

King Robert, who was standing near the throne,
Lifted his eyes, and lo! he was alone!
But all appareled as in days of old,
With ermined mantle and with cloth of gold;
And when his courtiers came, they found him there,
Kneeling upon the floor, absorbed in silent prayer.

LONGFELLOW.

SECTION XV.

I.

61. THE SIEGE OF PARIS.

PART FIRST.

LADY MARGARET was busy writing some good-by notes to friends in Paris one morning—it was Tuesday, and she was to leave on Thursday—when the door opened, and Burke announced “The Reverend Mr. Ringwood.” It was a welcome meeting on both sides. “Where have you come from, and where are you going?” was Lady Margaret’s enquiry, as soon as the glad surprise of the meeting was over.

2. “I have just returned from Rome, and was on my way to Switzerland, but my plans are suddenly changed. I am on the invalid list—the old trouble in my chest—and ordered to spend the winter out of England; my intention was to go to Paris on my return from the mountains, but I have determined now to attach myself to a regiment that is about to start for the north; I shall remain with it as long as my services are wanted, and when the war is over, I shall go south somewhere; unless,” he added, laughing, “a Prussian bullet sets me free before then.”

3. “And that is what you call coming abroad for your health?” He laughed. “The only thing I am under orders for is the climate; that is good everywhere, just in the seat of war.”—“But consider how the service will try your strength; think of the risk to your life,” said Lady Margaret. “What better can I do with them both than to lose them in such a

cause?”—“What! the cause of the French against the Germans? Are your political sympathies as strong as all that?”

4. “If I have any political bias, it is rather the other way. I was indignant with the French for going to war; and I quite expected—I will not say hoped—that they might get the worst of it at first: since the tide has set so overpoweringly against them, however, I have veered round to their side, though not to the extent of exalting them and vituperating the Germans. No; the cause that I am enlisting in is neither French nor German; it is the cause of souls: I am going to help the wounded and the dying; I hope to be of use to a good many.”

5. “But is there not a chaplain attached to every regiment?”—“Yes, but what is one among so many? On a field of battle there may be a hundred dying men, all in want of him; at such a time an extra priest is an immense mercy to the soldiers, and if I am only the means of saving one soul, if I come in time to absolve one poor dying sinner, that will be worth the risk ten times over.”

6. There was a quick ring of exultation in Mr. Ringwood’s voice as he uttered the last sentence, raising his hand with a sudden movement, and letting it drop quickly. Lady Margaret looked at him in puzzled admiration. They were a singular race, those Catholic priests; here was a refined, studious man, possessed of an independent income, quite sufficient to supply all his moderate wants and comforts, suddenly starting off, of his own accord, to expose his life, and in all probability ruin his health—for what? For the chance of giving absolution to a fellow-creature at his death-hour! What faith he must have in his own priestly power!

7. “How long do you remain in Paris?” inquired Lady Margaret. “Until my regiment starts; they are a band of raw recruits, mere boys some of them, who are hardly strong enough to handle their muskets. I have just been assisting at their drill; it is a very sad spectacle.”—“It is abominable! it is butchery! I am glad I am going!” said Lady Margaret, impetuously. “How did you find me out? at the embassy?”—“No; I never thought of inquiring; I did not know you were here: it was Crampton who told me. I met him at Galignani’s (gā lēn yā’nēz). You are one of his flock, are you not?”

8. "I suppose so."—"You only suppose so? The sheep should know their shepherd, should they not?" said Mr. Ringwood, smiling. "He spoke of you with great interest, at any rate, and seemed glad that you were going, although he observed it was a pity, as you were so spirited, that you should not stay and see it out." Lady Margaret laughed. "Does he intend to stay and see it out himself?"—"I should think so, from the way he spoke, but we only exchanged a few words in a hurry."

9. "Why, the man is mad if he stops, with his wife and ten children, in a besieged city," exclaimed Lady Margaret. "Ten children! Good gracious! is Crampton at the head of such a family as that? He must find it hard enough to provide for them in time of peace, but how he expects to do it during a siege I can not conceive. He is an exceedingly good fellow; he and I used to be great allies in the old days at Oxford."

10. Just at this moment there was a ring at the hall-door, and Mr. Crampton made his appearance in person. "You have come to speed me on my way," said Lady Margaret; "but is it true that you remain here yourself?"—"Certainly; it is my duty to do so," said the clergyman, a slight accent of resentment piercing through the emphatic tone of his reply.—"And your wife and children? Is there no question of a duty to them?"

