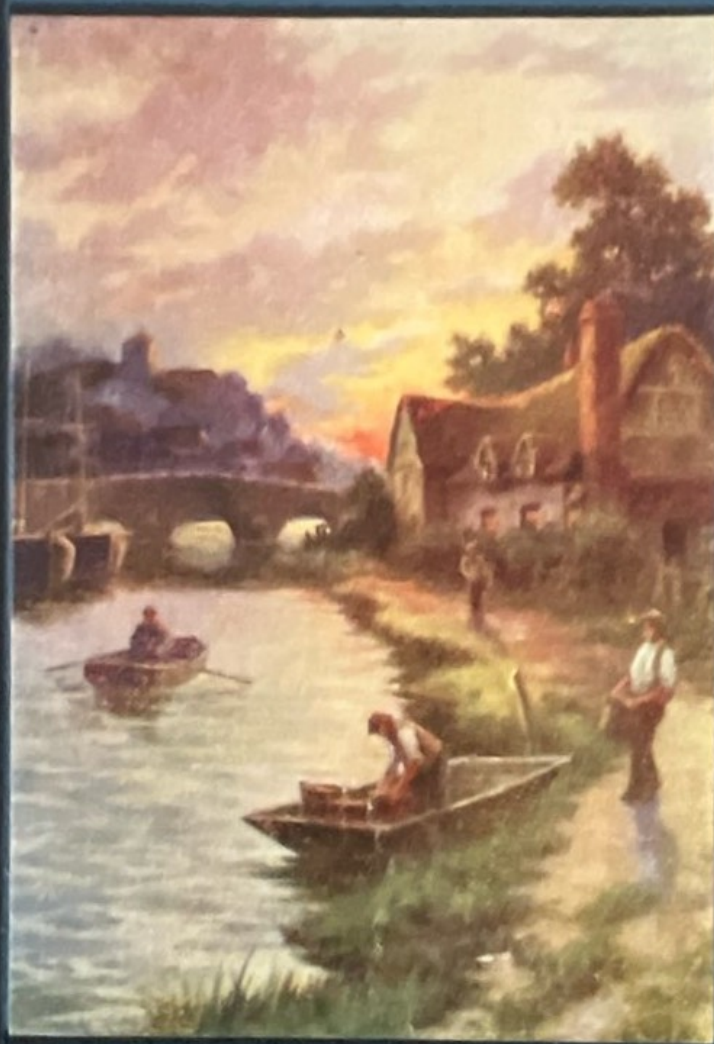


# HOW THEY KEPT THE FAITH IN BOHEMIA



By C. J. L.



A HAPPY HOME. (*Frontispiece.*)



# How they kept the Faith in Bohemia.

By C. J. L.



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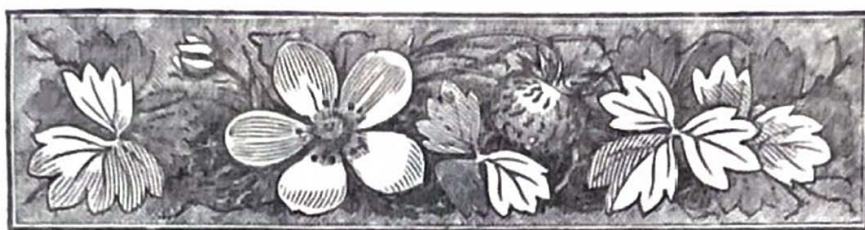
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# How they kept the Faith in Bohemia.

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## CHAPTER I.

### CHRISTINE'S STORY.

**M**Y name is Christine de Merle. I was born in the year 1765, just sixteen years before the Emperor, Joseph II., issued his famous Edict of Toleration.

The home of my childhood was a pretty village only a few miles distant from Prague. My father, who was the only doctor within ten or twelve miles,

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was so constantly engaged by the duties of his profession that he was unable to spend much time with his family, so that the care and education of myself and my only brother, Casper, who was five years younger, was left very much in the hands of my mother, the daughter of a Protestant pastor; she had received a good education, was a woman of quick understanding, and strong, though simple faith.

Both my parents were Hussites, a name which for many years had been given to those of our countrymen and women who, because they held the truth of the Bible, refused to bow to the authority of the Popes of Rome, did not attend mass, or go to confession. My father did not approve of the name, and would sometimes say, "All who love and seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ are Christians; we own no other name; we are Hussites only in that we honour the memory of a good man, who laid down his life rather than deny his Lord and Saviour."



Very often in the winter evenings, as my mother plied her spinning wheel by the cheerful light of the wood fire (for though we were rich in affection, there was never much money in our home), she would tell us stories of martyr times, and though at the time I thought more of the faith and courage of the martyrs than of the One for whose sake they suffered, I never forgot those stories, and in after years they bore fruit.

One I can recall impressed me so deeply that though many years have passed since I heard it, the very words in which it fell from my mother's lips come back to me. It was about a relation of her own, a great-aunt of her grandfather's; I do not remember that she ever spoke of her by any name but that of Clara. She was a widow, and had for some years been housekeeper to a learned and pious gentleman, from whom she learnt the truth as it is in Jesus.

During an outbreak of persecution her master was arrested on a charge of having

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said that the bread used in the sacrament was not the real body, bones, flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus; and also of having told one of his neighbours that it was God, and not the priests, who had power to forgive sins. Clara, who was at the time sixty years of age, boldly confessed that she held the same faith and was taken to prison with her master.

When brought before the judges, they said that they believed the teaching of Rome was in many things contrary to that of the Bible, and refused to confess to a priest; so sentence was passed—they were both to be burnt alive. The only favour they asked—to be allowed to pray together before their death—could, they were told, be granted only on one condition, that they should kneel and pray before a crucifix. This they refused, saying, "The word of God forbids us to worship any image, we worship only the living God, who made heaven and earth."

The old gentleman was first led to the

stake ; and as they bound him to it, he said with a loud voice, " Lord Jesus, Son of the living God, who hast vouchsafed to die upon the cross for me, a vile sinner, Thee only I adore, to Thee I commend my spirit. Have mercy upon me, and pardon my many sins."

The priests had done their utmost to persuade Clara to recant, but on finding that all their efforts were useless, she was placed by the side of her master ; when both were fastened to the stake, the Protestant books found in their house were brought out and thrown upon the faggots. The pile was lighted, and in a short time only a heap of smouldering ashes remained to mark the spot where two faithful witnesses for Christ had lain down their lives. But they did not die in vain ; many who had long been halting between two opinions were led to choose the good part, and cast in their lot with the persecuted Hussites.

There was only one day-school in the

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place, and as it was taught and managed entirely by nuns, we did lessons at home with mother, as both my parents felt it would be wrong to place their children in the care of those who worshipped pictures and images, and would have taught them to do the same.

We often heard sad stories of the sufferings of the Hussites in other parts of Bohemia, but persecution did not seem to come our way. When I grew old enough to think about such things, I used to wonder how this happened, for I knew quite well that little companies of the so-called Hussites, sometimes numbering ten or twelve, used to meet for prayer and reading the scriptures in the houses of one or other of their number, though care was taken to attract as little notice as possible, and they usually came and went singly. Sometimes these meetings were held in our house, and I had on several occasions been allowed to be present. We felt sure that Father Andre, the parish priest, a

quiet, easy-going old gentleman, knew of these little gatherings, and also that those who attended them never went to mass, or visited the confessional, and that, had he wished to do so, he could have put a stop to them by giving information to the officers of the Inquisition ; we were however allowed, during several years, to meet without interruption

Father Andre had been attended by my father through a long and dangerous illness, and a strong affection had sprung up between the two men. I remember one night father saying to my mother, when he returned from a visit to the priest, " I have long thought of Father Andre as a sincere and devout man ; but now I rejoice to know, that though he seems wanting in courage to come out boldly on the Lord's side, he is a true, though secret, disciple of Christ."

He went on to tell how they had often prayed and read the scriptures together ; a secret drawer in his study table contained

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quite a number of the writings of Luther and other reformers ; more than once he had told my father that his only hope of salvation was in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, but that, when urged to leave the Church of Rome, in which he saw so much of error, he would reply sadly, “ Had I read my Bible forty, or even twenty years ago, I think I could have welcomed reproach, and even death, for Christ’s sake ; but I am old and feeble, I am not far from the end of my journey ; what can an old man do ? If I left Rome to-morrow it would only bring down trouble on the heads of the few scattered sheep, who are now suffered to go quietly on.”

It was, I think, only two days after the conversation I have referred to that Joan, who had for many years been his house-keeper, came to our house very early and in great distress, begging my father to return with her at once, as her master, contrary to his usual custom, had not



entered the church for "matins" or morning prayers. She sent one of the choir boys to call him, who returned, saying that though he had knocked several times at the door of his room, he got no answer. She then went herself, and at last opened the door. Seeing Father Andre lying upon the bed, but breathing heavily, she thought he must be in a fit, and came with all speed for my father, who lost no time in going to the house, but before he reached it the old man had breathed his last.

We all felt his death as that of a personal friend, and wondered who would take his place. After a few weeks we heard that a young and very zealous Catholic priest had been appointed by the bishop and would arrive the week following. Father Jacques, as he was called, was in every way unlike the gentle, kindly man we had all learned to love. But as he will enter more than once into my story, there is no need that I should write much about him now.



## CHAPTER II.

### NEW NEIGHBOURS.

**O**UR house stood a little way from the rambling, old-fashioned village street, and we had few, if any, near neighbours. A house, so much larger than our own that to us children it seemed almost a mansion, was separated from ours only by a low wall and a garden ; but as for some years it had stood empty, we often played in its garden, or enjoyed a merry game of hide and seek among its winding passages and oddly-shaped cupboards.

It was no small surprise when one morning in early spring a party of workmen

arrived and began putting the rambling old place into repair ; we heard, soon after, that it had been purchased by Herr Johns, a well-to-do merchant of Prague, as his wife, who was far from strong, had been advised by the doctors to try country air, and that as soon as everything was in readiness she would with three of her children arrive, to make a stay of at least the summer months.

There was not much change or variety in our lives, and the preparations were a great interest both to my brother and me. He was then about five years old, while I was between ten and eleven. Masons, bricklayers, painters and paperhangers were followed by gardeners who, though they looked surprised at the seemingly hopeless tangle the garden and shrubbery presented, set to work with a will, and a pretty flower garden was in less than a week laid out and planted. Waggon, laden with what we thought costly furniture, and accompanied by a man-servant

and two maids, next excited our wonder and surprise. In a few days our new neighbours would arrive. Casper and I never tired of talking about them and wondering what they would be like. Would the children be about our own ages? Should we be allowed to play with them? We could certainly peep over the low boundary-wall into the garden, but that would be a very different thing from playing in it, as we had been used to do.

