To Contents

Pope John.

The Woman Who Was Pope

A BIOGRAPHY OF POPE JOAN, 853-855 A.D.

By CLEMENT WOOD

The Mother of Christ, did she not conceive and bring forth without ceasing to be a virgin? .... If, then, the Creator of all things did not disdain to obey a woman, why should his ministers desire to be prouder than the all-powerful God, and refuse to bend their foreheads before a woman pope?

LOUIS MARIE DE CORMENIN, in *A Complete History of the Popes of Rome.* Philadelphia, 1851, vol. 1, p. 231.

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TO GLORIA GODDARD

She must have come like a newborn son
  To those who knew her smile;
She must have made life lilt and run
Like Hippocrene on Helicon,
For those on whom her beauty shone
  In her far ancient while.

But you are all as much as she
  To all who know your heart,
And hold it high and holily,
As you have made it shine for me
  With sure and radiant art.

We have bowed sorrowfully, we two,
  At long forgetfulness
Of one who, sinewed and willed as you,
Has been veiled from the world's view,
And robbed of all the mere due
  Of her high excellencies.

And so, lit by your golden smile,
  I pen this life of her—
As tribute, in my so brief while,
To you, whose splendor would assoil
  The faultiest chronicler.

Together, then, we make her shine
  Where she so earns to be:
The virtues yours, the faults all mine,
 Till she, as you, is seen a shrine—
O woman humanly divine,
  Who open heaven for me.

CONTENTS

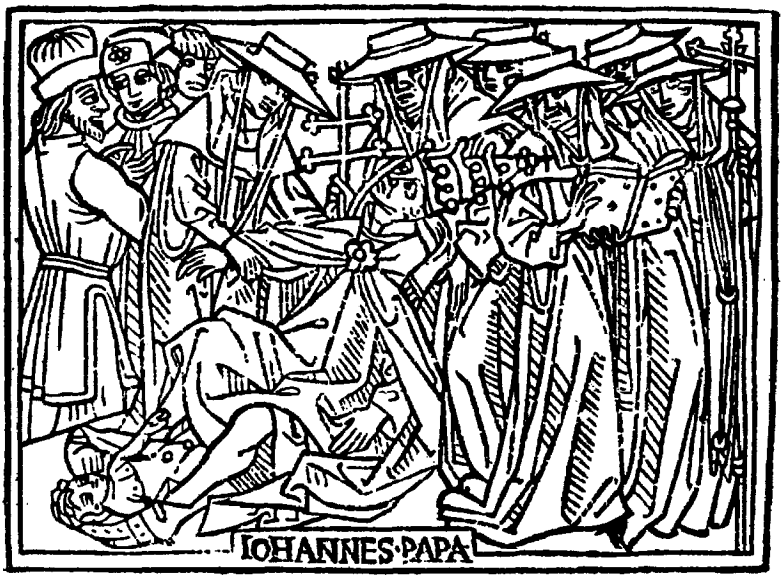
Part I. Pope Joan in History

Part II. The Life of Pope Joan

APPENDIX

PART ONE

POPE JOAN IN HISTORY



2. — *La Papesse Jeanne, d'après Boccace imprimé à Ulm en 1473.*

PART I

Pope Joan in History

i

A Woman as Pope

THIS BOOK IS DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS. The first part establishes that Pope Joan was a definite historical figure, whose existence is as definitely established as that of any of her contemporaries. The second part contains the life of the woman pope.

A devout Roman Catholic historian, Martin of Troppau—his other name is Martinus Polonus, or Martin the Pole—concluded, just about the time of his death in 1278, his monumental *Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum,* or history of the popes and emperors. Born in Troppau, in Silesia, as a youth he entered the order

of St. Dominic, at Prague, and afterwards proceeded to Rome. Here Guy Fucoldi, named from his appearance the Fat—who had been a Languedocian warrior and lawyer, before he turned priest—presided as pope, under the name of Clement the Fourth. This Clement soon named Martin his papal chaplain and penitentiary, or confessor; and it was at the pope's request that the pontifical chaplain commenced his great history.

