

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was not until after the conquest of Jerusalem that Count Robert of Paris returned to Constantinople, and with his wife, and such proportion of his followers as the sword and pestilence had left after that bloody warfare, resumed his course to his native kingdom. Upon reaching Italy, the first care of the noble Count and Countess was to celebrate in princely style the marriage of Hereward and his faithful Bertha, who had added to their other claims upon their master and mistress those acquired by Hereward's faithful services in Palestine, and no less by Bertha's affectionate ministry to her lady in Constantinople.

As to the fate of Alexius Comnenus, it may be read at large in the history of his daughter Anna, who has represented him as the hero of many a victory, achieved, says the purple-born, in the third chapter and fifteenth book of her history, sometimes by his arms and sometimes by his prudence.

"His boldness alone has gained some battles, at other times his success has been won by stratagem. He has erected the most illustrious of his trophies by confronting danger, by combating like a simple soldier, and throwing himself bare-headed into the thickest of the foe. But there are others," continues the accomplished lady, "which he gained an opportunity of erecting by assuming the appearance of terror, and even of retreat. In a word, he knew alike how to triumph either in flight or in pursuit, and remained upright even before those enemies who appeared to have struck him down; resembling the military implement termed the calthrop, which remains always upright in whatever direction it is thrown on the ground."

It would be unjust to deprive the Princess of the defence she herself makes against the obvious charge of partiality.

"I must still once more repel the reproach which some bring against me, as if my history was composed merely according to the dictates of the natural love for parents which is engraved in the hearts of children. In truth, it is not the effect of that affection, which I bear to mine, but it is the evidence of matter of fact, which obliges me to speak as I have done. Is it impossible that one can have at the same time an affection for the memory of a father and for truth? For myself, I have never directed my attempt to write history, otherwise than for the ascertainment of the matter of fact. With this purpose, I have taken for my subject the history of a worthy man. Is it just, that, by the single accident of his being the author of my birth, his quality of my father ought to form a prejudice against me, which would ruin my credit with my readers? I have given, upon other occasions, proofs sufficiently strong of the ardor which I had for the defence of my father's interests, which those that know me can never doubt; but, on the present, I

have been limited by the inviolable fidelity with which I respect the truth, which I should have felt conscience to have veiled, under pretence of serving the renown of my father."—*Alexiad*, chap. iii. book xv.

This much we have deemed it our duty to quote, in justice to the fair historian; we will extract also her description of the Emperor's death, and are not unwilling to allow, that the character assigned to the Princess by our own Gibbon, has in it a great deal of fairness and of truth.

Notwithstanding her repeated protests of sacrificing rather to the exact and absolute truth than to the memory of her deceased parent, Gibbon remarks truly, that "instead of the simplicity of style and narrative which wins a belief, an elaborate affection of rhetoric and science betrays in every page the vanity of a female author. The genuine character of Alexius is lost in a vague constellation of virtues; and the perpetual strain of panegyric and apology awakens our jealousy to question the veracity of the historian, and the merit of the hero. We cannot, however, refuse her judicious and important remark, that the disorders of the times were the misfortune and the glory of Alexius; and that every calamity which can afflict a declining empire was accumulated on his reign by the justice of Heaven and the vices of his predecessors."—*GIBBON'S Roman Empire*, vol. ix. p. 83, foot-note.

The Princess accordingly feels the utmost assurance, that a number of signs which appeared in heaven and on earth, were interpreted by the soothsayers of the day as foreboding the death of the Emperor. By these means, Anna Comnena assigned to her father those indications of consequence, which ancient historians represent as necessary intimations of the sympathy of nature, with the removal of great characters from the world; but she fails not to inform the Christian reader that her father's belief attached to none of these prognostics, and that even on the following remarkable occasion he maintained his incredulity:—A splendid statue, supposed generally to be a relic of paganism, holding in its hand a golden sceptre, and standing upon a base of porphyry, was overturned by a tempest, and was generally believed to be an intimation of the death of the Emperor. This, however, he generously repelled. Phidias, he said, and other great sculptors of antiquity, had the talent of imitating the human frame with surprising accuracy; but to suppose that the power of foretelling future events was reposed in these masterpieces of art, would be to ascribe to their makers the faculties reserved by the Deity for himself, when he says, "It is I who kill and make alive." During his latter days, the Emperor was greatly afflicted with the gout, the nature of which has exercised the wit of many persons of science as well as of Anna Comnena. The poor patient was so much exhausted, that when the Empress was talking of most eloquent persons who should

assist in the composition of his history, he said, with a natural contempt of such vanities, "The passages of my unhappy life call rather for tears and lamentation than for the praises you speak of."

A species of asthma having come to the assistance of the gout, the remedies of the physicians became as vain as the intercession of the monks and clergy, as well as the alms which were indiscriminately lavished. Two or three deep successive swoons gave ominous warning of the approaching blow; and at length was terminated the reign and life of Alexius Comnenus, a prince who, with all the faults which may be imputed to him, still possesses a real right, from the purity of his general intentions, to be accounted one of the best sovereigns of the Lower Empire.

For some time, the historian forgot her pride of literary rank, and, like an ordinary person, burst into tears and shrieks, tore her hair, and defaced her countenance, while the Empress Irene cast from her princely habits, cut off her hair, changed her purple buskins for black mourning shoes, and her daughter Mary, who had herself been a widow, took a black robe from one of her own wardrobes, and presented it to her mother. "Even in the moment when she put it on," says Anna Comnena, "the Emperor gave up the ghost, and in that moment the sun of my life set."