We knew that Herr Johns was a Romanist, so it was almost certain that his family were of the same persuasion. Indeed, we were told that Madame Johns was nearly related to Father Jacques, who, though he had only taken up his abode in our village for two or three weeks, seemed to know and be known to every one. I had only seen him at a distance, yet felt, though I could not have explained why, strangely interested in him. He was, we heard, an Italian by birth, tall and dark, with deep-set eyes that seemed to look

one through and through ; his quick, firm step and erect bearing gave me the impression that he was used to command.

We had not long to wait. One afternoon a travelling carriage, piled with trunks, stopped at the gate of "Verney," as the house was called by its new owners, and a tall lady, closely veiled, who walked very slowly along the garden path, was assisted to alight and led into the house ; she was closely followed by three children. The eldest, whose name I afterwards learned was Greta, was, though much taller, only a year or two older than myself. A maid, carrying rugs and cushions, followed them into the house. In less than an hour the maid, who spoke more French than any other language, came to our door, saying that

#### THE FATIGUE OF THE JOURNEY

had proved far too great for her lady, who had fainted. Would the doctor go to her at once ? My father was from home at

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the time, and his return was not expected for some hours, but my mother, who was, she said, "a born nurse," and always seemed to know what ought to be done in case of illness, offered to go and see if she could be of any use. Her offer was thankfully accepted, and taking some simple restoratives from the surgery, she went.

In about two hours she returned, saying that madame was much better, she had seen her placed comfortably in bed, and she had been able to take some slight refreshment. I asked several questions, but soon found that mother was not inclined to talk much, and there was an anxious, almost troubled look on her face I had not often seen. That night, after Casper was in bed, she called me to her, and said, almost in a whisper, "Christine, perhaps it is that I have so little faith, but I am sad to-night. I tremble for my children. Your father and I have taught you the pure faith of the Bible; perhaps we have not said enough about the errors of



Rome ; we believe that you love and wish to please the Lord Jesus. Nothing, however, has yet been allowed to try your faith. While Father Andre lived we were allowed greater liberty of conscience and freedom of worship than was enjoyed by our brethren in any other part of Bohemia. But it will not be so now. His successor will leave no stone unturned to bring those he looks upon as heretics into the fold of what he calls the 'true and holy Catholic Church.' But for my children, the greatest dangers will come from 'Verney.'

"When I entered Madame's dressing-room, she had not recovered from her faint, but lay pale and unconscious upon a couch, while Greta, her daughter, knelt before a silver crucifix, calling upon the Virgin Mary, whom she addressed as the mother of God, to save her mother. I cannot prevent, even if I felt it right to do so, my children from sometimes playing with those of 'Verney,' yet I know snares will be spread for you, and I beg you to

pray very earnestly that you may not be led into temptation."

"Mother," I said, almost impatiently, "you need have no fear for me."

I SHALL NEVER BE A ROMAN CATHOLIC.

Often when you have told of our brethren's sufferings in other parts of the country, I have felt it was so noble to suffer in a good cause, I have almost wished I might be called upon to do the same." But my mother was not reassured. Tears were in her eyes, as she answered gravely, "Christine, my child, self-confidence and pride are your besetting sins, and will sooner or later bring you into trouble. You are trusting yourself, not God. Do you not remember how Peter said to the Lord, 'If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.' (Mark xiv. 31.) Can you tell me what followed?"

I answered promptly, ready to shew my knowledge of scripture, "Yes! Peter did deny the Lord, and even said he did not

know Him. But afterwards he was sorry for having done so, and Christ forgave him, and he used to preach to both Jews and Gentiles." Something in my mother's face and voice gave me a feeling almost of awe, and I promised her that I would pray not to be led into temptation.

She then told me that madame, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered to talk, was very friendly and gracious, thanked her for going to her help, and said she had been pleased to learn that the doctor and his family would be her nearest neighbours. Her eldest daughter, Lucilla, was a boarder in a convent school some miles distant. She was seventeen years of age, and intended to "take the veil," or become a nun, as soon as the rules of the Order to which she wished to belong would permit. Greta was thirteen; her two younger children, Editha and Carl, were eight and six years of age. During their stay at "Verney" they would not attend school, but do lessons for an hour or two daily

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with Father Jacques, her nephew, who, she told my mother, had taken deeply to heart the neglected state in which he found his parish, but hoped that in less than a year every man, woman and child in it would be drawn or driven into the fold of the Catholic Church.

The return of my father put a stop to our conversation. He was no less interested than I had been in all we had to tell him about our new neighbours, but I thought his face looked even more full of trouble than my mother's had done. Mother noticed it, and said, "Father has had a very busy day, he is tired, we will leave him to rest for a little while." She then bade me help her prepare the evening meal. While we were having supper he told us that the outlook was anything but a bright one. In many places the priests and magistrates had received orders to stamp out heresy. All persons who refused to attend mass were to be treated as law breakers. And as it was suspected that

the Hussites still held meetings among themselves, any one who would give information as to these secret meetings, which were not allowed by law, would be rewarded.

It was mother who spoke words of cheer and hope, reminding my father how often they had proved the faithfulness and care of God, who would never leave nor forsake His poor, tried people ; and then he prayed so earnestly for grace and strength to *do* or *suffer* the will of God, and that his children might be true and faithful to Christ.





## CHAPTER III.

### IN THE POULTRY YARD.

**I**F our poultry yard was not large, it was well stocked. Mother took a real pleasure, perhaps not unmixed with pride, in feeding and rearing the broods of soft, downy chickens and ducklings that were the special pets of my brother and myself. From the time I was old enough to trot about after mother, I had helped to feed the fowls ; but for the last year or two I had been trusted to supply their wants entirely alone. It could not have been more than two or three days after the coming of our neighbours that, early one morning, as I stood surrounded by a numerous and



hungry family of ducks and chickens, all picking up the corn I threw to them by handfuls, as if fattening was the one business of all sensible, well-behaved ducks and chickens, while a pair of tame doves perched on my shoulder and fed from my hand, I heard my name called, and looking up, saw Greta leaning over the garden wall. "Oh, Christine!" she exclaimed, "I have been watching you for at least five minutes, and now I am longing to come and help you; do let me, it looks so delightful. I really must come." In another moment she had climbed the low wall and was by my side.

SHE WAS A BRIGHT, LIVELY GIRL,

and I felt pleased and flattered by her friendliness, who had never had a girl friend. I took her to see Casper's rabbits, and pointed out my white hen, a gentle, pretty bird, that always came at my call, and would follow me about the house and garden: while Greta, in return, told me

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about her town life ; she was charmed with "Verney," for though it was not so grand as their house in Prague, it had the charm of novelty, and she was ready to enjoy to the full the greater freedom of country life.

"Here," she said, "I can run about the garden in my morning wrapper and straw hat ; in Prague I could not stir half-a-dozen steps without having Julie, our French maid, running after me with some such speech as : 'My young lady must permit me to change her dress ; she cannot go out without her gloves ; madame would be shocked were she to hear of such a thing.' I was just getting sick of it all, when my father bought 'Verney.' I mean having a good time here, and the children will never tire of running up and down stairs, and playing hide and seek in the cupboards ; they have a play-room at home, and lovely French and German toys, but they seem to think chasing each other along that winding passage at the foot of the stairs far greater fun.



ENJOYING FREEDOM OF COUNTRY LIFE. (*Page 22.*)

“ But, Christine,” she continued in a more earnest tone, “ I want you to do something for me. I want you to be my friend, I shall tell you all my secrets, and you must tell me all yours. I have been so lonely at times ever since Lucilla went away to school at the convent.

I LOST MY SISTER THEN ;

for though she will for the next two years spend her holidays with us, she has set her heart upon being a nun, so the convent will always be her home. Editha is a dear little thing, but she has been so often ill, that we have all petted and made a baby of her ; so that I do not find a companion in her. My mother has promised me that she will ask yours to allow you to visit us very often, perhaps to-day, and you *must* come. Of course I know you are a little heretic, mother told me that, but I am going to convert you. Father Jacques says it will be a good work, but you need not say a word about this to your mother, or she

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might not let you come, and that would spoil all and be too tiresome, just as I have made up my mind that we are going to be such friends and so happy together."

Later in the day a servant brought a note for my mother. It was from madame, who asked as a favour to herself, that Casper and I might be allowed to spend the afternoon at "Verney."

The troubled look I had noticed before came back into her face, and she sat for a few minutes in silent thought. At last she said, "Christine, your father and I have foreseen this, and talked and prayed about it. We feel we cannot prevent all intercourse between our neighbours and ourselves, to do so would only hasten the day of trouble which we believe is not far off, and yet to allow you to cross the threshold of 'Verney,' seems almost like casting my children into a den of lions. I must give you one word of warning; no, it is more, it is a command: do not talk about our little gatherings for prayer and Bible read-

ing; and if you are asked the names of those who share our faith, have the courage to tell the truth, and say you are forbidden by your parents to give them. Young as Greta is, she has begun to go to confession; anything you say to her may, and most likely will, be repeated to Father Jacques, and he will use all the information he can get to injure our brethren and sisters. And be sure, Christine," she added in a low, pleading voice, "that you have no secrets from me. Tell me everything."

A strange feeling of uneasiness came over me, as I remembered how Greta had spoken of her desire to convert me. Ought I to tell mother of our talk in the poultry yard? The voice of conscience whispered loudly, "Yes;" but I only held down my head, and was silent. If I told mother perhaps she would not let me go to "Verney," and I wanted so much to see Greta's home, and to be her friend; and how could I be so unkind to her as to tell the first and only secret she had ever asked me to keep.



Going to "Verney" need not, should not, make me a Roman Catholic. And so my first wrong step was taken. How bitterly I had cause to regret it in after years, and how those dearest to me had to suffer for my sin, I must reserve for a later chapter.

We went in the early afternoon. Mother stood in the porch, shading her eyes with her hand, and watching us with such a tender, wistful gaze, as we went up the freshly gravelled garden path. Greta, all smiles, and wearing such a pretty dress of white muslin, with bows of blue ribbon, met us at the front door, and took us at once to her mother's private room, turning a deaf ear to Julie's whisper that her lady was resting, and ought not to be disturbed. Madame received us most kindly, and said, "I was afraid Greta would be lonely here, and after the first few days say 'Verney' was too dull, but you will try to make her happy, will you not, Christine?"

"I will if I can, madame," was my answer;

but I wondered how I, poor little girl, the daughter of a village doctor, who had very few possessions of my own, could add to the happiness of the young lady of "Verney," who seemed surrounded by all that money could buy. The room in which we were looked almost like a fairy-land. Pretty things of which I hardly knew even the names met my eyes on every side. I noticed the tall silver crucifix of which my mother had spoken, and longed to ask why, as the sun was shining brightly, two large wax candles were burning before it.