As Martin wrote his history, he saw the tangled intrigues of the papal court, out of which Charles of Anjou harried to his death young Conradin, king of Jerusalem and Sicily, the last of the Hohenstaufens; he saw Henry of Castile shut up in an iron cage like a wild beast, and led through Sicily, to frighten the Italian lords; he saw his master, the pope, die soon after. He wrote on, through the three years' vacancy in the holy see, caused by a deadlock between intriguing cardinals. He saw five more popes elevated in six years—tenth Gregory, fifth Innocent, fifth Adrian, twenty-first John, and third Nicholas. He finished his book, and was appointed by the pope to be archbishop of Gnesen; but he died, while proceeding to Poland to take up his new duties.

In this great history he wrote, when he ended with the pontificate of Leo the Fourth, who ruled from 847 to 853 A. D., the following:

> After the aforesaid Leo, John, an Englishman by descent, who came from Mainz, held the see two years, five months, and four days. And the pontificate was vacant one month. He died at Rome. He, it is asserted, was a woman. And

> having been in youth taken by her lover to Athens in man's clothes, she made such progress in various sciences that there was nobody equal to her. So that afterwards lecturing on the Trivium, at Rome, she had great masters for her disciples and hearers. And for as much as she was in great esteem in the city, both for her life and her learning, she was unanimously elected pope.
>
> But while pope she became pregnant by the person with whom she was intimate. But not knowing the time of her delivery, while going from St. Peter's to the Lateran, being taken in labour, she brought forth a child between the Coliseum and St. Clement's church. And afterwards dying she was, it was said, buried in that place. And because the Lord Pope always turns aside from that way, there are some who are fully persuaded that it is done in detestation of the fact. Nor is she put in the catalogue of the Popes, as well on account of her female sex, as on account of the foul nature of the transaction.

After all, all throughout Christendom knew that this Martin of Troppau had lived in the curia, as papal chaplain and confessor; all learned of his tragic death, on his way to assume an archbishopric, by papal appointment. For these reasons, as well as for its interest and painstaking research, the book was widely read, and more widely copied. No chronicle was used so often, during the next three centuries, as a source book, as this papal and imperial history of Martin of Troppau.

One or more manuscript copies of his *Chronicon* end the account differently. According to these, after her confinement Pope Joan was immediately deposed, and did penance for many years. Her son, this account elaborates, became bishop of Ostia—for, in those days, it was by no means unusual for the bastard of a cleric or pope to rise high in the church—and, on his mother's death, had her buried at Ostia; where "to this day" (to quote the Roman Catholic historian who wrote the account within the last twenty years) "her remains continue to work miracles."

Ranulph Higdon or Higden, an English Benedictine chronicler from the monastery of Werberg in Chester, whose life reached from the end of the thirteenth century to about 1363, included the account of Joan's tenure of the papacy in his celebrated *Polychronicon* (whose full title is *Ranulphis Castrensis, cognomine Higdon, Polychronicon (sive Historia Polycratica) ab initio mundi usque ad mortem regis Edwardi III. in septem libros dispositum*). In this universal history from the beginning of the world to the death of Edward III, in 1377, Brother Higdon gives credit to Martin of Troppau for many things, including his account of Pope Joan. The author, after all, died in 1363, and so another hand ended the book. But Higdon himself wrote the account of Joan. And this book was the standard history in use during the 15th century, and more than a hundred manuscript copies of it are known to exist.

Other historians added, to the story, that a marble statue of the woman pope was erected on the narrow

street between the Coliseum and St. Clement's church, at the point where she died—a statute showing her with her young baby in arms. An English writer, Adam of Usk, who had visited Rome, and who wrote within forty years of Higdon, attested in his chronicle that he had himself seen the statue of the woman pope. But this author called her Agnes, and not Johanna or Joanna; and other authors named her Gilberte, Geberte, Jutta, and by several more names, before her elevation to the papacy: all agreeing that she was hailed as John VIII, once she was pope.