11. "My first duty is to my flock," he replied. "I am thankful to say that my wife understands that, and is anxious to help instead of hindering me; she remains here to share whatever sufferings or perils may be in store for me; the children leave to-morrow for Scotland, where they will stay with some relations of hers."—"Do you expect many English here during the siege, since there is to be a siege?" said Mr. Ringwood. "I thought the whole colony had taken flight."—"All those who could, have done so; but those who can not are just the ones who will be most in need of me; gôvernëssès, servants, and tradespeople; they are likely to have a cruel time of it, and the least I may do is to stay and help them with what consolation is in my power."

12. "And Mr. Watkins—does he stay?" asked Lady Margaret.—"Yes; I met him yesterday, bringing up biscuits and

macaroni and other provisions."—"It is not so heroic in him as in you; he has nobody but himself to think of; he has no wife and children, I believe?"—"He has a daughter, and he finds it hard work to hold out against her; she is quite wrapped up in him, poor child, and is in a frantic state of mind about his staying; she will not hear of leaving him; and her health is very delicate, so that Watkins is terrified at the risk it will be for her; it is quite pitiable to see them both; she cries all day, and I dare say all night, and he looks as if he had not slept for a twelvemonth."—"Well, it is very praiseworthy in both of you," said Lady Margaret. "You see, Mr. Ringwood, *our* priests are capable of self-sacrifice too," she added, with some pride in the conduct of her own pastors; "and I am not sure if it is not more heroic in them than in you."

13. "It is a great deal more so," replied Mr. Ringwood; "there is no question of heroism at all in the matter for us; we are simply doing our duty."—"We would say the same thing," said Mr. Crampton; "we are only doing our duty."—"In a certain sense, yes; but there is no choice left to us, you see," said Mr. Ringwood. "There are no conflicting calls; we have no wives or daughters to consider; the Catholic priest has no ties of any description; his flock are his family. It is easier for us to give ourselves up because we do not belong to any one, not even to ourselves; for from the moment we are ordained we have, properly speaking, no home: we become cosmopolitan¹ pilgrims," he added, laughing.

14. "I vote you all heroes," said Lady Margaret; "it is merely a question of degree." Mr. Crampton rose to take leave. "God speed you," he said to Mr. Ringwood; "I hope we may meet before long in better weather, as the sailors say." He shook hands with Lady Margaret and went; Mr. Ringwood was about to follow, but she detained him. "I feel as if I were a deserter, going off and leaving all you brave people here behind me. As to you, I confess you bewilder me completely. Mr. Crampton has, after all, a distinct duty to keep him here; but there is not the slightest shadow of an obligation on your side."

¹ Còs mo pòl'í tan, having no fixed residence, but being everywhere a stranger; a citizen of the world.

15. "Where there are souls to be saved, the priest—who is free to go and suffer and work for them—has no choice but to do it."

II.

62. THE SIEGE OF PARIS.

PART SECOND.

THURSDAY came, and found Mr. Ringwood punctually waiting for the travelers at the station, pushing his way along with the crowd that besieged the ticket-office; he was still a long way from the wicket, when to his surprise he saw Mr. Crampton hastening back from it with tickets in his hand. "Halloo, Ringwood!" cried the other; "I had expected to meet you here; of course it was madness to think of staying on after the news this morning; my wife packed up what we could in an hour, and here we are. Watkins and his daughter are here too, so we all start in the same boat. Do you go straight on, or do you make any stay at Boulögne?"

2. "I am not going at all; I came to see Lady Margaret Blake off; it is for her I am taking tickets."—"What! you persevere in your Quixotic¹ notion of serving as chaplain to the troops?"—"Yes."—"You are mad, Ringwood."—"You thought me sane enough yesterday."—"Because I was a little mad myself; it will be nothing short of suicide and murder to remain here with my wife through the siege; it is going to be an awful time."—"No doubt; but I have no wife, you see; that alters my view of the matter."—"Just so; well, Göd be with you, wherever you are!" said Crampton, waving his hand, and the crowd shoved on, and eventually landed Mr. Ringwood at the wicket.