But Greta was impatient to have me all to herself, and soon took me away to her room; Casper being claimed by Editha and Carl, went off with them to inspect some small gardening tools just arrived from Prague, and afterwards to be shewn their toys.

Greta's room looked out upon the front garden, and was furnished with great taste. A beautiful painting attracted my attention; it was that of a sweet-faced woman, who

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held a lovely little boy of about a year old in her arms ; the child seemed to be fondling a dove. It was a very pretty picture ; but I could not understand why, on entering the room, Greta should kneel for a moment and cross herself before it.

She noticed my look of surprise, and said playfully, " Ah ! I see I shall have a great deal to teach you, so I will give you your first lesson now. That is a picture of the Virgin Mary and Child, the infant Jesus, you know. It is a very valuable painting, an exact copy of one at Rome, said to have been painted by one of the great masters. Father paid a high price for it, and gave it to me a year ago, on the day when I made my first communion. I know a great deal about you heretics. Julie told me, for once when she was quite a little girl, she lived with some relations who were heretics ; they tried to make one of her, but it was too 'triste,' no music, no flowers, no pictures, no sweet-smelling incense, no anything bright and beautiful."

“But we have the Bible,” I found courage to say. “Yes,” Greta replied, “And I heard Father Jacques telling my father that is just the reason why so many heretics will not enter the true fold. You *will* read for yourselves a Book which was only intended for priests to read. The Holy Catholic Church explains to her children all it is good for them to know. But we will not talk any more about these things. Come, I have so many things to shew you.”





## CHAPTER IV.

### A DAY IN THE WOODS.

**N**OT long after a picnic in the woods had been planned, and to our delight my brother and I were invited to join the party, who on a bright spring morning set out from "Verney" to spend a long day in some woods at a distance of rather less than two miles from our village. For some days previous Greta had been more than usually kind; she had made me several small presents and really seemed to have taken a great fancy to me, while in return I loved her dearly. "How could I help it?" I asked

myself, and though I sometimes thought that my mother looked grave and anxious, as she marked our growing friendship, she said little, but I believe prayed more earnestly than ever that I might not be allowed to fall into the snare, which she had only too good reason to fear was already being woven for her often wayward and too self-confident child.

It would have been difficult to find a more lovely spot than the one chosen for our picnic. Tall trees waved above our heads, not yet in full leaf, but arrayed in all the fresh beauty of early springtime, while pale primroses and sweet-scented wood violets nestled almost lovingly at their feet ; the grass was as soft and smooth as a velvet carpet, many coloured flowers adding greatly to its beauty, while the murmur of a brook almost at our feet, mingled with the songs of larks, thrushes, linnets and many other wild birds, all which lent a charm to the scene I can never forget.

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We were a merry party. Editha and the two boys, who were nearly of her own age, skipped, sang and ran races ; Greta and I, arm in arm, walked more quietly ; Julie, carrying our flower-baskets, walked respectfully a little behind, while a manservant, with a well-filled luncheon basket, brought up the rear. We were all very happy ; after strolling about for a little while, we found a dainty white cloth had been spread in a spot from which we had a glorious view of blue mountains and rivers, whose blue waters danced and sparkled in the sunshine till they looked almost like threads of silver, and added greatly to the beauty of the landscape. We were all ready for lunch, and I thought that cold chicken, ham sandwiches, custards and jellies had never tasted half so good before.

Soon after lunch Greta drew me aside, and said in a very earnest tone, "Christine, it is all very lovely ; but I did not come here just to please the children or

myself. I have something very important to do, and I want your help.

### THE MONTH OF MAY

is a time in which all good Catholics pay special attention to the Virgin Mary. Father Jacques is distressed to find how this was neglected during the time that Father Andre was parish priest. Would you believe it, Christine, he found nothing in the chest which ought to hold her wardrobe except one robe of crimson velvet, very much faded; and the dress of blue satin—now worn by our Lady is quite shabby and has several spots of mildew upon the skirt. Well, he has made up his mind to have at least one festival in her honour. The day after to-morrow is fixed for it; the school-children will walk round the church in procession, carrying baskets of flowers, and I am to be allowed to help the good father to decorate the church. I shall make garlands to hang upon the altar-rails, and lay the sweetest, fairest



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blossoms I can find at the feet of the virgin herself, so you see I shall need your help. We will bid Julie stay with the children, and go further into the woods. We may find flowers even more lovely than these."

I did not reply ; the flowers I had just gathered fell from my hand, as I stood confused and uncertain what to do or say. My parents I knew would not only object, but forbid my taking any part in what they felt to be little better than idol-worship, and my own conscience told me it would be wrong.

Greta saw my hesitation, and guessed its cause. She drew herself up proudly, her face flushed, and her whole manner seemed changed. "You are too provoking, you little heretic!" she exclaimed angrily. "It is very, very unkind, and if you persist I do not think I will ever speak to you again. You think your mother would not like it! Well, I did not know you were such a baby that you could not

even gather flowers without asking her leave ; but," she continued in a kinder tone, "you have never been forbidden to help decorate the church, have you ? "

"No," I ventured to say, "my parents never thought I should wish to do such a thing." "Well, then, you will not disobey their orders, as they have never given you any, by helping me this afternoon. Gather flowers as fast as you can, and give them to me ; you need not trouble yourself about what I want with them. Come now, be sensible, and let us be friends again." As she spoke she gave me one of her sweetest smiles, and looked so pretty in her white dress, with the sunlight falling upon her waves of dark hair, that I had not courage to make a stand for what I knew to be right.

"Do you ever deceive your mother, Greta ?" I asked at length. "Well, yes, I suppose I do sometimes, when I want anything very much indeed that she would not allow me to have. But I always re-

member it the next time I go to confession, and Father Jacques is very indulgent to me ; he gives me absolution, with sometimes some easy penance, and I have no need to trouble any more about it."

I felt shocked and grieved that Greta could speak so lightly of what I had been taught to look upon as exceedingly wrong. Without another word I allowed her to put her arm through mine and lead me further into the woods. We were soon gathering flowers, but for me all the brightness and beauty of the day had faded. I was doing wrong, and I knew it.

#### WE FILLED OUR BASKETS

and gave them to Julie, who reminded us that the lengthening shadows gave warning that it was time to begin our homeward walk. The children begged to stay a little longer, but Greta complained of a headache, and I was only too glad to leave a spot that would, I felt, always remind me of my first act of deception.

Our return home was a silent and spiritless one; the younger members of our party were tired, Greta did not seem to care to talk much, and I was very unhappy. I seemed to see again the look of trouble on my mother's face that I had noticed on her return from her first visit to "Verney," and how, I asked myself, should I meet my father's eyes? Kind as they were they always seemed to look me through, and I sometimes felt as if he must know what I was thinking about.

When I reached home, mother was busy preparing the evening meal. I felt the hot blood mount into my face as, turning to me, she said kindly, "I have missed my little daughter. Have you had a happy day, Christine?" I said "Yes," and murmured something about feeding chickens as an excuse to get out of the room; but mother said, "The poultry are all fed, and have gone to roost. I knew you would be tired, so I attended to them myself. Sit down now, your father will be here directly.

He came in half an hour ago to tell me he had only two more patients to visit, and if no sudden calls came in he hoped to be able to spend the evening quietly at his own fireside."

Only twenty-four hours before I should have been delighted. We had always thought it a great treat to have father with us for even a short time. He was so kind and pleasant, and would often tell us stories of his own boyhood, or read aloud from some useful and interesting book. But I felt on that evening I should not be happy in his presence.

When the time for our evening reading came, and our treasured Bible was brought from the secret drawer in which it was always kept, my father read the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel by John. When he came to the twenty-third verse, "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words," my father closed the book and said, "True love to Christ will not need to wait for a com-

## A DAY IN THE WOODS.

mand ; it will know what will please Him ; just as a loving and obedient child would be careful not to do anything that would grieve its parents, even if that thing had not been expressly forbidden." Oh, how miserable I felt ! How I longed to confess my wrong-doing ; but I did not, and that night cried myself to sleep.





## CHAPTER V.

### ANOTHER WRONG STEP

"It is a tangled web we weave,  
When first we venture to deceive."

**I** DID not know the lines I have just quoted at the time of which I am writing, but by many an hour of bitter sorrow I have proved how true they are. For some days after our picnic in the woods I was really very unhappy. Sometimes I felt as if I must go to my mother and tell her all, but pride, and a feeling of false shame, kept me back. There were not many children brought to the secret

meetings of the Hussites ; I had more than once been the only one allowed to be present, and I had been made rather a pet of. Our dear old pastor, Felix Gosmer, had laid his hand upon my head, saying, "Christine, you, like Timothy, have been early taught the 'holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.' May you, like his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, grow up a woman of unfeigned faith. The Lord bless thee and keep thee, my daughter." If I told any one, perhaps he might hear that I had been helping to decorate the Roman Catholic church, a place I knew he would think it wrong even to enter, and how grieved and disappointed he would be ! I could not bear to think of it.

At other times I used to reason as Greta had done. Why should I trouble about what was really no business of mine ? I gathered flowers, and gave them to my friend, and if she had not told me, I should not have thought of asking her what she



wanted with them. I tried to pray, but could not. More than once mother noticed my altered manner, and asked if I was in any trouble. My reply was always "No," and as father said I was growing too fast no further notice was taken, and after a time my unhappy feelings wore off, and I almost forgot my first act of deception.

The summer as a whole passed pleasantly. For a few weeks Greta was away, having accompanied her mother on a visit to some relations who lived near the convent in which her sister was a boarder; and though I missed my friend, I felt, I hardly knew why, freer and happier than I had done for some time. My white hen walked proudly about the poultry-yard, followed by a brood of six soft, downy chicks, and though I changed my mind several times each day as to which was prettiest, I intended to give the one on which my choice fell finally as a birthday present to Greta on her return.

They came at last. Greta, who was

tastefully and becomingly dressed, looked taller and I thought more charming than ever, threw her arms round me, and kissing me affectionately said, "Next Tuesday will be my birthday, yours is only a week later. One day when we were in Prague I thought of something so delightful, and it was not very hard to coax mother into letting me have my way. There is to be a double 'fete.' You and I are to be dressed alike, and share all the honours and pleasures of the day, just as if you were my very own sister ; for we love each other dearly, and I know you would never refuse to do anything that would please me, would you, Christine ?" I was silent. How could I be sure that by pleasing my friend I might not be guilty of some fresh act of disobedience or deception ?

Greta either did not, or would not, notice my hesitation, but rattled gaily on. She had enjoyed her visits, and had much to tell of the sights she had seen. Father Jacques had, she told me, joined their

party at Prague, and spent three days with them at the country house of her uncle. He had been, she added, so kind and pleasant that every one was sorry when his short visit came to an end. They had visited the convent in which Lucilla was a boarder, and obtained permission from the Mother Superior to take her with them for a long drive. She too had grown taller, and seemed older and more womanly than when they had last seen her. "But," Greta continued, in a graver tone, "I do not know what has come over her, she hardly seems the Lucilla who went away from us not three years ago. She did not shew any pleasure at seeing us, and seemed hardly willing even to kiss mother. All she thinks of is, I believe, the day when she is to 'take the veil.' In little more than a year, she says, the convent will be her home, the Mother Superior her mother, and the nuns her sisters.