The pope second before Joan, Sergius II, had borne, before his election to the papacy, only one name, which he had given himself: the name of *Os Porci,* or the Hog's Snout. He chose this out of some strange mood of Christian humility; but, after his election in 844 to the throne of St. Peter's, he changed his name to Sergius. The authorities attribute to this change the later custom of the popes of always altering their names, on their elevation to the papacy—a custom which next appears in the election of Gallesien Falisque, who called himself Pope Martin II in 882; and the alteration of names on accession does not appear certainly again during the next seventy-two years, in which twenty-two popes ruled,—or until the selection of the youth who took the name of John XII, himself the son of the pope-comforter Marozia by another of her sons, and himself also the lover of his mother; as has been her former son who had ruled as pope under the name of John XI. Before many years had passed, it had become the universal custom of popes, upon their accession, to take new names. When later historians

encountered the account of John's tenure of the papacy, they assumed naturally that she must have had a different name from John, Joan, Joanna, or Johanna and so they did their best to provide such a different name for her, to fit the custom of their own centuries, rather than the custom of her time, of which they were ignorant. But in the time of Jope Joan, a pope did not ordinarily alter his name on accession to St. Peter's throne; so we may safely conclude that Pope John VIII's name before election and consecration was John Anglicus, or English John, as the old accounts have it; and that, as a girl, she was called Joan, Joanna, or Johanna.

Other items were gradually added to the story. Thus Almeric D'Anger, who in 1362 dedicated to Urban V his *Nomenclature Chronologique des Eveques de Rome,* wrote—we use Richard Ince's translation—

> At the commencement she behaved honestly, but afterwards, having become corpulent from the abuse of good living, she led a dissolute life, and finished by becoming a mother, the victim of one of her valets.

This was within ninety years of the time that Martin of Troppau had praised Joan for her "great esteem in the city, both for her life and her learning." He was by that much closer to the event that Almeric D'Anger, and should have known more of the truth.

Ten year's after Martin's death, Count Menard of Tyrol had publicly proclaimed,

> The operations of the priests are to get bastards, preside over orgies, and invent new modes of extorting money from the people.

Boniface the Eighth had come, and had imprisoned and starved to death his pious predecessor, Celestin V, who had been tricked into abdicating. Benedict XI had been poisoned, for daring to seek to reform the morals of the cardinals; Clement V had died, and his mistresses and minions had divided all of his possessions, after which there was a two years' vacancy in the holy see. And John XXII had published his list of cash absolutions for all crimes of laymen or clerics, including fornication, incest, adultery, deflowering a virgin, wife-murder, child-murder, murder of mother, father or any relative, and violation of Lent and other fast days. Joanna of Naples had been successfully debauched, by order of Clement VI. It is possible that these things had corrupted the judgment of Almeric D'Anger, and that their influence on him accounts for his foul dispraise of the learned woman pope.

Petrarch (1304-1374), the great Italian poet and first true reviver of learning in medieval Europe, spent his last years in Venice, writing the lives of the emperors and popes. He included Pope Joan naturally among these. His friend Boccaccio (1313-1375), whose *Decameron* is still a sourcebook for countless writers, in his study of famous women, *De Claris Mulieribus*, selected Joan as one to biographize and praise. In England, John Lydgate (from about 1370 to about 1451), English poet and admirer and friend of Chaucer, included the story of Joan in his *Falls of Princes,* dating from 1430. Lydgate, who had been a Benedictine monk at Bury St. Edmunds, retained his monastic connection, while devoting himself to literature. He tells how, after the death—

Of the Pope which called was Leon
The said woman by eleccion
Installed was, no wight supposing than
By no token but that she was a man.
The boke of sortes after that anon,
Of aventure turned upso down,
She was named and called Pope John,
Of whose naturall disposicion
Fel by processe into temptacion.
Quick with child the houre came on her than,
She was delivered at St. John Lateran.

To word this in modern English: After the death of Pope Leo, the said woman (Joan) was installed by election as pope, no one supposing then, by anything in her appearance or conduct, that she was anything but a man. The book "of sortes" (chance passages from an author's work, selected by lot, as the superstitious often use the Bible) of adventurous happenings turned thus upside down or topsy-turvy, she was named Pope John. By her natural disposition she fell into a temptation; and, quick with child, she was delivered in her hour at St. John the Lateran's.

Another element was added to the story, in the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae,* probably a twelfth century production; though it is not established that the account in this book appeared in the first copy of it. According to this, when Pope Joan was given the choice, in a vision, of disgrace on earth or eternal punishment in hell, she chose the former, and died at her confinement in the open street. Then there was the *Flores Temporum,* by Martinus Minorita, Herrmannus Januensis, and Herr-

mannus Gigas, a chronicle extending down to 1290, which contains the full story, perhaps based on the account of Martin of Troppau.

