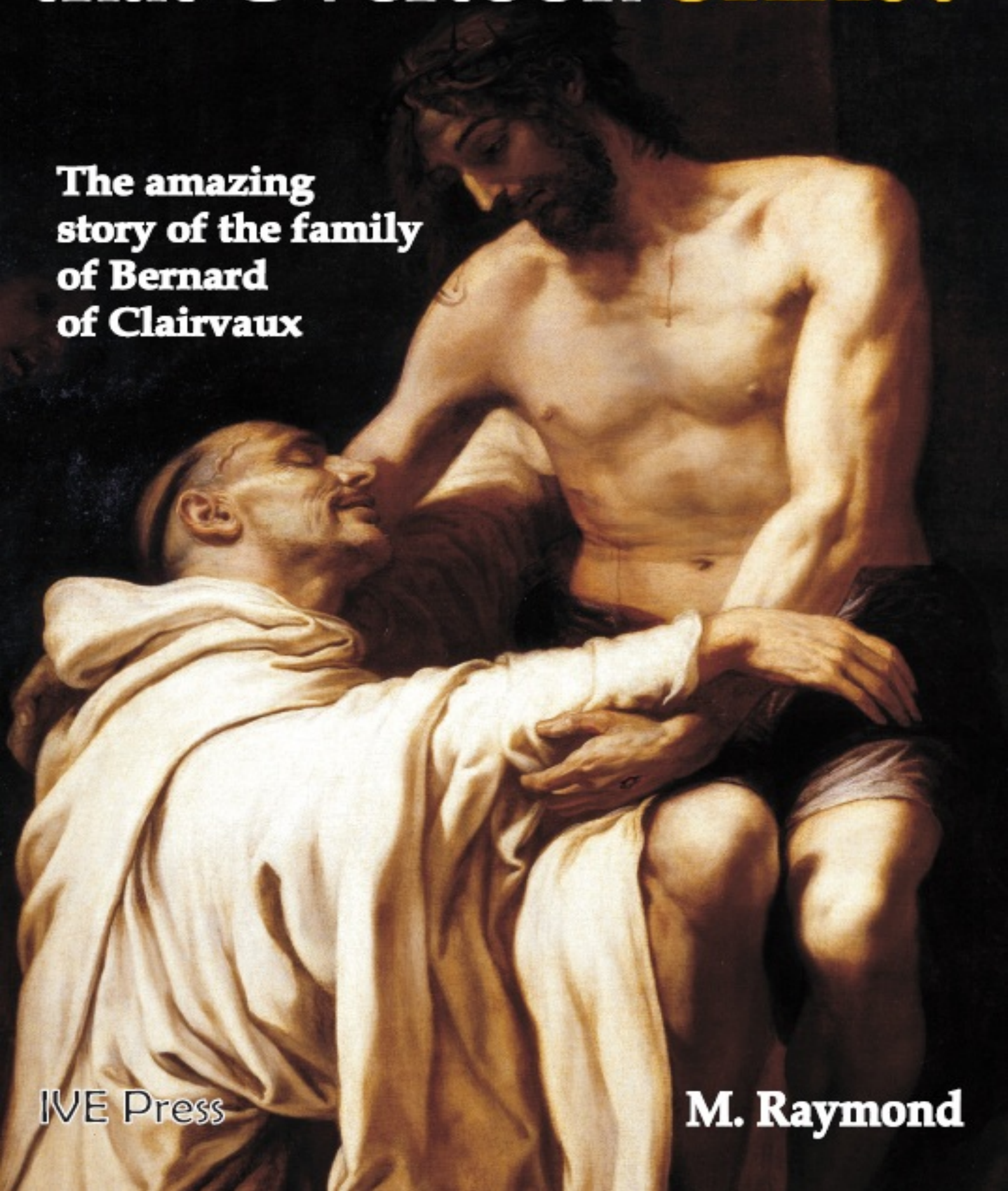


The Family that Overtook **Christ**

**The amazing
story of the family
of Bernard
of Clairvaux**

IVE Press

M. Raymond



The Family That Overtook Christ

M. Raymond

ebook Edition

Produced by  Books2Go

1111 Plaza Drive, Suite 300

Schaumburg, IL 60173

Enquiries:

info@ebooks2go.net

www.ebooks2go.net

ISBN 13: 978-1-933871-80-6

ISBN 10: 1-933871-80-6

Cover Design

© IVE Press

Cover Art

Christ embracing St. Bernard

© Museo Nacional del Prado.

Text

© IVE Press, New York

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Manufactured in the United States of America

113 East 117th Street

New York, NY 10035

Ph. (212) 534 5257

Fax (212) 534 5258

E-mail ivepress@ive.org

<http://www.ivepress.org>

ISBN 978-1-933871-80-6

© Catalogued in the Library of Congress of the US.

Printed in the United States of America ∞

Nihil Obstat

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+ Frederick M. Dunne, O.C.S.O.

Imprimatur

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PART 1

THE PARENTS

THE GRAND OLD WARRIOR

“... his honesty bends.”

“WHAT’S the matter with you? You’ve got a face a league long; you’re grumbling to yourself; and you’re ruining the toes of a good pair of riding boots kicking the dirt that way. What’s the matter with you anyhow?”

“Oh nothing! nothing! nothing! Go away and don’t bother me,” and Gerard of Fontaines turned on his heel and started to walk away.

“Not so fast, young fellow,” said his older brother Guy as he stretched out his hand and caught Gerard by the shoulder. “The grooms told me that your horse was lathered in sweat when you came in; that you vaulted from the saddle and bolted away without a single word. You’re old enough to know that is no way to treat a horse. And I’m old enough to know that something is very wrong with you. Out with it. What is it?”

“Aw, something would be wrong with you, too, if you saw what I just saw.”

“What did you see?”

“I saw Father play the coward.”

The blood fled from Guy’s face; his eyes narrowed as his jaw squared and his upper lip trembled; then between clenched teeth he squeezed out the words, “If you weren’t my brother I’d throttle you for that statement. Now tell me what you mean, and tell me quickly or I’ll thrash you.”

Gerard squirmed beneath the fiercely gripping hands of his older brother, his face was crimson, and his eyes held fire as he said, “Thrash me! Go ahead and thrash me! I don’t care what happens to me now. I’m sick down to my toes; and I’m ashamed as deep as my soul. And you’ll be too, when you hear the awful truth. But I’ll not tell you. It would choke me.” With that he gave a quick lift to his arm and broke the grip Guy had on his right shoulder. But Guy was angry now; wheeling the twisting youngster around he brought his eyes down level with Gerard’s and said, “I’ll choke you if you don’t tell me! What did Father do?”

Tears gushed from Gerard’s eyes; they were tears of anger. He blurted out, “He played the coward.”

Guy gave him a violent shake and said in a deadly tone, “Gerard, if you say that once again, I’ll wallop you.” Then tightening the grip on his brother’s shoulders until his own knuckles showed white, he shook him again and said, “Tell me the story.”