3. When he emerged from the railed alley with the tickets, he found the place so thronged with travelers and porters, screaming and bustling amid mountains of baggage, that he despaired of ever finding Lady Margaret; children were thrown down, mothers were shrieking, men were vociferating and shouting to them to get out of the way. One scream which

¹ Quix öt'ic, like Don Quixote; mad; romantic.

shot up from the crowd made Mr. Ringwood start and plunge violently in the direction from which it came.

4. "She is killed!" cried some one, and the crowd swayed suddenly back to make room for whoever it was; a porter seized the opportunity to charge through with a Noe's Ark on his back, and Mr. Ringwood rushed on behind him. "Oh! sir, come, will you? milady is 'urt!" exclaimed Wells, the maid, catching him by the sleeve in great excitement; "one of them trucks ran against her and threw her down, and she's 'urt her foot dreadfully!" The first thing to be done was to have Lady Margaret carried to the waiting-room and laid on the sofa; the next to send for a doctor. "It is the same foot that I sprained three months ago," she said; "I think this is worse than a sprain: the pain is agonizing. I fear it is out of the question my going to-day."

5. "By this train, certainly," said Mr. Ringwood, "but when the doctor comes, he may do something to relieve you and enable you to go by a later one." The doctor arrived just as the bell was ringing the train out of the station. He pronounced the accident to be of a very serious nature; there could be no question of traveling that day, nor for many days to come. Mr. Ringwood and the medical man both accompanied Lady Margaret home: it was easy to see by the contractions of her face that she was suffering, but a moan, not a sigh escaped her. She was carried up-stairs and laid on the sofa; then the doctor took leave, saying he would call again that evening.

6. "He evidently thinks it serious," said Lady Margaret as soon as he was gone: "there is an end of my leaving Paris now; I am condemned to see it out, as Mr. Crampton said, whether I will or not. That reminds me: will you let him know what has happened? He will never think of calling otherwise; we must keep each other company as much as we can. I am so thankful he is staying! He is the only person left whom I know."—"I am sorry to tell you he is not here," said Mr. Ringwood; "I met him just now taking his tickets; he and his wife left by the train you have missed."—"Göne!" repeated Lady Margaret, in amazement; then after a pause she added, with a little scornful laugh, "so much for his heroics! Are you going too?"

7. "To the frontiër, yes, or wherever my regiment goes. I am under orders to be ready to march this evening."—"And so my brave shepherd has gone away! I dâre say you are inwardly exulting in the fact, as illustrating the difference between the true shepherd and the hireling," she remarked, with the same little laugh. "God forbid I should exult in any man's weakness!" said the priest, in a tone of pained rebuke. "I see strong motives for excusing him, on the contrary; he had a wife and ten children to think of; God, who is more merciful than we are, will take that into account. There must be clergymen of your church still here," he said presently. "I will go to the embassy and make inquiries, and if I can find one out, I will tell him to come and see you."

8. "No; you need not give yourself that trouble: I do not want him. Oh, my Gôd!" she cried, with a sudden outburst of indignant scorn, "what a pitiful race they are, these parsons! You can not count on them in life or death; they are busy with their wives or their hounds when you want them most." She was thinking of Mr. Wilkinson in his hunting gear while her husband lay dying up-stairs: and now here she lay in a besieged city, and there was not one of the ministers of her church to help her; she might go mad for want of a word of sympathy or advice; she might die like a dog without any one to pray beside her. Her pride broke down, and she burst into tears, hiding her face in her hands and sobbing aloud.

9. Mr. Ringwood was greatly moved; he thought he saw deeper than she did into the causes of her emotion; he let her weep on for a few moments undisturbed, and then he said, speaking earnestly, but very quietly: "Lady Margaret, this is a solemn moment for both of us; you are arrested on your way, and by God's will forced to remain here alone, to go through a painful, perhaps a terrible experience, while I am going forth—I humbly trust in obedience to the same Divine will—to face death, with many chances of meeting it; I may therefore claim the privilege of a dying man, and speak to you boldly and frankly.

10. "This accident has come as a message of mercy to you; take care that you profit by it. God's dispensations always hold a purpose; it is mostly hidden from us, but sometimes it

reveals itself. I see as distinctly as if it were written in a book, that this dispensation is one on which some momentous result to your soul depends: ask for light that you may understand this, and that you may accomplish God's will when it is made clear to you. Say one *Pater noster* every day for this intention; will you promise me?"