"Mother was, I think, a little hurt at first, but Father Jacques comforted her

by reminding her she had received a great honour by being allowed to give her eldest daughter to the church, and that Lucilla, though so young, is quite a devotee, and, who knows! one day she may become a saint."

"Are not all the children of God saints?" I ventured to ask, adding, "I think it says so in the Bible." "Ah! that is just like you heretics! You go to the Bible, the priest's book, for everything; I do not know anything about the Bible, for I am sure Father Jacques would not allow me to read such a book, but our saints are those who, by good works, fastings, prayers and penance have laid up merit, and so made themselves pleasing to God."

This was very unlike the gospel I had heard from my mother's lips, but I did not know how to reply to Greta, so I was silent.

The following morning Madame Johns called upon my mother, and after greeting her warmly said, "Dear Madame De Merle,

were it not that we are already friends, I should hardly have dared to take what you may consider a liberty. We are both mothers, and nothing gives us greater pleasure than to see our children happy. Greta has set her heart upon a double birthday, hers and Christine's being kept together, and begged so hard that they might be dressed as nearly alike as possible, that I directed Julie to prepare two dresses of simple white muslin, with coloured sashes ; Christine's sash will be pink, Greta's blue. You may have noticed she always wears blue and white, they are the colours of the Virgin Mary." As our visitor said the last words, she made the sign of the cross.

My mother said, or tried to say, a few words of thanks, but her heart, I felt, was not in them, and I saw the old troubled look in her face.

Much of my spare time, for the next two or three days, was taken up in weaving a pretty basket large enough to hold

the chicken I had at last decided upon as my present to Greta, though I sometimes feared that my friend, who would, I knew, receive many pretty and some expensive presents, might not care for it ; still, I had nothing else to offer.

The birthday morning came at last. Greta had planned everything. I was to be arrayed by Julie in the very pretty white dress madame had provided for me. When the dressing was over and she had arranged the sash, and tied my hair back with pink ribbons, I was taken to madame's room to survey myself in a large looking-glass, purchased, I was told, in Paris. I hardly looked like the homely little girl who fed the chickens and helped to make the bread. Madame kissed me warmly, and gave me her present, a lovely work-box lined with crimson satin ; Greta had one just like it, with blue fittings.

Greta seemed pleased with my present—the basket and its contents—saying that no one else had even thought of giving her

a live pet. As we wanted to amuse ourselves the chicken was given into Julie's care, with many directions as to its proper feeding and treatment.

Later in the day several visitors arrived from Prague, and about three o'clock we were joined by Father Jacques, who played games and ran races, much to the delight of the younger members of our party ; and when we were tired of play we sat on the lawn and listened to his stories. There were many things in them I did not like, and yet they were so interesting I could not help listening. One was, I remember, about two children who were lost in a dark wood ; night was coming on, and they were afraid ; but when they had prayed, not to God, but to Mary, a shining angel walked by their side, and led them safely to their home. I felt it could not be a true story, and yet I wished it was.

Before saying " good-night " Greta drew me aside and said, " We must have a ramble in the woods while this glorious

weather lasts. Come for me the day after to-morrow, quite early ; but stay, I shall be in church till eleven o'clock. You must meet me there. You can wait in the porch and listen to the music. The organ has been repaired, and though old its tones are very fine. You will enjoy it. You *must* come. You need not tell your mother anything but the truth, that we are going for a walk, without saying where we are to meet. Do be quick, Christine, and say you will do as I ask you. Our friends are waiting to say good-bye." And I promised, though my conscience said loudly, "ANOTHER WRONG STEP."







## CHAPTER VI.

### CORDS TIGHTENED.

**M**Y promise to meet Greta two days later at the door of the Roman Catholic church weighed somewhat heavily upon me. A long ramble in the woods with my friend would indeed be delightful, and yet there were difficulties in the way. If I told mother where Greta wished me to meet her she would not, I felt sure, approve, and might perhaps forbid my going altogether; or if she said, "Take Casper with you, a long walk will do him good," that would spoil all, for he was a frank, truthful little fellow, and from him my parents were sure

to learn what I was so anxious to conceal. So I made up my mind to say nothing about it till the day following, and as a kind of set-off for what I knew was so wrong, to be more than usually obedient and dutiful at home.

My work-box was much admired; Casper had not been allowed to leave empty-handed, a bag of French bon-bons, which he insisted upon sharing with us, and a money-box in the shape of a frog, that appeared to swallow a coin if placed in its open mouth, having been given him; but I saw, even though mother said, "Madame Johns is very kind to my little girl and boy," the anxious, troubled look I had before noticed was on her face. Father saw it too, and said, "As our neighbours only came to 'Verney' in the hope of madame receiving benefit from the pure air and simple country life she could enjoy here, I expect they will soon return to Prague. I have, as you know, seen her more than once as her medical attendant, and consider her health greatly

improved by her stay in our village.”  
“Perhaps Christine can tell us when ‘Verney’ is to be again empty?” mother said in a low, wistful tone; and I felt that it was no mere curiosity that prompted the question.

I had not heard, and said so; but I had been so happy in having Greta for my friend that I had quite forgotten what we had at first heard, that the family would only, it was expected, occupy “Verney” during the summer months, and the thought of losing her made me more anxious than before to be with her as much as possible. The day that followed was a very busy one. Mother was not well, and as she did not rise till much later than her usual hour, I had, as far as possible, to take her place in the house. I did my very best, and in the evening she seemed much better, and said, “You have been a real comfort to us to-day, Christine; I cannot tell you how thankful your father and I are that we can trust our little daughter.”

I coloured painfully, for I knew I was not worthy of their confidence, but in the deepening twilight mother did not notice my confusion. It seemed a good opportunity, so I said, "Greta has asked me to go into the woods again with her to-morrow morning, and if you are better, and I can be spared, I should very much like to go." Mother gave her consent readily, saying that as Casper was getting useful, he should remain with her, and render any small services she might require.

The sun shone brightly on the following morning. I rose early, lighted the fire, and did several household duties, all of which would, I knew, save mother's time and strength ; still I was restless and unhappy. I almost wished that Greta had not asked me to walk with her, or at least that she had chosen some other meeting-place ; but then perhaps in a few weeks she would be going away, and I might never see her again. Yes, I must go, just this once.

I have learnt since that a lie *acted* is as

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much a lie in the sight of God as a lie *spoken*, but at the time I thought far more of pleasing Greta than of obeying God. The Roman Catholic church was at the other end of the village, quite in an opposite direction to "Verney." I could not, as I had hoped, leave the house unobserved, for mother followed me to the gate, so I climbed the low wall that parted the gardens—we seldom if ever went round by the gate. At the door I met Julie, and asked her if my friend was at home, though I knew very well that she was not. Mother had gone in, and in a few minutes I was standing in the porch of the church. Greta was nowhere to be seen, but the organ was playing, and as I listened to the grand but solemn music I almost envied Greta, who could hear it very often.

The door opened at last, and quite a number of people came out. I could not help noticing on the faces of several a look of surprise at seeing me there. I did not see Greta, and began to wonder if she was

really there : the music ceased, and I had grown almost tired of waiting, when she appeared. Father Jacques was walking by her side and talking to her in low, earnest tones. I could not hear what he was saying, but from his manner I thought he was giving her directions or commands about something in which he was greatly interested. He stopped on seeing me, and said, "Good morning, Christine ; I expect you are going to carry off my pupil ;" but though his manner was kind, there was something in his face, though I could not tell exactly what, that made me feel afraid of him.

Greta had, I felt sure, been crying ; traces of tears were on her face, but she gave me a cordial greeting, and I soon forgot everything except the beauty of the scene, and the pleasure of being with my friend.

During our walk Greta told me that as her father wished Lucilla, who was coming home for the holidays, to pay one visit to "Verney," it had been decided that they

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should remain there until her return to the convent school at the end of January ; the Christmas following she would wear the white veil of a novice ; on the day of her profession, when she would really be a nun, their father had promised that her marriage portion of a thousand silver ducats should be paid to the convent.

“We are to have a grand Christmas festival in the church,” she went on to say, “when Lucilla comes ; Father Jacques has given me leave to help to dress the Virgin, her image, you know, I mean. I have seen her robe, it is lovely ! pale blue satin trimmed with lace, and embroidered in silver thread by the nuns of a convent near Berlin ; it is a great favour, but a still greater honour is in store for my sister. There will be a procession, she is to lift the holy infant from the manger and carry him round the church ; she is to represent the virgin mother of our Lord, but she will wear the dress of a nun. Oh, it will be a grand sight ! the music will be lovely, and

there will be flowers, and sweet-smelling incense, and holy water. You must be there that day ; Father Jacques and I have planned it all ; you really must come ; you are my friend, and if you love me, you love to please me, don't you, Christine ? ”

“ You forget I am not a Catholic,” I replied, “ and please, dear Greta, do not be angry with me, but I have been taught that to pay such honour to images, the work of men's hands, is little better than the worship of idols.”

“ Who told you that ? ” she asked, her dark eyes flashing, and her face crimson with anger. “ Father Jacques has had a long conversation with your father, who is, he says, the most stubborn and dangerous heretic in the village ; I expect it is some of his teaching.”

I was frightened, I had never before seen Greta so really angry. I knew my father was of the same mind as our beloved and aged pastor, but at that moment I remembered my mother had charged me not to



give the names of any who shared our faith, and resolved that in this I would not disobey her commands. I remained silent.

Greta saw her advantage, and said, "You have come more than half way already, you gathered flowers to help decorate the church, and this morning you came so near that some who saw you there might think you had been inside ; you have done these things without even asking leave of your parents, why should you miss hearing grand music, and seeing a beautiful sight ? Coming inside the church need not make you a Catholic, if you do not wish to be one. And," she added playfully, "in a few months we shall be going back to Prague ; I am beginning to find ' Vernev ' rather dull, and then you can be as good a little heretic as you please, quite a pattern to all the girls in the village. I told Father Jacques it was very hard to persuade you to do anything your parents might not like, and he says you are not disobeying them by doing

what you have never been forbidden to do. And as he is a priest of course he knows a great deal more than we do."

I dared not promise, and yet I wanted very much to please Greta, so I said, "But it wants a long time to Christmas, nearly three months, and if I were to promise, something might happen that would prevent me from keeping my word."