Gerard broke under the grip and the shaking. Tears flooded his pain-filled eyes as he said, “Father wouldn’t fight. He shook hands with his enemy. We’re disgraced.”

Guy's eyes opened wide as his lower jaw dropped. His whole person seemed to undergo a change as he gasped, "Father wouldn't fight? Gerard, Gerard, what are you saying? Tell me what you mean." His tones were pleading. He was no longer the angry older brother, he was an anxious, awe-struck suppliant.

"Oh, Guy, I don't know what happened," cried Gerard. "I heard the grooms whispering the other day that Father was to fight a duel. I nosed about until I found the place and the time. Today, I stole out to that hollow in the woods where Alfred has his hut. I hid in the thicket. I knew my horse would be quiet. Then they came: Father with his two attendants, and a lowly knight with his two. Father could have flattened him with a look. But what did he do? What did great Tescelin the Tawny, counselor of the Duke and one of the most famous knights in the Duchy do? What did Father do? My father... Do you hear, Guy?... My father—He put out his right hand, spoke some soft words to this sorry knight, whoever he was,—one that I could conquer—and they clasped hands. Then they walked to the hut and signed some papers. I saw the knight ride away. I wanted to ride after him and strangle him; I could have, too! But I was so filled with shame, I galloped home. Guy, Guy, how can we ever show our faces in the Duchy again? Our father, a coward."

The back of Guy's hand flipped to Gerard's mouth. It was a sharp, stinging blow, one that drove the upper lip against the teeth and drew blood. Gerard was more bewildered by the fact that his brother should strike him than he was stung by the blow; he just looked open-mouthed amazement as the blood trickled down his chin.

As soon as Guy saw the blood, his arm circled Gerard's shoulders and pressing the younger brother to his side, he said, "Oh, I'm sorry, Gerard, really sorry. That blow was involuntary; it was completely automatic and instinctive. Forgive me, please. But don't you ever, ever, ever say that about Father! He's not that. He could not be that. Never! There are no cowards in the Duke's bodyguard, and Father has been in that guard since before you or I were born. I don't know what happened in the wood. I accept your word that Father didn't fight; but never say that Father wouldn't fight. There is some explanation. Trust him. I'm ashamed of you for even having had these thoughts. But forgive me for that slap in the face."

"Huh," grunted Gerard, "do you think a little slap in the face matters now? Nothing matters. I saw what happened in the wood. Father wouldn't fight."

Guy's lips tightened; so too did his fists. "Gerard," he said, "I'll..." But that is as far as he got, for just at that moment his father came around the corner from the stables. He stopped short as he caught sight of the attitudes of his sons. Glancing quickly from one to the other he asked, "What's wrong here?" It was a quiet question, put in a deep, cool voice, but Guy noticed that the voice sounded weary. He looked more closely at his father and noted that there was a sag to his whole countenance: the lines in the forehead were jagged and deep, the eyes were sunken, the mouth appeared loose and the cheeks somewhat hollow. Guy frowned, peered even more intently and saw that his father looked old and very tired. He gasped then and said, "I think that we should ask that question of you, Father. What's wrong with you? You look ill."

His father straightened at the statement. His head came up, his mouth snapped shut and his lips showed one straight line. He was the warrior again, in perfect command of

himself; but the effort had been noticeable. Without answering Guy, he looked at Gerard who had turned away and was apparently disinterested. "Gerard," he said, "what's wrong?"

"Nothing," came the sulky answer as he kicked sharply into the loose dirt.

"Turn around here and tell me..." but there he stopped, for Gerard had turned and there on his chin was the tell-tale blood. "What?" exclaimed the father, "have you two been quarreling?"

"Not exactly, Father," put in Guy. "I struck him on the mouth, but it was a blow that was unpremeditated. He has forgiven me."

"But why did you strike him?"

"I would rather have him tell you that, Father."

Tescelin looked at Gerard, but only got a deep crimson blush by way of enlightenment. He waited. The silence grew embarrassing. Guy shifted from foot to foot; Gerard kept kicking the dirt and blushing, while the father looked from one to the other and frowned. "Come," he finally said, "this is no way for my sons to act."

"Well, Father," said Guy, "Gerard said something about you..."

"Oh," interrupted the father, "so I am the cause of it, am I? What did he say about me?"

"Well," said Guy very hesitatingly, "he said that you wouldn't fight..."

Tescelin's eyes closed. It was as if he had been struck in the face. He blanched as he said, "Wouldn't fight whom?"

"That he could not tell; he says it was some sorry knight..."

"Gerard," broke in the father, "were you in the woods today?" The question was heavy with sadness.

"I was," came the hot reply. "I was and I saw it all; and I told Guy that you played the coward. That's why he struck me."

Tescelin seemed to sway. His face grew ashen grey. The muscles on either side of his face were seen to flex as he clenched his teeth. With a deep sigh he said, "There are others who will say the same." Then walking over to Gerard, he put his arm around his shoulder as he wiped away the blood from his mouth and said, "My boy, I want you to love me always the way you do this moment. It is your deep loyalty and love that Guy takes to be disloyalty; and it is his loyalty and love that made him strike you. I am sorry that you were in the woods today; sorrier still that you have spoken about it; but since you have, you must come along to my room and allow me to explain. I will try to teach you both a deeper loyalty and a greater love."

In silence the three turned from the yard and headed for the Castle; in silence they walked the corridor and mounted the stairs, and in silence they entered Tescelin's room. When he had quietly closed the door, the father waved the boys to two chairs and reaching up, took from its hooks on the wall a splintered spear. Walking over to Gerard he placed it in his hands and asked, "Do you know when that spear was splintered and how?"

“Yes, Father, I do,” came the quick and uncompromising reply. Gerard had not lost any of his fire as yet.

“Then you know, my son, that I almost lost my life by that spear; you know that it struck me here on the right side, and had not that shaft splintered it would have driven on, into and through my heart. That is the only trophy I keep of all the battles I have fought. Do you know why?”

“No, Father, I don’t.” Gerard cooled a little, but only a little. “Do you know, Guy?”

“No, Father, I don’t; but I have often wondered. You have been victorious in countless battles, and yet you keep as memento only this spear that almost caused your death.”

“Yes, and it is the only trophy I will ever treasure. I keep that splintered spear to remind me to be grateful to God. I have faced death numberless times, as you know; but if that shaft had not splintered that memorable day, I would have faced God! And had I met Him then, I fear that I would have been empty-handed. So that spear is my admonitor. It tells me that I’ll have to face God one day and that I must not be empty-handed. It tells me to be grateful for life as it reminds me how close I was to death. I keep no trophies of my own successes; I keep only this treasure as a memento of God’s great mercy. Have you followed, Gerard?”

“I have,” came the sullen reply. Gerard was far from friendly even yet.