We shall not pursue her lamentations farther. She upbraids herself that, after the death of her father, that light of the world, she had also survived Irene, the delight alike of the east and of the west, and survived her husband also. "I am indignant," she said, "that my soul, suffering under such torrents of misfortune, should still deign to animate my body. Have I not," said she, "been more hard and unfeeling than the rocks themselves; and is it not just that one, who could survive such a father and mother, and such a husband, should be subjected to the influence of so much calamity? But let me finish this history, rather than any longer fatigue my readers with my unavailing and tragical lamentation."

Having thus concluded her history, she adds the following two lines:

"The learned Comnena lays her pen aside,  
What time her subject and her father died."\*

These quotations will probably give the readers as much as they wish to know of the real character of this Imperial historian. Fewer words will suffice to dispose of the other parties who have been selected from her pages, as persons in the foregoing drama.

There is very little doubt that the Count Robert of Paris, whose audacity in seating himself upon the throne of the Emperor gives a peculiar interest to his character, was in fact a person of

\* [Ἀρξεν ὄπον βιοτοιο Ἀλεξιος ὁ Κομνηνος  
Ἐνθα καλῆ ὀυγατηρ ληξεν Ἀλεξιαδος.]

the highest rank; being no other, as has been conjectured by the learned Du Cange, than an ancestor of the house of Bourbon, which has so long given kings to France. He was a successor it has been conceived, of the Counts of Paris, by whom the city was valiantly defended against the Normans, and an ancestor of Hugh Capet. There are several hypotheses upon this subject, deriving the well-known Hugh Capet, first, from the family of Saxony; secondly, from St. Arnoul, afterwards Bishop of Alex; third, from Niblong; fourth, from the Duke of Bavaria; and fifth, from a natural son of the Emperor Charlemagne. Various placed, but in each of these contested pedigrees, appears this Robert, surnamed the *Strong*, who was Count of that district, of which Paris was the capital, most peculiarly styled the County, or Isle of France. Anna Comnena, who has recorded the bold usurpation of the Emperor's seat by this haughty chieftain, has also acquainted us with his receiving a severe, if not a mortal wound, at the battle of Dorylaeum, owing to his neglecting the warlike instructions with which her father had favored him on the subject of the Turkish wars. The antiquary who is disposed to investigate this subject, may consult the late Lord Ashburnham's elaborate Genealogy of the Royal House of France; also a note of Du Cange's on the Princess's history, p. 362, arguing for the identity of her "Robert of Paris, a haughty barbarian," with the "Robert called the Strong," mentioned as an ancestor of Hugh Capet. Gibbon, vol. xi. p. 52, may also be consulted. The French antiquary and the English historian seem alike disposed to find the church, called in the tale that of the Lady of the Broken Lances, in that dedicated to St. Drusas, or Drosin of Soissons, who was supposed to have peculiar influence on the issue of combats, and to be in the habit of determining them in favor of such champions as spent the night preceding at his shrine.

In consideration of the sex of one of the parties concerned, the author has selected Our Lady of the Broken Lances as a more appropriate patroness than St. Drusas himself, for the Amazons, who were not uncommon in that age. Gaita, for example, the wife of Robert Guiscard, a renowned hero, and the parent of a most heroic race of sons, was herself an Amazon, fought in the foremost ranks of the Normans, and is repeatedly commemorated by our Imperial historian, Anna Comnena.

The reader can easily conceive to himself that Robert of Paris distinguished himself among his brethren-at-arms, and fellow-crusaders. His fame resounded from the walls of Antioch; but at the battle of Dorylaeum, he was so desperately wounded, as to be disabled from taking a part in the grandest scene of the expedition. His heroic Countess, however, enjoyed the great satisfaction of mounting the walls of Jerusalem, and in so far discharging her own vows and those of her husband. This was the more fortunate, as the sentence

of the physicians pronounced that the wounds of the Count had been inflicted by a poisoned weapon, and that complete recovery was only to be hoped for by having recourse to his native air. After some time spent in the vain hope of averting by patience this unpleasant alternative, Count Robert subjected himself to necessity, or what was represented as such, and, with his wife and the faithful Hereward, and all others of his followers who had been like himself disabled from combat, took the way to Europe by sea.

A light galley, procured at a high rate, conducted them safely to Venice, and from that then glorious city, the moderate portion of spoil which had fallen to the Count's share among the conquerors of Palestine, served to convey them to his own dominions, which, more fortunate than those of most of his fellow-pilgrims, had been left uninjured by their neighbors during the time of their proprietor's absence on the Crusade. The report that the Count had lost his health, and the power of continuing his homage to the Lady of the Broken Lances, brought upon him the hostilities of one or two ambitious or envious neighbors, whose covetousness was, however, sufficiently repressed by the brave resistance of the Countess and the resolute Hereward. Less than a twelvemonth was required to restore the

Count of Paris to his full health, and to render him, as formerly, the assured protector of his own vassals, and the subject in whom the possessors of the French throne reposed the utmost confidence. This latter capacity enabled Count Robert to discharge his debt towards Hereward in a manner as ample as he could have hoped or expected. Being now respected alike for his wisdom and his sagacity, as much as he always was for his intrepidity and his character as a successful crusader, he was repeatedly employed by the Court of France in settling the troublesome and intricate affairs in which the Norman possessions of the English crown involved the rival nations. William Rufus was not insensible to his merit, nor blind to the importance of gaining his good-will; and finding out his anxiety that Hereward should be restored to the land of his fathers, he took, or made an opportunity, by the forfeiture of some rebellious noble, of conferring upon our Varangian a large district adjacent to the New Forest, being part of the scenes which his father chiefly frequented, and where it is said the descendants of the valiant squire and his Bertha have subsisted for many a long year, surviving turns of time and chance, which are in general fatal to the continuance of more distinguished families.

THE END.

THE

# FAIR MAID OF PERTH.

A ROMANCE

BY

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