"Well, I will not ask you to promise anything now; I have said enough to make you want to see and hear for yourself, and my father says it is a good rule for anglers to let a fish have a little play after it has swallowed the bait. But come, we must hurry now, or I shall be late for tea; don't tell any one what I have been saying," was Greta's reply.





## CHAPTER VII.

JOHN HUSS.

**I**T was not often that our loved friend and pastor, Felix Gosmer, was able to spend an evening at our fireside. He was always a welcome visitor, and I think we children enjoyed his visits as much as our parents, though of course in a different way. His life had been a strange one, and we loved to listen to his stories of hair-breadth escapes and adventures. Not that he cared to talk much about himself, though he had much to say of the good Master he served.

My father seemed to understand him

and would sometimes draw him out to speak of the cruel way in which French Protestants were treated in the stormy years that followed the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes ; for though he was a Bohemian by birth, an outbreak of persecution had driven him from his native land. A price had been set upon his head, and he was forced to escape for his life. He crossed the frontier in the disguise of a peasant, and reached France in safety, where he remained for some years. He was seldom able to speak to large numbers, but the words of faith and hope he spoke to the timid believers who dwelt among the valleys of the French Alps seemed to give them new hope and courage ; and sometimes under cover of darkness a few would leave their scattered homes, and taking the most winding and lonely ways through the forest reach a small clearing, and then the voice of prayer and the song of praise would be heard, and sometimes the little company would remember the

Lord's death in the simple way so dear to His heart. Each one present knew it might be for the last time, for if the king's soldiers came upon them their pastor would be hurried away to a violent and cruel death, the men sent to work in chains in the galleys, the women sentenced to lifelong imprisonment, while the children, torn from their parents, would be given into the care of monks and nuns, who would bring them up as Roman Catholics.

Pastor Gosmer was not really an old man, though I believe we children thought him so. Years of hardship and suffering had bowed his frame and silvered his hair. He had toiled in the galleys, chained to thieves and murderers; he had lain for months in a dark, dirty dungeon, without proper food or air; and though he never spoke of it, father had, he told us, good reason to believe that he had been put to the torture.

He had suffered so much in Bohemia

that, having once left the country, he never would have returned to it had it not been for the constraint of a great love—"the love of Christ." He knew that not only in our village, but in the surrounding district, there were quite a number of persons who did not attend mass or own the authority of the Pope; but with very few exceptions they were weak, and having hardly any Bibles knew but little of the scriptures—they were as sheep having no shepherd. Among these he lived and laboured, known and loved by all. I loved to look at him, his worn face had such a calm, peaceful expression, and his smile had a rare sweetness in it.

#### ONE OF GOSMER'S STORIES.

It was a wild stormy winter's night; snow had been falling for several hours, and in some places lay in deep drifts. My father had only just returned wet and weary from a long day's work, for at that time of year his hands were always more

than full with sick cases. Mother was, with my help, busy preparing supper, when a gentle knock was heard at our door. It was repeated three times, though so low that if any one had been passing at the time it would hardly have been noticed. But we knew the signal quite well; one who shared our faith stood outside, and though we wondered who on such a night it could be, father hastened to open the door.

A few words were spoken almost in a whisper, and then we knew from his exclamation of glad surprise that Felix Gosmer was to be our guest. Father brought him to the fire, and helped him to take off his frozen and snow-laden mantle while he explained that having been to a village at about ten miles distance he had visited several of our brethren, but overtaken and almost blinded by the storm he had, in crossing the forest, taken a wrong turning, and found himself on the side of the wood little more than a mile from our house.

We all gave him a warm welcome, and father begged him to remain all night. He seemed to hesitate about accepting the invitation, and when father said, "Well as you know the forest, there is no moon to-night, and what with the darkness and the snow-drifts, I am not sure that you would find your way," his reply was, "It would not be the first time I have slept on the snow, though I know in doing so I am exposed to some risk; it is far better that I should face danger for myself, but I am unwilling to expose my friends to it. To give a night's lodging or even supply a pastor with food is an offence in the eyes of the law that must be punished with heavy fines, and in some cases a long term of imprisonment."

"There is little, if any, real danger to-night," said my father. "The soldiers who are supposed to hunt for heretics seldom visit our village, and even if they were here, I know them well enough to be sure that they would rather play cards and



drink at the village inn than trouble us on such a night as this."

"If that is so, I shall greatly enjoy the society of my friends and the cheerful blaze of your fire," was the reply ; and in a few minutes we were all seated round the table, on which my mother had just placed a large bowl filled with steaming, savoury soup.

When the meal was ended, and mother and I were busy with our sewing, father asked our guest to tell us the story of John Huss, "for," he added, "though I do not care to be called by his name, I love and honour his memory, and I wish Christine and Casper to do the same, but if they do not know they cannot love."

For a few moments Pastor Gosmer was silent ; indeed, we began to think he had not heard, for he sat gazing into the fire with a strange, far-away look on his face. At last Casper crept up to him, and without speaking laid his hand gently on his arm ; the touch seemed to recall him, and

in as nearly as I can remember his words I will re-tell the story of John Huss.

“THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE.”

It was in the year 1415 when the beautiful city of Constance was full to overflowing with visitors. A great council was being held, attended by nobles, knights, bishops and priests from every country of Europe. Its sittings had begun in 1414, but so many important matters claimed the attention of those who composed it, that it did not break up till the following year. Just at that time there was no Pope of Rome, but though every one knew that there could be only one pope at a time, three men claimed the vacant chair, and each had his friends and supporters.

There is no need to go into their public or private lives, perhaps the one who had the largest following was one who claimed to be chosen under the title of Pope John XIII. He was not a man to be loved or trusted, and the nobles of Bohemia

strongly opposed his election. But my story has not much to do with the rival popes, for just at that time there were many in Constance who thought far more of a prisoner who lay in one of its dungeons than of all the gay crowds who, day after day, assembled in its palaces and churches. They would not only have spent their gold freely, but given their lives for him, but they could do nothing either for his comfort or his release.

Some years before the time of my story John Huss had entered the University of Prague as a poor scholar. He was the son of a widow, and as he had no friends to support him while he went on with his studies he used to sing in the church choir, thinking himself well paid if a bowl of porridge with a crust of black rye bread by way of a spoon, was given him when the service was over. But poverty and hardship did not turn him from his purpose to get an education. Being naturally quick and clever he made good progress

with his studies, and had he wished it might have become a famous lawyer ; but there were needs in his soul that he felt worldly honours could not satisfy. He saw himself to be a lost sinner, and though he had no opportunities of hearing the gospel he was led through days and nights of deep soul exercise into saving faith in the finished work of Christ.

To live among monks, and be himself one was, he thought, the only way in which a man who really wished to serve God could do so, so he took the vows. His preaching was attended by crowds, it was different from any they had ever listened to. He spoke to them of a great and holy God who loved sinners, and had given His own Son to be a Saviour. He made many friends, but also bitter and powerful enemies, for he told the nobles that it was wrong to oppress and illtreat the poor people as many of them were in the habit of doing ; and he was not afraid to speak to the monks about the idle and often

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worse than useless lives many of them were leading. He opposed the election of Pope John, saying that a man who claimed to be the successor of the Apostle Peter ought to be a follower of Peter's Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, which he felt sure that the would-be Pope was not.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### MORE ABOUT THE COUNCIL.

**B**UT the idle, often worse than useless lives of many of the priests and monks were not the only evils against which John Huss believed God was calling him to lift up his voice. He loved his Bible, and the words of the Lord Jesus when, on the night of His betrayal with "his own" gathered around Himself, He said, as He took the cup and gave thanks, "Drink ye all of it" (Matt. xxvi. 27), had made a deep impression upon him. For quite a long time the teaching of Rome had been that only the priests

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should drink of the cup. The more Huss thought and prayed about it, the more clearly he saw that the priests were wrong, and in his sermons began to tell the people that ALL who really trusted for salvation in the finished work of Christ ought to be allowed to remember His death by doing what would give joy to His heart.

Many listened to and believed the words of the man who had, they felt, been taught of God the truth he pressed upon them, and some wished to obey their Lord and Saviour. He made many friends among the nobles of Bohemia, and alike in the baron's hall and the peasant's hut his strong, fearless words were repeated and talked over. But though the preacher had warm and devoted friends, he had also bitter enemies, who hated the light that exposed their deeds of darkness, and they made up their minds, if possible, to put a stop to his preaching. They called him a heretic, brought false charges against him, and at last he was required to appear

before the Council, still holding its sittings at Constance, and give an account of his views and his teaching.

He went, the emperor having given him "a safe conduct," or written promise that no harm should happen to him during his stay in the city ; his word, however, was quickly broken, and instead of being allowed, like other priests, to be present at the meetings of the council, Huss was thrown into a dark and cheerless dungeon. For some time his friends did not know where he was, and during the first weeks of his imprisonment he must often have suffered greatly from the want of fresh air and proper food.

But his faith in God did not fail, nor his service cease. If he could not speak as he had been used to do to large numbers of his countrymen and women, he could and did tell the good news to his jailers. They soon learnt to love their prisoner, so unlike any who had ever been committed to their keeping, and more than one was



won for Christ through his teaching. Though there was but little light in his prison, he made good use of all he could get, and spent much of his time in writing. Many of his letters are still preserved, and in more than one he speaks of the many small services rendered to him by the soldiers whose duty it was to guard him and prevent his escape, especially one named Robert; and tell how, fearing that they might forget what they had heard from him, he had copied for the use of those who were able to read several portions of scripture, to which he had added some very simple explanations.

Days grew into weeks, and weeks into months, and Huss still remained a prisoner, though for a time he was deprived of the custody of his kind and friendly guards.

On one occasion the governor of the prison in which Huss was at the time confined, being called away, carried the key to the emperor, but other things filled the mind and occupied the attention of the

careless and ease-loving sovereign ; he had not a thought to spare for the captive in his dungeon, and Huss was left for many hours without food or water.

At last a day came when he was brought before the council to hear the charges against him.

THE EMPEROR WAS TO BE PRESENT, for whom a throne had been placed. He was surrounded by princes and nobles, but he looked anxious and unhappy, and when the prisoner, under a strong guard of soldiers, was brought in, those who were near enough to observe could not help seeing how the emperor blushed, and even trembled, in the presence of the man with whom he had so cruelly broken faith.

Quite a number of the prisoner's friends were there as well, among them some who had travelled all the way from Bohemia to be present at the trial, feeling sure that if Huss was allowed a fair hearing he would be able to clear himself from the

charges brought against him by his enemies, and be at once released from prison.

What must have been their surprise and disappointment when they found that each time he tried to answer a question, or say that he held and had taught nothing contrary to the teaching of scripture, his voice could not be heard, as it was completely drowned by the loud talking or angry shouts of those who did not wish to hear what he had to say. One who loved Huss stood so near to the chief clerk that he was able to look over his shoulder as he unfolded a paper and read to his horror that the prisoner was to be given up to the will of his enemies, and though he had not even been tried was condemned to be BURNED ALIVE.