“All right, son. Now I want you to look at another Man who also had a spear driven into His side; but this time the shaft did not splinter! It went up and on and into His very Heart.” As he spoke Tescelin lifted a large crucifix from the wall and brought it close to Gerard. The boy looked up almost in fright. His father had never spoken as solemnly as this to him before. Guy, too, was all attention, for although he was the eldest son and first-born, he had never seen his father in such a mood as this.

Tescelin the Tawny was a man of deep emotions; but he kept them deeply hid. He was known as the quiet and ever congenial Lord of Fontaines, whose fire was seen only in battle. In fact, the metamorphosis that seemed to take place as the Tawny one went into a fray puzzled most; for they never knew that the Duke of Burgundy’s most reputed counselor was a man who had fought for and won the mastery of the very deep and very powerful emotions of his soul. As he now stood before his two oldest boys, holding a large crucifix in his hands and pointing to the wound in Christ’s side, he was manifesting more feeling than they had ever seen him show in all their years, even though Guy was eighteen and Gerard just sixteen.

“My boy,” said the father, “look at this wound often, and let it speak to you. Let it tell you that there is a victory greater than that of vanquishing a foe, a fiercer enemy for you to conquer than the one who comes to you from without clothed in armor and armed with steel, that there is a battle more bitter to fight than the one fought in open field. You say that I would not fight a sorry knight today. You are right, son of mine, I would not fight. And here is my reason.” Saying which he held out the crucifix. “You call me coward. In that I hope that you are not right, my boy. My opponent was hardly worthy of my steel. It was not fear of man that made me hold out the hand of friendship, Gerard; I meant it to be love for God. Yes, my boy, let me tell you that there is a greater victory than vanquishing a foe; and let me insist that it costs much more! Do you begin to understand?”

“I do, Father,” broke in Guy, “you forgave your enemy for love of Christ.”

“Right, my boy, for love of Christ. And you, Gerard, do you understand?”

“No,” blurted the younger brother, “a duel is a trial before God. I wish that you had fought.”

Tescelin sighed as he put the crucifix back on the wall. He looked at it lovingly, then took the spear from Gerard and hung it close to the crucifix. After that he turned and said, “You will understand one day, Gerard; but until that day dawns just remember that Christ did not come down from the Cross although His enemies taunted Him with this as a proof that God had abandoned him. I am sorry, son, that I have wounded you so deeply by my action today, and as a balm for your wound I give you permission to enter this room of mine any time at all, so that you can look at the Cross and my splintered spear. They may yet teach you the lesson that I have failed to teach.”

Gerard sprang from his chair, flung himself into his father’s arms and sobbed, “Oh, Father, Father, I believe in you. I trust you. I love you. But why, oh, why didn’t you fight?”

Tescelin patted the boy’s shoulder and smiled; it was a sad little smile for he was sorry for this son of his and fully sympathized with the tempestuous little heart that wanted to be loyal but could not give up its preconceived ideas. “Come, son of mine,” he said after he allowed the crest of Gerard’s grief to spend itself, “mother must not know what happened today, nor any one else in the house. Promise me that?”

“I promise,” came the sob.

“Very good, then. Now go with Guy and wash away every last trace of your tears. One day you’ll understand it all.” Patting them on the back, he sent them from his room and closed the door behind them; then leaning against the door and looking to the crucifix, he said aloud, “It hurts to be thought a coward, Lord, and that by your own son; but I bear it for You. Give me the strength to brave it all for You.”

Scars for Memory

Gerard kept his promise; hence, the rest of the family never heard how Tescelin, by a display of surpassing moral courage, earned for himself the name of coward with his second oldest son. One day, many months after, he found Gerard in his room studying the crucifix and the splintered spear. When he asked the boy what he was doing, he was surprised with the answer, “Trying to read enigmas; but I can’t make anything out of them yet.” And with that the boy was gone. Tescelin laughed then and said to the unheeding walls, “That boy is going to be a man of one idea. I hope it’s a big one!”

The Lord of Fontaines failed in teaching Gerard the lesson he wished to teach; but the trouble was psychological, not pedagogic. Gerard’s mind, memory and imagination were crowded to capacity; hence, there would have to be an evacuation before there could be an entrance, and the present occupants were proving most tenacious of their lease. His ideas of chivalry would not yield to those of charity. Already Gerard was showing himself a man of one idea. But Tescelin was much more successful with the rest of the family and especially so with Humbeline, the only girl in a family of seven; and while it is true that the preponderating male element made something of a tomboy out of her, it is equally true

that her isolated femininity made a courtier out of her father. He called her his “Little Queen,” and she accepted the homage with all the grace of one.

One day he came upon her as she knelt before the shrine of St. Ambrosia which he had had erected on his grounds. He looked at her in amazement then cried out, “Oh, Humbeline, my Little Queen, for a moment you took twenty years from my life. As you knelt there I thought I was looking at a girl I loved much.”

“Ooo, tell me about her, Father.” Humbeline was just fifteen, an age when the very word “love” connotes worlds of romantic mystery.

Tescelin smiled as he said, “Come here and sit by me, and I’ll tell you all about her.” Humbeline turned from the priedieu and walked to the rustic bench on which her father sat. Once she had nestled close to him, he began, “She had hair just like yours, Little Queen, soft, silky and bewitchingly black; she had eyes just like yours, wherein tall candles were always lit and star-radiance always lingered; and her skin was as snowy and transparent as your own; her mouth was as a rose-bud, even as your own, and when she smiled the same even, white line of pearliness shone. Yes, Humbeline, she looked exactly like you, even to this precious dimple, which they tell me is left from an angel’s kiss.”

“Ooo,” exclaimed Humbeline in a kind of breathless awe, “she must have been beautiful!”

Her father’s laugh was light, liquid and airy. He knew that his little queen had not meant the complacency that was in the exclamation; but his sense of humor was such that he could not allow such naïveté to pass. “That’s what I’ve been telling you, Humbeline. She was very beautiful, for she looked just like you.”

“Was she rich?”

The question had come so quickly that Tescelin saw that his daughter was so completely absorbed in this other woman that she was entirely oblivious of self, so he went on, “Yes, she was very rich. She was the daughter of a wealthy lord who saw to it that she was educated in such a way that her mind, memory and will would be as beautiful as her outward form. She was as rich in ideas and ideals as he was rich in estates. All in all she was a very lovely little lady.”

“And did you love her greatly, Father?”

Tescelin was now enjoying himself; he saw that his little queen was lost in the tale. “With all my heart and soul I loved her,” he said.

“What was her name?”

“Oh, a beautiful name; one that described her perfectly, for it is a name that means ‘truth;’ a name that flows from the lips of a lover with limpid gracefulness, for it is composed of an exclamation and a sigh. You see, my Little Queen, your name is a song on a lover’s lips; but this girl’s was an exclamation of admiration and a sigh of longing. You just breathed it in wonder and worship.”

“Ooo, how exquisite!” said Humbeline. “Breathe it for me, Father.”