It is unnecessary to multiply evidences from these centuries. Pope Joan was universally regarded as a historical personage, whose existence no one ever doubted. Early in the 15th century, when marble busts of all the popes were placed in the cathedral of Siena, Pope Joan had her place among the rest.

Yet we must give one more picture of the period, to show how universal was the acceptance of the historical existence of Pope Joan among all the Roman Catholics of the 15th century. This concerned the references made to her at the celebrated Council of Constance, in 1413.

This was the hour when Benedict XIII ruled as pope in Avignon, in southern France; when deposed Gregory XII still claimed to be pope in Rome; and when Alexander V, Gregory's successor, had been poisoned at the instigation of Cardinal Balthasar Cossa, who then, armed in mail, and sword at side, bulldozed the cardinals, vetoing every candidate they named: and, in the end, covered himself with the pontifical mantle, as the only one worthy to wear it, ruling thereafter as John XXIII. He had been born of noble Neapolitan parents; had escaped from the monastery in which his parents placed him, and become a pirate; deciding to become a priest, he had bought from Boniface IX the archdeaconate of Bologna; had become Collector General of the holy see, and had forced even remote clerics to buy from him indulgences, absolutions, relics, and benefices, on threat of otherwise exiling them to remote corners of the world.

He was openly accused, during this time, of forcing virginal young nuns in Rome, by having himself introduced into their cells at night; and of conducting an incestuous liaison with his brother's wife.

Boniface, surfeited with these charges, sent his collector general to subdue revolting Bologna. When this was done, Balthasar Cossa gave free rein to his lusts. When he desired a youth or young girl, it was openly charged that he plunged the parents into the dungeons of the inquisition; and even, in subtle lust, abused the children in the very presence of the parents, while they were in the torment of the inquisitional tortures. In the end, he became pope; and so great was the detestation of his rule, that he had to yield in the end to the demand that he call a council to try his case, which the emperor designated should take place at Constance, in Baden.

John steadily refused to attend the council, receiving the deputies of the council finally in his bedroom, lying indecently exposed. "No, I will not place myself within the jaws of the wolf," he cried, according to the records; "Return to that accursed council, an impure mixture of kings, cobblers, and courtezans; say to them who sent you that I excommunicate them, and will never grant them truce nor repose."

Ince describes the "mixture of kings, cobblers, and courtezans" thus:

> To Constance came all the kings, princes and prelates of Europe; Armidius, Duke of Savoy, a big sceptre in his hand; Adolphus, Count of Cleves, with a sword two feet taller than him-

self; Ernest, Duke of Austria, whose enemies were put to flight by his beard and his eyes; Rudulph, Elector of Saxony, fierce as the white bears he delighted to hunt. There were four patriarchs, twenty-seven ambassadors, fifty goldsmiths, three hundred and fifty barbers, nine hundred cooks, three hundred wine merchants, ninety-five Merry Andrews (that is, buffoons, or clowns), three hundred and twenty dancers, twenty cardinals, forty-nine bishops, two hundred and seventy-two theologians and fifteen hundred and eighteen prostitutes.

The historical accounts of the council differ slightly in the figures; but this gives a generally accurate picture of the motley miscellany who assembled to try the head of Christendom and the true doctrine of the church.

When John XXIII refused to appear, John Gerson, Chancellor of Paris, appointed prosecutor, read, in full audiences, the atrocious charges, all sustained by irrefutable proof. We need not give all of these; enough that they included the poisoning of his papal predecessor; the violation of three hundred nuns of different convents; the incest with his brother's wife; unnatural relations with men; the sexual abuse of a whole family, consisting of mother, son, and three young sisters, the youngest of them twelve years of age; together with a traffic in bishoprics, holy orders, indulgences, taxes, graces, and even excommunications.

The council in the end deposed him, calling him, among other things, "the slave of the flesh, a sink of vices, a man destitute of every virtue, a mirror of infamy,

a devil incarnate, ... ravisher, ... traitor, murderer, sodomite, poisoner, committer of incest, and corrupter of young nuns and monks." And, having thus disposed of the head of Christendom, the council proceeded to try the case of two young protestant reformers, John Huss and Jerome of Prague. Huss was a man of profound learning, as well as of high spiritual integrity. But there was no faintest slur cast on his morals.