After a long and weary time, during which Huss was not once suffered to speak for himself, the emperor rose from his gilded seat and the assembly broke up. Huss, after being ordered to appear on the following day, was again taken to prison.

The treatment Huss had received on the first day of his so-called trial was, with some additions, repeated on the second.

THE DEATH-SENTENCE WAS READ,

and he was told to mount a small platform that had been put up during the previous night ; this done, the clothes he wore to shew that he was a priest were, one by one, with words of scorn and mockery, taken from him. He looked sad and had aged greatly during the months of his imprisonment, but was calm, and did not attempt to speak. When all was over, he was again led back to prison.

During the short time that passed between the sentence and the day fixed for carrying it out, his friends, among whom were some of the richest and most powerful nobles of Bohemia, spared neither trouble nor money to obtain justice for the condemned man, but all their efforts proved in vain. Some even talked of

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taking him by force from the soldiers who were to lead him to the place of burning, but in some way the prisoner in his cell heard of their intention, and wrote, begging them not to take up arms, but be content that he should suffer the will of God.

Large sums of money were offered to those who were thought likely to have influence with the monarch, to induce him to order another trial, in which Huss might have a fair hearing ; but though the gifts were generally accepted, nothing was done. Many of the priests, who were among his most bitter enemies, and of whom the emperor seemed greatly afraid, did all in their power to hurry on the day of his death.

It came at last. Great crowds lined the streets, all anxious to get a glimpse of the prisoner as, surrounded by a strong guard of soldiers, he passed on his way to the place of burning. Those who saw him can never forget his calm and even cheerful bearing. He was not allowed to address

the people, though many thought he would gladly have done so, but was able to say a few words of affectionate farewell to the guards who had been his keepers. He thanked them for the kindness he had received from them, and begged them not to forget what they had learnt from him, for he had taught nothing contrary to the word of God, either to them or others.

The faggots were already piled, and as they bound him to the stake his calmness never for a moment gave way. His lips moved as if in silent prayer, and now and then parted with a smile ; his eyes had a far-away look in them, as if he beheld that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

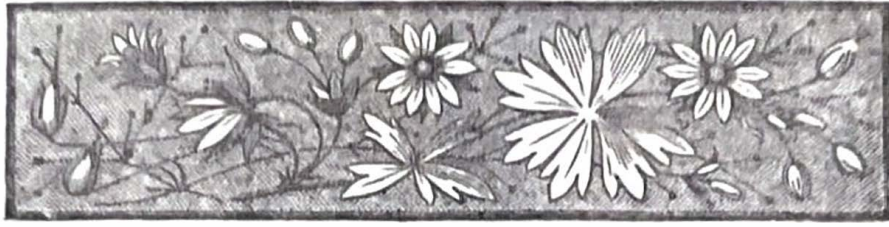
He died, as only a Christian and a truly brave man can die, but his death was used by God in bringing many out of the darkness of Rome into the light of the glorious gospel. They call us Hussites, but we are Christians, who love our Bibles, and cannot, dare not, return to the darkness

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and bondage from which we have been delivered. We may be called upon to suffer, or even to die for our faith, but we know it is for the love of Christ we bear the scorn and reproach, the hunger and the thirst, and "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." (2 Tim. ii. 12.)

Our pastor was silent, and for a time no one spoke. I was almost ready to cry, as I remembered my own want of faith and courage to do what I knew to be right. Oh! how I longed to be brave and true as Huss had been, but Greta would be so angry, and I did not want to offend my friend. Soon after Christmas she would return to Prague, and then it would be so much easier. I had yet to learn that "the fear of man bringeth a snare."





## CHAPTER IX.

### THE NET SPREAD.

**W**E were as a household early risers ; but when I went downstairs on the morning following the visit of our loved friend and pastor, I found that he, with my father, having breakfasted long before daylight, had already left the house. My mother was busy with household cares, and I went as usual to feed the poultry. It was nothing unusual for my father when a heavy day's work lay before him to leave home at an early hour, and in his absence my mother always read and prayed with us.



How well do I remember our reading that morning! We read verse by verse the eighth chapter of the Gospel by Mark, and when we came to the last verse, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." I can never forget how earnestly and tenderly mother begged us not to be ashamed of confessing the Lord Jesus as our own trusted Saviour. She knew, she said, that the warm friendship that had grown up between Greta and myself might have placed me in circumstances of temptation to deny the Lord. Madame Johns had, she continued, promised her that if we were allowed to visit "Verney" our faith should not be interfered with, but she could not help seeing that Greta had acquired an influence over me of which she could not approve.

I felt thoroughly miserable. I longed

to tell mother everything, but pride held me back ; she had trusted me, and I was not willing to confess myself unworthy of her confidence. How I wished Greta had not asked me to go to the Roman Catholic church on Christmas morning. I would tell her I could not, would not go. Yes, I would be as brave and true as John Huss had been.

My good resolutions seemed to give me hope and courage. Alas! how little I knew my own utter want of strength to keep them. It was baking day, and for some hours mother and I were very busy ; I always enjoyed seeing how deftly she moulded the dough into various shapes, and the house was fragrant with the pleasant smell of newly-baked bread. It was quite late in the afternoon before I had an opportunity of going to seek my friend. I had quite made up my mind to tell her I would not enter her church on Christmas-day, and began to fancy I should be doing something quite brave and praiseworthy.

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When it was over I would tell my parents, and how pleased and proud of me they would be.

With my mind filled with such foolish thoughts I crossed the low wall, but on going to the room where at that hour Greta and her mother were often busy with their embroidery I found it empty. The large open grate was fireless, and it did not appear to have been used during the day. I went in search of Julie, and learnt from her that madame and Greta had gone to Prague at an early hour. A novice was to take the veil in the convent where Lucille was a boarder, and they had received an invitation to be present at the ceremony. They would spend the night at the house of a relation, and as madame wanted to do some shopping might not return for a day or two. I felt surprised and almost hurt that Greta had not left any message for me, but Julie told me that they had only had a few hours' notice ; she had had to prepare for

their journey in great haste ; her young lady had, she thought, forgotten everything and everybody in the pleasure and excitement of being invited to witness a real profession.

There was nothing left for me but to return home, and it was nearly a week before I saw Greta again, and then she had so much to say to me that I did not seem . able to get a word in. She had greatly enjoyed her visit to Prague, and was loud in her praises of the beauty of the young lady whose profession, or taking the veil, she had just witnessed. She was, Greta said, a fair, gentle girl of nineteen, the only child of one of the richest men in Prague. Her mother had been for several years an invalid, with no hope of cure.

#### MANY YEARS OF CONVENT LIFE

might lay before her. How I wondered if they would be happy ones. Would her parents miss her very much ? She would not be allowed to visit them, and they

could only see her once or twice a year, and even then could only speak to her through a grating.

As several guests were expected to spend the holiday season at "Verney," I did not see much of Greta, who seemed to have grown much older during the time I had known her. She spent much of her time practising on the harp, as her father wished her to be a good musician, and more than once she accompanied her mother on shopping expeditions, often remaining in town two or three days. She had not in any way alluded to her wish that I should be present at the Christmas morning service, and I began to hope that she had forgotten all about it. Her manner when we met seemed less affectionate than it had been, and I sometimes thought that perhaps she was beginning to tire of her village friend.

It only wanted three days to Christmas. Our fire of pine logs burned brightly ; for more than half an hour supper had been

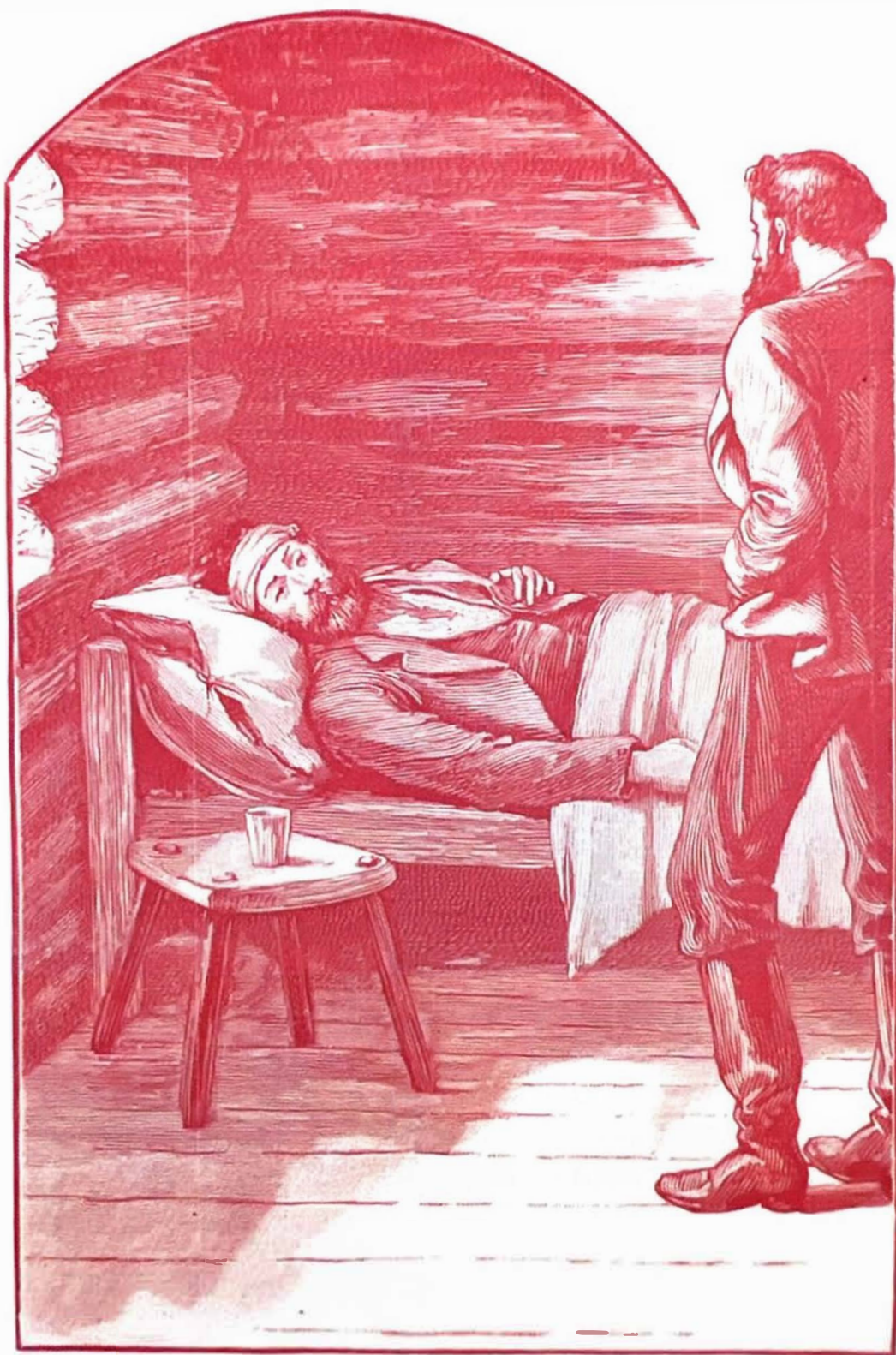
ready. I was busy helping Casper with his sums, while mother tried to occupy herself with her spinning-wheel; yet I noticed how often she rose, opened the door, and stood for a few moments on the threshold, not seeming to feel how cold the wind was. At last she said, "Your father is very late to-night. He was far from well when he left home this morning, indeed, I believe that he took a chill three days ago. All last night he was feverish, and complained of pains in his head and back, but when I tried to persuade him not to go out to-day he only smiled and said he had quite a number of patients who were far worse than he was, and he believed he should have strength given to visit and do what he could to relieve them, but would try to get home in good time, and so relieve me from all anxiety on his account."