“Ah—liss,” breathed her father and made it sound like a caress.

Humbeline sat bolt upright and said, “Why, that’s mother’s name.”

“Yes,” said her father, “and the girl I’ve been describing, the one you reminded me of so forcefully, the one I loved then as I love now is your mother.”

Humbeline gasped, then laughed aloud as she said, “Oh, you old tease! I thought you were letting me in on some intrigue. You fooled me. But how beautifully you speak of mother.”

“I’ve been saying a few things about her daughter, too,” said Tescelin with a smile. “Honestly, my Little Queen, you look just like your mother when I courted her. When I saw you praying there at the shrine I thought I was back at Mont-bar, twenty-two years ago, looking at Alice, my lovely Alice. Tell me, for whom were you just praying?”

“I was thanking St. Ambrosia for saving your life. Were you terribly sick that time, Father?”

“So sick, child, that I didn’t know where I was, what I was, or if I was; and I didn’t care.”

“Tell me about it.”

“We were coming back from Jerusalem....”

“Now, Father, that is no way to begin! Who are ‘we,’ and what were you doing in Jerusalem?”

“Oh, you want the whole story. Very well. It was 1075. The world was in a pretty messy state at the time and everyone was nervous, anxious and quite restless. I was just twenty-five years old and in the full lustihood of my young powers. Oh, how I was twisted and torn those days! England called to me, for William the Conqueror, one time Duke of Normandy, had been crowned king there, and French knights were very welcome under the new regime. Excitement was promised aplenty, for the Saxons were holding on to old customs and their lands; fighting was common. At the same time Germany called to me, but for a very different reason. There young Henry IV was Emperor, and I would have given my right eye if I could but meet him in single combat. He was outraging the very name of nobility as he rebelled against Hildebrand, the man who had tutored him when still a boy, and who but two short years before had been elected Pope.

“They were times that stirred the blood, Humbeline, and there was fighting on all sides. Even our own France was not perfectly peaceful; for many of her bishops and princes resented the Pope’s decree against the awful conduct of the clergy. As I told you, Humbeline, my blood was hot; I wanted to fight, but I did not know with whom or against whom. Those were sad days, too, Little Queen, sad for the Church and for the State. Well, just at that time the Bishop of Langres, Raynard by name, asked me a question that changed my whole life. He saw the situation and he saw into my soul, so he very quietly asked me if I had ever thought of fighting for God. I didn’t know what to answer. The question filled me with awe; it held such wondrous possibilities. The Bishop sensed my reaction, so he said, ‘Let’s fight Henry IV in the Holy Land. Let us fight for Hildebrand with the spiritual weapons of prayers and a pilgrimage. Let us do something for God, since so many seem intent upon doing all they can against Him.’

“I joined him, Humbeline. With a small group we made our way to the Sepulcher of Christ and prayed for His Body, which is the Church. It was the first bloodless battle that I had ever fought; but God was not going to leave me without a scar. No, indeed. So on our way back, as we were passing through Constantinople, I was seized with a fever. No one could do anything with it. It burned up my body, and my brain went wandering; but I did remember enough to call for a relic of St. Ambrosia. I don’t know what happened after that. My companions say that they despaired of my life; but the Bishop obtained a relic and applied it to my head. The next morning I was kneeling at the Saint’s shrine, saying what you were just saying—‘Thank you.’”

“Were you completely cured?” put in Humbeline with a gasp.

“Completely, Little Queen. I felt rather weak, it is true; but we went on with our journey and every day I grew stronger. The relic was always in my possession, and it is there in the shrine now. Wasn’t God good to me?”

“Was it because you had been good to Him, Father?”

“Oh, ho, I would that I could be good to God! But I know what you mean, Little Queen; and you are right. God never forgets a single effort. So every time that you kneel at this shrine you must do two things; you must say ‘thank you’ to St. Ambrosia for his cure, and you must also pray as I prayed in Palestine thirty-two years ago; pray for God’s Church, Humbeline, all is not well with it yet. And pray for our princes and prelates; much depends on them.”

“I shall, Father; but now tell me how did it feel to be on Mt. Calvary?”

“Oh, girl of mine, words can never tell that,” said Tescelin and his tone was as solemn as a sacred chant.

“Well, you can tell me this, Father: why didn’t you go with the Crusaders in 1098?”

Tescelin smiled a slow, sad smile, shook his head and said, “How I wanted to go! How I wanted to go!”

“What kept you back?” questioned Humbeline.

Tescelin looked at her intently, then broke into a pleasant chuckle as he said, “A little queen with golden gleams in her raven black hair, and star-radiance in her eyes. A little queen whom most people call ‘Humbeline,’ but whom I am often tempted to call ‘Alice.’ She kept me back. My heart prompted me to go, but stern duty said, ‘Stay!’—Are you sorry?”

“Of course not, Father. What ever you do is right. But I have often wondered. Show me the scar God gave you for your pilgrimage.”

“I have just shown it to you, child. It is in my memory, a scar that will never fade. You know, Little Queen, scar-tissue is always tougher than ordinary tissue; that is why I say that the scar God gave me at Constantinople will never fade. It is deep and jagged and very, very tough. I am ever mindful of the fact that He almost called me home when I was but twenty-five. I wouldn’t have had much to show Him, would I?”

“I don’t know, Father.”

“Well, at least I wouldn’t have had you, nor that other girl that looked so like you; nor any of the boys.”

“Are we going to help you get to Heaven?”

“More than my pilgrimage, my title, or estates! In fact, Humbeline, if I don’t get to Heaven by what I have done with you and for you, I’m afraid that I’ll never get there at all. For, you see, the only ladder to Heaven that I know of, outside of Jacob’s ladder, is the ladder of stern duty. I’ve always tried to climb that; and you and the boys are the solid rungs. Or to put it another way: I look on life as another pilgrimage. My first was to the earthly Jerusalem; my second is to the Heavenly one. And just as my companions saved my life by obtaining a relic of St. Ambrosia in the first, so will my companions in the second save my soul. Do you know my companions, Humbeline?”

“The girl with the name like an exclamation and a sigh, six boys who are often rough and rowdy, and a little queen.”

“Good for you! And what must the little queen do here at the shrine?”

“Thank St. Ambrosia for giving my mother my father, and pray for the Church.”

“Excellent!” exclaimed Tescelin. “You are an apt scholar. I wish that I could say the same for all of your brothers.”

“Surely you’re not thinking of Bernard,” said Humbeline, “he is the leader of his whole school.”

“No,” laughed her father, “I was thinking of Gerard. But I must leave you now; the Duke is waiting for me. Put your lesson into immediate practice, for, today, I have to judge a case concerning the Church. Pray that I do it rightly.” With that he kissed his daughter, whispered, “Alice—Humbeline—my Little Queen,” and was gone.