11. "I will," she answered, subdued into unwonted docility, "and will you do the same for me? You told me once that you prayed for me before you ever saw me."—"And I have continued to do so ever since I have known you."—"What do you ask for me?"—"The grace to receive the faith."—"You think I am refusing it?"—"God alone can answer that; you do not, perhaps, know yourself whether you are or not; but this I can tell you—you have had immense graces granted to you. Beware of trifling with God."

12. "What can I do? What do you want me to do? You would not have me become a Catholic without conviction?"—"God forbid! But conviction is the work of grace and prayer: it comes to us much oftener through the heart than through the head. Ask for it humbly, with simplicity and fervor, and it will come to you."—"I will! I promise I will!" she answered earnestly. "Thank God! that promise will lighten many a dark hour that is before me," he said, and, rising, held out his hand, which Lady Margaret pressed in silence.

13. Mr. Ringwood took out his pocket-book, and wrote something on a card. "If you are in want of a friend, it does not matter in what way, send to this address," he said, giving her the card: it bore the name of a priest whom he knew very intimately. "Thank you. This, then, is good-by? I shall not see you again before you start?" she said.

14. "I fear not; if I can, I will run in for a moment later in the afternoon. But you must cheer up now, and show them here what stuff English women are made of!" he said cheerfully; "after all, the siege may turn out to be a battle of smoke: at this moment there are numbers who think it will. All the same, you had better get in a good supply of provisions immediately. If they turn out not to be wanted, you will have a good laugh over the cowards who ran away."

15. "And who knows," she replied, smiling, "I may find,

like St. Thomas, that the coming late was a greater gain than being in time?"—"God grant it, and God bless you!"

O'MEARA.

KATHLEEN O'MEARA, an Irish writer of the present day. Under the pseudonym "Grace Ramsay," she has published several tales and novelettes of real excellence; among them "The Bells of the Sanctuary," "A Woman's Trials," "Iza's Story," "Mary Benedicta," etc. Recently turning her pen to graver uses, she has written under her own name, and her memoir of Bishop Grant of Southwark and her life of Frederic Ozanam have received high and well-deserved commendation.

III.

63. HERVÉ RIEL.

1.

ON the sea and at the Hogue,¹ sixteen hundred ninety-two,
Did the English fight the French—woe to France!
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue,
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,
Came crowding ship on ship to St. Milo on the Rance,
With the English fleet in view.

2.

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase,
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfreville;
Close on him fled, great and small, twenty-two good ships in all;
And they signalled to the place, "Help the winners of a race!
Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick—or, quicker still,
Here's the English can and will!"

3.

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leaped on board;
"Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?"
laughed they:
"Rocks to starboard,² rocks to port,³ all the passage scarred and
scored,

¹ Cape La Hogue, 10 miles N. E. of Valognes, France, off which the united English and Dutch fleets defeated the French naval force, as referred to above, May 19-23, 1692.

² Starboard, the right-hand side of a ship or boat, to a person looking forward.

³ Port, now used instead of larboard, or opposed to starboard.

Shall the Formidable here with her twelve and eighty guns
Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,
Trust to enter where 'tis ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,
And with flow at full beside? now 'tis slackest ebb of tide.
Reach the mooring? Rather say, while rock stands or water runs,
Not a ship will leave the bay!"

4.

Then was called a council straight; brief and bitter the debate:
"Here's the English at our heels; would you have them take in tow
All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and bow,
For a prize to Plymouth Sound? better run the ships aground!"
(Ended Damfreville his speech.)
"Not a minute more to wait! let the captains all and each
Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach!
France must undergo her fate."

5.

"Give the word!"—But no such word was ever spoke or heard;
For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these—
A captain? A lieutenant? A mate—first, second, third?
No such man of mark, and meet with his betters to compete!
But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the fleet—
A poor coasting pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

6.

And "What mockery or malice have we here?" cries Hervé Riel;
"Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards, fools, or
rogues?
Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings, tell
On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell
'Twi't the öffing here and Grève, where the river disembogues?
Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying's for?
Morn and eve, night and day, have I piloted your bay,
Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

7.

"Burn the fleet, and ruin France? That were worse than fifty
Hogues!
Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe me there's a way!
Only let me lead the line,
Have the biggest ship to steer, get this Formidable clear,