She had hardly finished speaking when the low, thrice-repeated knock I have before mentioned was heard at our door.

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I opened it, and the firelight fell full and bright on the face of our loved friend and pastor, Felix Gosmer. Even in that gleam I saw it was a sad, anxious face, and felt he was the bearer of sorrowful tidings. Mother hastened forward, her voice was calm, but every trace of colour seemed to have faded from her lips and cheeks. She said, "You bring tidings of my husband. Do not fear to tell me the worst. I can bear sorrow better than suspense. Has he been arrested on a charge of heresy, or is he sick?"

"He is sick, but I trust not sick unto death," our pastor replied very gently, and then told us that on that afternoon he had met my father by the bedside of a sick man. He appeared very ill, and said he would return to his home at once and not attempt to visit his other patients. They set out together, but after having walked about half a mile my father became too ill to continue his journey, so as they were quite near the home of a very poor brother,



ILLNESS OF DR. DE MERLE. (*Page 88.*)



his friend took him there. It was a poor place, little better than a hut, but it was a shelter, and he had been made welcome to the best accommodation they could offer. Knowing how anxious we should be, Pastor Gosmer undertook to bring the sad tidings and return with the proper medicines.

Mother longed to go to him at once, and said so, but it was already late, the night was wild and stormy, and the roads bad. So when our friend told her that her returning with him would delay his journey quite two hours, perhaps longer, that he intended to watch by my father all night, and that it would not be kind or right to leave us alone, she saw the wisdom of his advice, and consented to wait till the morning.

Nothing could exceed the kindness of Madame Johns on hearing of our trouble. She insisted upon ordering the carriage so that mother could be driven to the cottage where her husband was, and begged that Casper and I might be allowed to

stay at "Verney" until her return. The offer of the carriage was accepted gladly, as it would enable her to take food, bedding and other comforts that might, she felt, be sorely needed ; but I saw the old anxious look in her face as she said, "Your promise, madame, if I leave my children in your care ; can you assure me that it will not be broken ?"

A shade seemed to cross the face of the lady as she replied, "I have always been considered a woman of my word, and as far as lies in my power I intend to remain so." Greta joined in urging my mother to consent, saying she would help me feed the chickens, and on her return she would be pleased to see what good care we had taken of the poultry yard.

And so at last it was arranged, and an hour later mother was with my father, and Casper and I were guests at "Verney."





## CHAPTER X.

LUCILLA.

**T**HOUGH from the time that our new neighbours came to "Verney" I had been a more or less frequent visitor, to sleep under its roof, and for a few days at least to be considered one of the family was a new and, I must own, not quite such a delightful experience as I had pictured to myself.

Madame Johns and Greta were really very kind to me, but madame was almost constantly engaged in superintending preparations for the visitors who were to arrive a day or two later : and Greta spent

the greater part of her time in the church, which, she told me, Father Jacques had, as a great favour, given her leave to help him to decorate. Lucilla had been at home nearly a week, but we saw very little of her as, though not a nun, or even a novice, she considered herself bound by convent rules, and spent the greater part of her time in her own room, seldom joining the family even at meals.

I felt from the first that she looked coldly upon me; afterwards, I remembered, she did not even offer her hand when I was introduced by Greta; she seldom spoke when I was in the room, and if I happened to be near her she would draw her dress away as if she feared some injury from my touch. I was at a loss to find a reason for such strange behaviour on her part, but a fragment of a conversation between Julie and her, which, without intending to do so, I overheard, threw some light on the subject.

Lucilla, attended by the maid, had been

to an early service in the church. I, too, had risen early, for our poultry-yard I knew had, notwithstanding Greta's promise of help, been left mainly in my care. I was busy among the hens and chickens as they passed the hedge that separated our garden from a footpath leading to the main road. They did not observe me, and I heard Lucilla say, "I cannot understand it! It seems so strange that my parents should have allowed Greta to choose as her friend a little heretic, the daughter, too, of one who never loses an opportunity of spreading his dangerous opinions. He will talk of God, of Christ, of faith and salvation, and even quote the words of holy scripture to deceive and mislead the poor, ignorant people he visits. He even told a dying man that he must ask God, not the priest, for the forgiveness of his sins."

"But my young lady," replied Julie, "has great hopes of her conversion." They passed on, and I stood still, heedless

of the rain and sleet of the dull December morning. I felt as if I had been guilty in having listened to what was not intended for my ears ; and yet I did not feel that I could repeat it to any one. Oh, how at that moment I longed for my mother. If she knew all that I could have told her, I felt sure she would not have allowed her children to remain at "Verney." Greta would, I knew, expect me to go to church with her on Christmas morning, but would they really force me there against my will ?

At that moment a servant from the house came to call me to breakfast. Madame Johns, as usual, took that meal in her own room, but when it was over I received a message that she wished to see me there. I went, having, I thought, fully made up my mind to beg her not to compel me to attend church on the day following ; but when I entered, the sight of her grave face, and an open letter in her hand, turned my thoughts into another channel. She looked at me pityingly, and

said, "Christine, I have bad news for you.  
A messenger has just brought me

A LETTER FROM YOUR MOTHER.

She found your father much worse than she expected. He was in a high fever, and as there was no one else to nurse him, she may be obliged to remain for two or three weeks, at least until the crisis of the disease is past. You and Casper will, of course, remain at "Verney" during her absence. Your mother sends her love, and hopes you will be good, obedient children."

I was weeping bitterly. I loved my father dearly, and the thought that he was very ill and might even die and I never see him again seemed, as indeed it was, the sharpest sorrow I had ever known. Madame was silent for a few moments, then said, "Christine, I trust you not to forget your mother desires that you should be obedient. Remember, you are with friends, and though some things may seem

strange to you, everything you are asked to do will be for your good, and for the health of your soul."

I did not understand her words, but I was too unhappy to ask any questions. She then bade me send Julie to her, adding that she was already late, as three hours later she had an important engagement to keep in Prague with a friend who would, in the afternoon, return with her to "Verney."

On leaving madame's room I went in search of Greta. She noticed my tear-stained face, and did her best to comfort me. I found courage to say to her, "I shall not be forced to attend your church to-morrow, shall I?" She was silent for a few moments, but her cheeks glowed crimson, and there was a strange, angry light in her eyes that reminded me of that never-to-be-forgotten day in the woods when I had taken my first step Rome-ward. At last she said sharply, "Who said a word about forcing you to do any-



thing against your will? You have no need to trouble. Your father is sick, your mother left you and Casper in the care of my parents, so for the time being 'Verney' is your home; my father and mother are your father and mother, so all you have to do is just what they wish you. Are you not told, even in your heretic book, to honour your father and mother? so you see you cannot disobey their commands. But I must not stop to talk more now; Lucilla allows me to help her to make wreaths for the church. Oh! it will be a lovely sight to-morrow. You would never forgive yourself for having missed it."

Greta left me as she spoke, feeling very unhappy and perplexed. There was so much truth in what she had said, that I did not know how to answer her. Mother wished us in her absence to obey Madame Johns, and yet I felt sure she would never consent to our attending "high mass," as I knew the service on the following day was called. If madame had been at

home I would have gone to her and begged her not to command me to go ; but she would not return till late, and then guests would be with her, and I should not have the opportunity of saying a single word. Lucilla, I felt, would not help me if she could, and I felt utterly friendless and alone. I was too miserable even to pray.

The day seemed a long and weary one, but night came at last. I had cried a great deal, and feeling thoroughly worn out went to bed early. It was late when I awoke, the household was astir, and Greta came to my room looking very pretty in her dress of soft, white cashmere, with blue sash and bows. Her father had just given her a small but beautifully carved crucifix of Italian workmanship, with which she was delighted after the fashion of a child with a new toy. She was very pleasant and friendly, just her old self. How could I help loving her, I asked myself.

We were quite a large party at break

fast, several visitors having arrived the day before. Madame was much occupied with her guests, and after a "Good morning, Christine," did not speak to or even look at me during the meal. Every one was talking of the service to be held in the church ; or rather, I should have said, of the music, the wax candles and the flowers that were to make it the most attractive that had ever been held in our quiet village.

"Father Andre never attempted anything on so large a scale," I heard a lady who sat near me saying to her neighbour. "No," was the reply ; "I knew him in his younger days. He was a good man and an apt scholar, but," and her voice dropped almost to a whisper, "I have heard it said, but of course there was no truth in it, that during the last years of his life he was tainted with heresy. A hint had even been given to the holy Inquisition, who, with their usual mercy, waited for some proof before giving the order for

his arrest ; indeed, I have even heard a rumour that during the time he was the parish priest here, the village was quite a nest of heretics, who even ventured to hold secret meetings, of which he could not possibly have known, or he would have informed against them."

Madame Johns had, I felt sure, heard as much as I had ; she looked uncomfortable, and tried to turn the attention of her guests into another channel by saying, "Christine and Casper are going to church with us this morning ; it will seem almost like a new world to them." I saw a look of pleasure, almost of triumph, pass across Lucilla's pale but handsome face. I must speak to madame, and beg her not to insist upon our going, but she rose from table, and left the room hastily, and Greta caught me by the arm so as to prevent my following her.





## CHAPTER XI.

### A GREAT SORROW.

**B**REAKFAST over, Greta and I were told to get ready for church. Julie helped us to dress, and more than once I thought she was trying to find or make an opportunity of speaking to me alone, but I think Greta must have seen it to, for she would not leave me even for a moment. It is not my intention to give an account of the service that followed. I knew it was called "high mass"; the music was grand and solemn, the air was heavy with incense, and hot-

house flowers met my gaze everywhere ; but the prayers and singing were in Latin, a language of which I did not understand a single word. I was thoroughly miserable. Mother wished me during my stay at "Verney" to be obedient, but I felt that both my parents would not only have strongly disapproved of, but positively forbidden me to attend such a service.