The Duke Rages

Some ten hours after Tescelin had kissed his daughter and whispered her name so lovingly, the Duke of Burgundy was heard in angry outburst and the name most frequently on his lips was Tescelin the Tawny. It was early evening; the ducal household was quietly completing the tasks of the day, but in the Duke’s private council-room nothing was quiet. The Duke was pacing the floor like a caged lion and, addressing no one in particular, was saying, “I like men who are upright; but I don’t care for men who are so upright that they bend backwards. I believe in having clean hands; but that doesn’t mean that you have to scrape off the skin. I know that honesty pays; but that doesn’t mean that I have to go destitute; and that is just what I’ll be if that Tescelin the Tawny keeps on giving decisions against me. That man hasn’t got a tender conscience; he’s got a bashful one. It pales at the very idea of partiality and blushes at the mere mention of favoritism. The goddess of justice may have been blindfolded and even-handed, but she can meet one more blindfolded and more even-handed in the Lord of Fontaines.”

“But, Your Excellency, it is only a question of a few fields. After all, the monks need the land and the tithes therefrom,” said Seguin of Volnay soothingly.

“I’d give them the fields and the woods; I’d give them the tithes and the harvests. It is not those things that bite, Seguin. No! It’s losing a battle; and with your own counselor as

judge. That's what hurts! Didn't I practically found that Abbey of St. Benignus de Dijon? Didn't my father, Odo I, and my uncle, Hugh I, after whom I am named, give and give and give to the Church? No, Seguin, understand me clearly. It's not the lands that I mind losing; it's the battle. And I blame Tescelin the Tawny. He's too straight!"

"Well," Ranier the Seneschal soothed, "there's a way to end that, Your Excellency. Tescelin was not born a member of your council, nor does he have to die such."

"Humph," grunted Hugh, "that's a brilliant bit of advice. Get rid of one of the bravest warriors the Duchy ever knew, a knight who seemingly knows no fear but the fear of God; get rid of the deepest man in the whole realm, a man who sees as keenly as an eagle—and why? Just to keep a few fields I never use or collect some tithes I don't need! No, Ranier, it won't do. Tawny-beard stays in the council, but I wish I could keep him off the judge's bench, or at least get him to bend a fraction of an inch. He's too honest!"

Ranier laughed as he said, "Your Excellency, you remind me more of your uncle than you do of your father. Hugh I always wanted to 'eat his cake and have it, too.' It can't be done, my lord. If you want Tescelin for a warrior and a counselor, you've got to take him as judge. If you will have his fearlessness and his longsightedness, you will also have to take his unbending honesty."

"Ah, but that's my complaint," growled the Duke, "his honesty does bend; it bends backwards! Couldn't you have given me the decision today? Wasn't it all but a matter of a mere technicality? Couldn't you have arranged to have said that I was right in the past but that for the future the monks of St. Benignus de Dijon could have the lands and the tithes? Couldn't you?"

"I could have, but I'm not Tescelin."

"Aren't you honest?"

"Yes, but with a touch of the sycophant. Tescelin is not. You say he bends backwards; I understand you, but I envy him! Would that I could be so utterly independent of men that I would look, as Tescelin always looks, only at God. He's always been that way, Your Excellency. He was that way with your father before you, and with your uncle before him. Tescelin has been that way since first I knew him, and that was when he was hardly more than a boy, just back from the Holy Land. Tawny-beard is all that you say he is, Your Excellency; he's brave, fearless, straightforward, far-seeing, deep. But you haven't said all, nor have you said half. And what you have omitted, many miss—Tescelin is holy!"

The Duke stopped in the middle of his stride, looked at Ranier sharply, and then almost shouted, "By heavens, you're right! And it is that which makes him different. He's as quiet and controlled in that as he is in everything else except battle; but when I reflect on his shrine to St. Ambrosia, his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, his unwavering honesty almost to hostility, and his devotion to his family—there's only one explanation, and you have given it. There's more gold to Tescelin than his hair and beard! And still I must say that I wish he weren't quite so honest when I am defendant in a case."

The council-room rang with laughter as Seguin and Ranier appreciated their liege lord's predicament and contradictory sentiments.

"Laugh," said the Duke, "go on and laugh; but you won't change me, and I won't

change Tescelin. I'm a poor loser and he... well, I'll use your word, Ranier, he's holy. So let's drink a toast to the holy one who serves his duke so well that he makes him mad."

They drank the toast, and amid the jests and laughter, Hugh II of Burgundy regained his noisy, good-natured self.

Silver Jubilee

It was several years later that the Castle of Fontaines stood silhouetted, one night, against a blue-black and silver-spangled sky. From within but one single light shone. The night was deep and its quiet was broken only by the long, low, howl of a distant dog as it bayed the moon. The looming outlines of the Castle seen beneath the light of that high moon seemed to speak of confident strength and promise substantial peace. There was that about it that made it seem like a living thing. Beneath the one light that shone within, sat Tescelin the Tawny and his wife, Alice of Montbar. They had just celebrated their silver anniversary, and now, as the high moon walked her silver way in the blue-black sky, they were enjoying the echoes of the day and the memories of the years.

"Does it seem twenty-five years to you, Alice mine?" asked Tescelin.

"No; nor like twenty-five months," came the speedy reply. "And yet," she went on, "it seems that it has always been, that never was there any other life but this one here in the Castle with you, the boys, and Humbeline. I know that that sounds contradictory," she laughed, "but it really isn't. You see, sometimes it seems like yesterday that my father told me that you had asked for my hand; but then, when I think of my little ones, it seems that I never had any other life or any other love."

"What you are saying, Alice, is that you have become 'all mother'; that girlhood is but a vague and very misty memory; and I can readily understand that. Your girlhood was short; you were a mother almost before it had ended. You were only fifteen, you know, when we married. It does seem but a short while ago, doesn't it?"

"Like yesterday, Tescelin; and yet, when I look at Humbeline and reflect that I was the mother of Guy and Gerard at her age, I begin to think that I am very old."

Tescelin chuckled as he said, "Well, what does that make me? I was more than twice your age when we married; if you are ancient now, I must be some sort of an antique. But no, Alice, God has been good to both of us. To me you look as lovely today as you did twenty-five years ago."

"Yes, but you're looking through lover's eyes; my mirror tells me a more truthful story. But as you say, God has been very good to us. Tell me, Tescelin, do you worry as much about God's world today as you did twenty-five years ago?"

"Every bit, Alice. It has not mended any. Do you remember what happened the year we were married?"

"You mean the death of Hildebrand?"

"Yes, and all that led up to it and all that followed. I used to fret in those days and worry about the Pope. I had reason to. Think of it! Christ's vicar had to die in exile; driven there by those who called him 'Holy Father.' Think of that ingrate Henry IV. Hildebrand did all that a father or a mother could do for that man, and yet look at the return the ingrate made.

Oh, the sacrilege of it all! To have the satanic arrogance to dethrone the Pope and set up a creature of his own. My blood boils even as I think of it.”

Alice smiled a little as she said, “I’m afraid the Lord of Fontaines has not learned his lesson yet. You are no better today at looking at the whole picture than you were twenty-five years ago. What a dull pupil you make; or is it that I am a poor teacher?”

“Oh, I know. I know,” answered Tescelin quickly. “You say that God always balances things, and you’re right. Hildebrand had his Countess Matilda of Tuscany, a second Deborah if ever there was one, while at the same time, a Peter Damien in Italy, a Lanfranc in England, a Stephen of Muret, a Hugh of Cluny and a Bruno with his companions at Chartreuse in this our own land told us clearly that man had not entirely forsaken God, nor had God abandoned the world to its wickedness. But I suppose that we could take up our argument just where we began twenty-five years ago and get just as far as we did then. We never decided who was looking at the shadows and who at the lights, did we?” He smiled as he said it and her returning smile was one of complete understanding. Then he added, “There is consolation though, in looking at the whole picture, Alice; but I still hold that more immediate harm comes from the actions of sinners than from the actions of saints. Why, look, for one who is ready to imitate Bruno and his Carthusians, I find two hundred, if not two thousand, to imitate our King and his wantonness.”

“Look at the highlights!” cried his wife. “Philip was a disgrace to nobility. That is unquestionable. He was every bit as bad, if not worse than Herod of old. But look at the balance! Philip puts away his lawful wife and steals for himself the wife of the Count of Anjou, but immediately there rises up a second John the Baptist in the person of Yvo of Chartres. Philip showed the beast that lurks in man, Yvo showed the angel. And despite what you say about your two hundred or your two thousand, I maintain that the universal protest that arose against the King shows how good can come from evil.”

“I wish that I could catch your optimism, Alice; but even when I look at the whole picture I get scared. Perhaps I’m not spiritual enough, for although I see God’s balancing in England, I fear that things are still off balance in that land. William Rufus plunders the property of the Church and almost immediately there arises an Anselm. ‘Balance,’ you say. But I say, ‘off balance’; for while Anselm had to go into exile, Rufus still reigns.”

“Oh, Tescelin, you’re as nearsighted as ever! One saintly man is worth a hundred or a thousand of your monarchs. Anselm will be influencing people to do good, when your Rufus is no more than a very, very dim name in history. You live too close to sovereigns, Tescelin; you think them all-powerful. They are not! They make a lot of noise, but so does a hollow drum. They cause quite a commotion, but so does a passing wind.”

“Yes, my dear,” quickly countered her husband, “but I have known hollow drums that summoned devastating armies, and passing winds that leveled whole countrysides.”

“If so, it was the Will of God; and where those armies devastated cities, civilizations flourished again; and where those winds leveled there came a new growth.”

“But what if the winds and the armies persist?”

“They won’t.”

Tescelin laughed at his wife’s positive statement and said, “We’re back just where we

were twenty-five years ago. We come to a certain point and you no longer discuss, you assert; and that ultimate assertion is always—God. And, of course, you are perfectly right, Alice; the last word is always—God. But, my dear, in all seriousness, I do fear for His Church. Oh, I know that the gates of hell shall not prevail; but they can and they do cause a lot of damage. The Church will remain; we have God’s word for it; but what we haven’t got His word for is in what state it will remain. And that is what gives me concern.

“At this very moment things, to my eyes, are in as bad a state as they were under Hildebrand. Henry V of Germany is every bit as arrogant as was Henry IV, and I predict suffering for Pascal II every iota as sacrilegious as that inflicted on Gregory VII. Henry I of England is a menace. That man is a calculating, scheming politician. I wouldn’t trust him as far as I could throw him. And here in France... Well, I only hope that the combination of Louis VI and Philip I will be less bad than was the reign of Philip alone; but I have only loose and shifting sands on which to base that hope. Sovereigns want too much power over the prelates of the Church. There’s the trouble. This matter of lay investiture is a scandal.”

“If you ask me,” put in Alice, “I’d say that the trouble lay in the Holy Roman Empire, that thing which is not an empire, by no means Roman, and most certainly not holy. But what was it that we decided just about twenty-five years ago tonight? Didn’t we find a way to change the whole world?”

Tescelin stopped, looked at his smiling wife, thought a bit, then laughed as he said, “I remember. We decided that there was a way to change the whole world and that was by changing ourselves. We determined on the cardinal principle that the soul of all reformation is the reformation of the individual soul. We decided that God had placed us in this tiny speck of the universe, that we call Fontaines, for the one purpose of making that tiny speck beautiful for Him. Yes, Alice, I remember. I have never forgotten. And yet, I must think of those other tiny specks.”

“Yes, but you think about them too much. Pray more for them and you’ll be more peaceful.”

“You win,” laughed Tescelin. “You always did. What you say is true. I should pray more; and I notice that Humbeline is taking after her mother.”

“Yes, and most of the boys are taking after their father. You’re bringing up a fine family of knights, when I wanted priests or prelates.”

“Doesn’t your balance work both ways, Alice? Mustn’t there be a hundred or a thousand knights to one saintly soul?”

“Not in the one family,” answered Alice. “But I’m not complaining. I’m really proud of Guy and Gerard; and I’m sure that Andrew will win his knighthood early. But Bernard belongs to me.”

“Don’t be too sure of that,” said Tescelin. “He’s not robust, but he has a more daring spirit than any of the rest. Further, the way he is winning honors at school, sometimes makes me wonder.”

“Well, don’t go putting ideas into his head. Leave that to me. You’ve left most of it to me for the last twenty-five years. Don’t stop now. Bernard is mine. You can have the rest.”

“And I suppose you call that balance,” teased her husband.

“Indeed I don’t,” answered Alice, “I’m cheating. You don’t know the fire that burns in the soul of that boy. Train your knights; they’ll be worthy of you. But leave me my boy.”

“Well, if Bernard has fire,” said Tescelin, “I know where he got it; it is not all from the Lord of Fontaines; the little Lady of the Castle has a spark or two. All I say now about Bernard is: God’s will be done.”

“And I say, do It!” put in Alice quickly. “Everything about him shows where God wants him.”

Tescelin looked at his little wife admiringly. “Twenty-five years have not changed you a bit; and I thank God for it!”

“Yes and I say ‘Thank God’ for the twenty-five years.”

“Before I join you in that prayer, Alice,” said Tescelin, “I want to ask you a very personal question.”

“What is it?” said his little wife.

“This: Twenty-five years ago I rode to Montbar and asked your illustrious father, Bernard, if I could have you for my own. He hesitated; shook his head; then said, ‘I don’t know. I think that she belongs to God. I had intended her for the convent.’ Tell me honestly, on this our twenty-fifth anniversary, are you sorry that your father changed his mind?”

Alice did not answer immediately. She closed her eyes, folded her hands on her lap and allowed her head to bow forward. It was as if she were trying to look into the depths of her heart. She stayed in this posture for what seemed a very long time to Tescelin, but actually was only a minute; then her head came up, her eyes opened wide, large, blue, beautiful eyes, with tall candles aglow in their depths; then her arms opened, and she walked over and embraced her husband.