Father Jacques joined us at dinner, and was so kind and pleasant I could not help liking him. Both he and Lucilla took special notice of me, and the rest of the day was spent in music, dancing and playing forfeits. It was late when we went to bed. As Greta kissed me "good-night," she whispered, "You are very nearly one of us now." I wondered what she could mean, but the day had been a tiring one, and I was soon asleep.

Can I ever forget the

NEW YEAR'S DAY THAT FOLLOWED ?

My father had passed the crisis of the fever, and though very weak, we all hoped that with the blessing of God upon the means used, and the devoted nursing of my mother, he would recover. But the poor little cottage in which he lay was badly built, and the wind that howled around found its way in through every chink and cranny, while snow and rain came in through bad places in the thatch, and in spite of all mother's care he took a chill and died just as the old year was passing away. He sank so rapidly that we had not been sent for, but mother told us he was calm and peaceful, and begged her never to allow the hope of securing any worldly advantage for us induce her to give us up to those who would seek to turn us away from the true faith.

It was my first great sorrow. I had loved my father dearly, and I wept long and bitterly. Nothing could exceed the kindness of madame, and Greta seemed touched and said I should always be her

dear friend. The funeral took place at night. As the law would not allow any but Romanists to be buried in the churchyard, a grave had been dug in the wood at a short distance from the place where he died, to which he was carried by those who had loved and honoured him.

We were once more in our own little home, though it seemed very empty and desolate, we missed father so much. It would not be our home much longer, as we had, so mother said, no means of support; the doctor who would shortly take my father's practice would also require our house. The future looked very dark and uncertain. Hardly a day passed without some kindness being shewn to us by our neighbours at "Verney." Whenever they received a hamper from Prague, a share of its contents was sent to us; or Greta would run in, saying she must carry me off as a little change would do me good; but I did not go more than once or twice, as I thought that mother seemed to feel the



loss of my father most keenly when I was away from her.

One afternoon madame called, as she said in a few days they would be leaving for their town house, and she must have one quiet talk with mother. She had a proposal to make ; it was that I should be allowed to return with them as the friend and companion of Greta who, on their return, would not only be a day-pupil in a convent school, but have the advantage of masters for painting and music. I was to share her lessons, and in every way be treated as if I had really been her sister. She even offered to take Casper till such time as arrangements for placing him in a school could be made. Mother would then, she urged, be free from all care on our account, and as the new doctor, who was a widower, would require a housekeeper, she could remain in that capacity.

Much to the surprise of madame, mother declined the seemingly tempting offer

though she thanked madame for her intended kindness. She was willing to work for her children, but not to part with them. To do so would not only be against her own conscience, but a betrayal of the trust reposed in her by her dying husband. After trying, but in vain, to persuade mother to change her mind, she asked if we might go for a few weeks, at least a month. A peep at town life would do me good, I was looking too thin and pale. I had heard so much of the wonders and beauties of the great city from Greta, that I thought a visit would be delightful, but mother stood firm.

When at last madame rose to go, she was, we could see, not only disappointed, but grieved; for, as she bade mother "good-bye" she said, and her voice was low and trembling, "I would so gladly have proved myself your friend, but now it is beyond my power to help you. Whatever follows your refusal, try and think as kindly as you can of Eloise Johns." In less

than a week the family would return to Prague.

It was the last night of their stay at "Verney." On the morrow the house would be empty once more. Greta had repeated her promise of a lifelong friendship, we had exchanged farewells, and we were about to retire for the night, when a low knock was heard at our door ; mother opened it, and we saw that our visitor was Julie, though she was so closely veiled that for a few moments we did not know her.

In low, hurried whispers she addressed a few words to my mother ; I did not at the time fully understand what she said, but from what I then heard, and what mother afterwards told me, I found that the law of Bohemia, which was in many respects like that of France, gave the priests power to take any child above the age of seven who had ONCE been present in a Roman Catholic Church away from its home and parents, and give it into the

care of monks and nuns. This power Father Jacques intended to use to its full extent in case madame failed in getting my mother to give us into her care. In that case I should have been educated with my friend in a convent school, but as that had fallen through, Julie believed I was to be sent to a convent at some distance. The day following the removal of our friends to Prague was the one fixed for carrying out his purpose, and at some risk to herself Julie had dared to give us warning.





ESCAPE FROM PERSECUTION. (*Page 109.*)



## CHAPTER XII.

### NEW SCENES.

**I**T was still dark when I awoke on the following morning, but mother was already moving, and indeed was up and dressed. I do not think she had slept at all. She had collected some of our clothes, and a few of our most valued possessions, not the least of which was our treasured but carefully hidden Bible, into three parcels, not too large for us to carry, and as I dressed, mother told me in a few words that before the death of my father Pastor Gosmer had told her that it was very likely that an attempt to

take us from her would be made, and had advised her, should any warning be given, to leave everything we could not carry, and bring us to his hut in the thickest part of the forest. He would then act as our guide to a little company, ten or twelve in number, of our fellow Christians who, having been driven from their own village by persecution, were living in great poverty and hardship on some waste land at a distance of nearly twenty miles from our home, and waiting for an opportunity of leaving their native land, and finding in England or Holland liberty to read the word of God.

In order to avoid notice, it would be necessary, mother said, to start before sunrise ; so after a hasty meal and prayer we set out. The morning though cold was fine ; the snow still lay in drifts, and "ice candles," as we children called them, hung from the leafless boughs of every tree. We had not gone more than a mile or two when the first gleams of day-dawn were

seen in the east, and when the sun had fully risen we forgot for a moment our own cares and sorrows as we stood still to gaze upon the beauty of the scene. A robin perched upon a tree near by chirped cheerily away, and other birds added their notes.

We sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree and ate some bread and meat we had brought with us, nor did we forget to throw a few crumbs to the birds who, rendered tame by hunger, came quite close to us. The keen, fresh air and bright morning seemed to have given us new hope and courage, and we went on our way with weary feet but lighter hearts.

We were all very tired when we reached Gosmer's hut ; it was a poor place which he had built for himself in the very heart of the forest, still it was a shelter, and in the warmth of the welcome we received we forgot that its floor and walls were of mud. He gave us the best he had to offer, some black bread and goat's milk,



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and insisted upon our resting during the day ; for, as he said, he knew the way to the camp where we should find our brethren so well, that day and night were almost alike to him, and by travelling during the night we were more likely to escape observation. We lay down upon his bed of leaves and straw, and he left us, as he wanted to visit the family of a charcoal burner who lived at a distance of about two miles.

We slept for some hours, and as the short January day drew near its close we heard the sound of wheels ; our friend returned telling us that the charcoal burner had willingly lost a day's work that we might continue our journey in his cart. This thoughtful kindness touched us deeply, as we knew that owing to their deep poverty he and his family lived almost entirely upon black bread and roots.

The simple preparations for our journey were soon completed and we all got into the cart. The roads were anything but

good, and our progress was very slow. We did not pass through any villages, as Pastor Gosmer thought that if any one should be about at such an early hour it would not be wise to furnish a clue by which our flight could be traced, as we might be followed and overtaken before it would be possible to get us on board a ship. The sun had again risen when we reached our destination.

At first we thought there must have been some mistake, everything was so strangely still and silent; we looked in vain for some sign or sound of human life. But our guide gave a long, low whistle, and after a few moments two men appeared from a cave, the entrance of which was almost hidden by brushwood; it was, I soon afterwards learnt, used as a sleeping-place by the men of the party. After a few words with our guide they gave us a kind though grave welcome, and led the way over some rough ground to a small hut that had been put up for the

## HOW THEY KEPT THE FAITH IN BOHEMIA.

women and children, of whom there were several.

A few stools, a long, low table, an iron cooking pot and a few common plates, bowls and spoons seemed to be all of worldly goods the little party possessed, yet we did not hear a murmur or complaint. We had not been there long before a boy of about fourteen appeared at the door, holding in his hands a couple of rabbits he had taken in a snare in the wood. The pale faces of the children brightened at the sight, and I gathered from a few words whispered by an elderly woman to her neighbour that they considered it an unusual piece of good fortune that they should be able to provide such a plentiful meal for the new-comers and also for the pastor. One woman, who was, I was told, the mother of the boy who had brought the rabbits, impressed me greatly; she seemed so sad, and sat with bowed head and folded hands; she seldom spoke

and shewed no interest in what was passing around her.

Mother went to her and, taking her hand in hers, spoke kindly to her. At first she did not seem to notice, hardly to hear what she was saying, but after a little while she roused herself, and began to tell her story. It was a very sad one. Her husband, who had been the schoolmaster in a neighbouring town, was arrested on the charge of heresy, and had died in prison; her two elder sons, who had boldly confessed their faith, had been sent to the galleys; and in haste and fear she had fled with her youngest boy, the only one left to her; but sorrow and hardship had told upon her never strong constitution, and she said she knew her time on earth could not be long.

Meanwhile, preparations for dinner had been going busily on. A rough fireplace of stones had been built at a short distance from the hut and over this the iron pot was slung, gipsy fashion; and with the

addition of some dried herbs and a few potatoes, the gift of a farmer, a savoury stew was soon forthcoming.

We slept soundly that night on our beds of dried leaves, and though we had but scanty covering, did not suffer from the cold. The life that for the next three or four months we lived in the lonely, out-of-the-way place was a somewhat strange and silent one. We all learnt at times what it was to suffer from cold and hunger, for though daily visits were paid to the traps and snares set in the woods, it was not easy to take birds and rabbits enough to supply the wants of so large a party; and we were often touched by the unselfish kindness with which some one would insist upon his or her share of the scanty meal being eaten by some sickly child or pale-faced woman.

My mother seemed almost to forget her own sorrows in seeking to help and comfort others. She nursed the sick and taught the children. Just as the long,

cold winter began to give place to the soft, fresh beauty of the spring, we had another visit from Pastor Gosmer, who told us that he had been able to arrange passages for five of our number—mother, Casper, myself, the youth who brought the rabbits on the first day of our arrival at the camp, and his mother—on board a trading vessel about to sail for an English port. No time was to be lost, as news had reached him that Father Jacques, who was very angry at our flight, had been searching for us everywhere, and if our hiding-place was discovered we might still be taken from mother. There would be some difficulties in getting us to the coast, but once out at sea we should, he hoped, be beyond the reach of danger.

That night we took leave of those to whose kindness we should always remember we owed so much. I cannot give any detailed account of our journey, as we usually travelled by night, and, hiding ourselves in the woods or fields, rested during

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the day. It was a glad and thankful moment when we found ourselves on board the ship, which we reached only an hour before the time fixed for her to sail. We soon got out to sea, and as we strained our eyes to catch a last glimpse of our native land, we felt that we could never forget

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