“For twenty-five years,” she said, “I have been just where God wanted me to be, doing just what He wanted me to do; could I be other than happy? I am positive that it is the will of God that I love you and rear your children and His. Tawny Tescelin of Fontaines, I am happy this moment and have been happy for every moment of the twenty-five years that have fled, happy that my father changed his mind, for I am sure that that was the will of God.” They embraced on the last word. It was a young lover’s embrace. “Tescelin, I hear your heart. I wonder if it can spell me a riddle,” Alice said, holding her raven head against her husband’s breast.

“It will try,” said Tescelin softly.

“Then tell me why they celebrate such gloriously golden years by a jubilee that they call silver.”

“That’s what I call Alice of Montbar’s delicate tribute, and my heart says, ‘Thank you’. Now, my little lady, off with you to the land of dreams; and may they be golden on your silver jubilee!”

Can’t you Pray?

Eight years later Tescelin was again seated 'neath a solitary light; but this time it burned in the Castle of the Duke of Burgundy, not Fontaines; while across from him sat, not Alice, but the noisy and somewhat angry Hugh II.

“But, Tawny, you’re too old for that sort of thing,” growled the Duke. “Your decision makes me think that you are getting childish.”

“Well, Your Excellency,” answered Tescelin with a laugh, “did not Our Lord say something would happen to us if we all did not become like little children?”

“Yes,” came the quick and gruff reply, “but He wasn’t talking about second childhood! It’s simplicity that He wants, not senility; and senility is all that I can see in this act of yours. Come, be yourself!”

“Isn’t it strange, my lord, that you should make use of the very expression my boy, Bernard, used? His answer to every objection and his final exhortation was, ‘Come, be yourself!’”

“That Bernard of yours has caused me more trouble in the past five years than a besieging army. He began by taking thirty of my best men to Citeaux. Since then my Duchy has gone fanatic; every knight that was or was-to-be goes to Citeaux, Clairvaux, or one of their filiations. Now he’s taking you, my best counselor. When and where will he stop? Will it be my turn next?”

There was an undercurrent of humor in Tescelin’s voice as he made answer saying, “Hugh I ended his days at Cluny; why shouldn’t Hugh II go to Clairvaux?”

“Because it’s madness! That’s why. Sheer madness. Come, Tescelin, you’re almost seventy years old. What can you do at the Abbey?”

Tescelin arose at that question, clasped his hands behind his back, and started to pace up and down in front of Burgundy’s Duke. “Your Excellency,” he finally said, “I’m going to tell you a story. Don’t interrupt unless you have to. As you say, I’m almost seventy years old. I’ve had a full life, a long life, a happy life. Oh, there have been shadows and sorrows and bitter disappointments; but looking at it whole and entire, it has been happy. I was born of noble parents; for that I have to thank God. From my father I received my strength of body and from my mother, Eva of Grancy, whatever piety of soul I had. When I was twenty-five, I saw the Sepulchre of Christ and stood on Mount Calvary. That does something to a person, Your Excellency. Life looks a lot different after that. On my way back from the Holy Land I almost died of fever. I was cured by a relic of St. Ambrosia. And let me tell you, *that* does something to a person!

“You know, Your Excellency, we men of nobility and prowess at arms become very self-sufficient; we practically forget that we are dependent beings. A skirmish with Death or a visit to the place where God died makes one think differently. Well, these two telling experiences had hardly settled in my soul when I married an angel, if ever earth held one. She taught me more practical piety than even my pilgrimage had. Alice of Montbar, my lord, was a soul of burning Faith. She saw the world and all things in the world through eyes that you and I and the rest of us seldom use; she saw everything in the light of Faith, everything as part of God’s plan. Nothing could disturb her, for every happening was somehow or other a ‘coming of Christ’ to her. Constant contact with such a person does

much to a man. She made my life different. She made me different.”

Tescelin paused in his talking, but not in his pacing. After making two turns of the room he resumed his narrative in a lower tone but one that had a more gripping ring to it. “She died young,” he said. “Alice was only forty when she left us. That hurt, Your Excellency, hurt much; hurt deep in the dark of night and in the sunlit glory of day. It still hurts. They say, ‘Time heals all wounds’; maybe they are right; but let me tell you that it takes a long, long time for some wounds. Understand me, my lord, I’m talking about loneliness, not about lack of resignation. I know that it was God’s will that she go when she did; I was resigned then, and have ever been. But resignation does not fill the void. No, indeed! And yet, God does balance things. I had a replica of Alice in Humbeline; she acted like her, looked like her, almost thought like her. Then a vision of a stirring old age was given me as I saw my older sons win knighthood. First Guy, then Gerard, and then young Andrew. I thought that my down-going years would be spent amidst the clatter of hoofs and the clash of armor as my lads did all that I had done and more. But you know what happened. Bernard took every one of them. Think of that, my lord, every one of them! And I was left with a Castle that was filled with empty echoes. Don’t you think that that hurt?”

Again Tescelin stopped talking but kept pacing. Suddenly, however, he stopped short before the Duke’s chair and said, “Now, Your Excellency, let me tell you something. I have had what many will call ‘a blessed life’. And why? Because I was nobly born, given tremendous estates, won a lovely wife, have always been fortunate in battle, had the high favor of my liege lord and a family that was a credit. But, Your Excellency, these people do not know the real blessings of my life. No! But I’ll tell you, and I’ll say that the greatest blessings that I ever received were those that most people would call sorrows! I can thank God for much, my lord, but I can never thank Him enough for beating me to my knees, putting tears in my eyes and tears in my heart, and forcing me to say, ‘Thou art the Lord God of all.’ Your Excellency, there is nothing in the whole wide world that will make us realize what we are, that we are only tiny, dependent creatures of God—there is nothing, I say, like sorrow”; and with that he brought his fist down on the table before the Duke of Burgundy’s face.

After a little pause he went on saying, “Five years have passed since Bernard and the boys went to Citeaux. They have been the longest and loneliest five years of my life; and yet, perhaps the most profitable. Ah, my lord, there is nothing like solitude to mother thought. My huge, empty Castle has been a solitude to me and the big thought that it has brought forth is this: Life is only to get close to God; nothing else matters!”

He paced the length of the room again, then said, “Well, to come to my point. You know that Bernard was at Fontaines a short while ago. You likewise know that he preached a very powerful sermon on hell. But what you don’t know is that he and I had a long talk in which I told him much that I have just told you. His reply was that God was calling me to the cloister. I was not exactly startled, but I did object and objected on the very grounds you have objected this evening. ‘What can a man of seventy do in the Abbey?’ Do you know his answer?”

“What was it?”

“He answered with a single question. He looked at me and said, ‘Can’t you pray?’”

Tescelin let the three words have their effect on the Duke before he went on by saying, "Without waiting for reply he said, 'A child of seven can lift its heart and mind to God; I suppose a man of seventy can do the same. We have plenty of strong, young workers; we can make use of more old, ardent prayers. Martha got dinner for Our Lord, but Mary chose the better part.' Then, my lord, he said a thing that has given me food for thought ever since; it is the most helpful truth that I have meditated in months, aye, in years; it is the most inspiring fact that I have thought on all my life. He said, 'There is no such thing as a useless old man in God's wide world! God never does a useless thing. He does not give life to one who is useless; as long as man breathes God has a special use for him!' Isn't that but common sense, my lord? And yet, how often do we look upon people, especially old people, as useless! We're all wrong. God never gives life to one who is useless! So you see why I go to Clairvaux—I am not useless and I can pray."

The Duke was greatly impressed by Tescelin's manner and message. He watched his counselor's every move and grasped his every word. The last sentence struck him so forcefully that he started visibly. But before he could speak Tescelin resumed his story with, "And now, Your Excellency, one last reason. All my life I have had a great concern for God's Church; and all my life my heart has ached because of what princes have done to that Church. Hence, it was like my own heart speaking when my boy said, 'Come to Clairvaux and pray for God's Church; come and weep for sinners.' There, my lord, in very brief is why an old man of seventy goes to the Abbey to become a lay brother. It's not loneliness for my boys; it is love for my God. My arms are weak. My step is slow. But my heart and my mind can be lifted up to Him; and that is prayer. I will not be useless. I'll do penance and I'll pray. That will be giving glory to God, and to give Him glory is the only purpose for existing. Can a man of my years make any other answer to the sharp, short, inspiring question, 'Can't you pray?'"

The Duke's whole demeanor had changed as Tescelin spoke. He had never seen his Counselor so animated or deeply serious before, nor had he ever heard him speak with such force and feeling. He arose at Tescelin's last question, put out his hand and said, "Give me your hand, Tawny, and let me say that I feel favored by God to have known you. Go, by all means, go! I'll take care of your estates as you have outlined and I'll look after Humbeline as if she were my own daughter. Go and serve me in a new way. Pray for me. And tell your boy, Bernard, that his question, 'Can't you pray?' and his remark that no creature is useless mean much to me. I shall never forget them." With that two noblemen clasped hands and said more by the pressure of fingers and the light in their eyes than they had with their lips.

Death on the World's Most Bitter Battlefield

Just two years from the time Tescelin and Hugh of Burgundy parted, Gerard, the man of one idea, was found kneeling beside the heaped up mound of a freshly filled grave. Standing across from him and watching his every move was Geoffrey de la Roche, the Prior of Clairvaux. Gerard had been kneeling statuelike for some time; his eyes alone moved; they wandered from iron cross at the head of the grave to the dank dirt that formed the mound. Suddenly he flung himself full length on the grave, kissed the cross and the mound and broke into a heart-broken sob as he moaned, "Forgive me, Father, for ever thinking that you could be a coward." Tears flowed fast and the stern, ascetic monk was

but a boy again. The Prior had been waiting for something like this. He moved now, bent down, put his hands on the shaking shoulders and said, "Come, Gerard, come to my room and tell me all about it."

Hardly had they entered the room when Gerard broke out again and sobbed, "I'm not crying in sorrow Geoffrey; I'm crying in shame. It's not for my father I weep; it's for myself. Think of it! One time I said that he was a coward. Oh, what sort of a fool was I? He told me that I'd understand one day, and I'm telling you, this is the day!" Geoffrey wisely waited for the deeply moved man to tell his story in his own way. Gerard went on, "You've seen him for two full years, Geoffrey; he was regular, wasn't he?"

"Most regular," came the reply.

"Would anyone, who did not know, suspect that this aged lay brother known as Tescelin was the father of Clairvaux's Abbot and the father of five others in the community?"

"Never."

"Have you ever thought what that meant, Geoffrey? My father, who had commanded hundreds all his life, who was Counselor and intimate friend of Burgundy's Duke, who was Lord of Fontaines and all its dependencies, took orders from his boys! Geoffrey, that calls for heroism. We can all get used to the demands of our vow of Poverty, and find no great difficulty in observing our vow of Chastity; but who is there, who calls himself a man and has had any experience, who will not admit that he feels an almost instinctive rebellion against obeying a fellow man?"

"It is the surging of our innate independence," agreed Geoffrey.

"Yes, and how it surges when the one who commands is in many respects your equal! What must it have cost my father, then, to have obeyed his boys? Geoffrey, it's miraculous."

"It is," put in the Prior, "and I say that, not because he is your father, but because I know something of his life before he came here. Contrast his last two years with any other years of his life and you'll have more reason to exclaim. Think of it, Gerard, your father rose at two A.M.—and why? Only to praise God. He worked on the farm and with the cattle for long hours at a stretch—and why? Why should he, who had been lord, knight, and counselor, soil his hands and weary his back at such menial labors? Why? Only to praise God. He kept silence almost the whole day through, was satisfied with the poorest of clothing and the plainest of food—and why?"

"Why should Tescelin, Lord of Fontaines and favorite of the Duke, spend his old age doing the seemingly foolish thing of wearying his body with hard work and denying it all the niceties of life, resting it on a hard bed for only a few hours and refreshing it with only the plainest of plain vegetables? Why? Why? Why?—Only to praise God! What an inspiration he has been to all of us! Manuscripts and books are good to help us on to sanctity; the voice of the living teacher is better, but for real results give me the sight of an old warrior going through the routine of the day with the light of love in his eyes and a song in his heart that is best of all! And that, Gerard, was your father."

"Thank you, Geoffrey," said Gerard as he wiped away the tears. "I am his son; naturally I would admire him, but to have you pay the tribute that I feel is his due, consoles me

greatly. He was a warrior, every inch of him. And his last two years proved it more conclusively than his sixty-eight preceding. He died on what I am coming to consider the world's most bitter battlefield, where man must conquer not only the world and the devil, but also and especially himself. My father told me that there was a greater conquest than that of vanquishing a foe who comes at you from without, clad in armor and armed with steel. He proved that to me the past two years. But what I am ashamed of, Geoffrey, and what I will be eternally ashamed of is the fact that one day I thought him a coward. I was young then. I didn't know what bravery was. I have learned since, for I have learned what it takes to prove your love for God. My father has taught me well; I must live worthy of such a sire. He told me that he'd teach me a deeper loyalty and a greater love. He has. It is love for God that makes the life of a man great, and makes a man live greatly. My father had it."

There was a new light in Gerard's eyes as he said it and Geoffrey was glad that he had waited at the grave. This interview had made an admirer out of a grieving man. Gerard left then to seek out his brother Bernard; and as the door closed on his retreating form Geoffrey said, "Yes, your father had it; and without any fear of error I say 'like father, like son.'"

* * *

Can you blame the grateful and ever appreciative Order of Citeaux for calling this grand old warrior "Venerable"?

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