He was charged with having denied that the gospels said that Jesus Christ had invented mass; that priests in a state of mortal sin had a right to administer the sacraments; that confession was unnecessary, when a sinner admitted his fault and asked pardon of God, and that those who held the contrary were knaves who wished to pervert young girls or discover family or state secrets; that the wealthy pope lived contrary to the morality of Christ; and other charges against the teachings of Huss, all these teachings being based on his conscientious opposition to the abominations practiced by the Roman Catholic church in that age.

John Huss defended himself with eloquence, logic, and sincerity, convicting his enemies of falsehood and imposture, demonstrating the absurdity of the Catholic tenets he opposed, and ended by declaring that he would rather surrender his head to the executioner, than become the accomplice of popes and their supporters.

They put him through a severe examination on church doctrines and his own writings. He was asked, among other things, whether he had dared write, "Jesus Christ could govern His Church on earth, without a visible chief, by his true disciples, scattered throughout

the universe." Huss replied that he had so written, and asked,

> Was not the Church without a head and without a ruler during the two years and five months Joan occupied the see of Rome?

Yet not one of the—we give the recorded figures—four patriarchs, the twenty-eight cardinals, the thirty metropolitans, the two hundred and six bishops, the eighteen auditors of the sacred palace, the four hundred and forty doctors in theology, the twenty-seven prothonotaries, the two hundred and forty writers of bulls, the one hundred and twenty-three procurators of the pope, the numerous deputies from bishops and universities—not one among these contradicted him on this point. For all knew that it was so; that the church itself taught it; and that it would have been outright lying to have contradicted it. These were the most powerful, as well as the most learned, men in the whole Roman Catholic Church: and not one of them would not have staked his hope of eternal salvation upon the truth of the historical account of Pope Joan.

The friends of Huss begged him to adjure his beliefs, and escape the fire. But he stood firm for the truth, and was condemned to be burned to death. And so was the glory and truth of God vindicated by the Roman Catholic church at the council of Constance.

But Joan had ruled as pope from 853 to 855; and the first writing we have quoted dated from about 1278. Did not the earlier records of the centuries between contain her story, as well? If any had been disposed to question her existence, this must have been one of the

first questions they asked. And we are reminded again of the closing words of the account of Joan as given by Martin of Troppau—words which the all-powerful church of those ages must have armed with teeth of iron:

> Nor is she put in the catalogue of the Popes, as well on account of her female sex, as on account of the foul nature of the transaction.

ii

Smothering the Truth

THE EARLIER RECORDS DO CONTAIN THE story of Pope Joan.

The *Liber Pontificalis,* or *Gesta Pontificum Romanorum* (the book of the popes, or the deeds of the Roman pontiffs), contains the lives of the bishops of Rome from the time of St. Peter to the death of Nicholas I in 867. Whether this is all the work of the Italian monk, Anastasius Bibliothecarius, or Anastasius the librarian, who died in 886; or whether it is a composite work, some of it dating from three centuries before the time of Anastasius, and the balance being the work of the librarian or of others, is unimportant. Many copies of the manuscript of this, and most of the early printed copies, include Pope Joan.

Marianus Scotus, in his universal chronicle or *Chronicon,* a history of the world from its creation down to the year 1082 A. D., relates—

> Joanna, a woman, succeeded Leo IV and reigned two years, five months, and four days.

Marianus was born in 1028 in Ireland, and was named Moelbrigte, or servant of Bridget. He was educated by a certain Tigernach, became a monk, and crossed to the continent in 1056, entering the abbey of St. Martin at Cologne. On May 14, 1059, he transferred to the abbey

of Fulda, where Joan herself had lived as a student. Ten years later, he moved to Mainz, and lived here till his death, in 1082 or 1083. Since he lived in the abbey and city where most accounts agree Joan spent her youth, he had unusual opportunities of ascertaining the facts; and so we find the brief account of her in his immense treatise covering all known human history down to the time of his death.

The *Chronographia,* or universal chronicle, of Sigebert of Gembloux, which covered the period between 381 A. D. and 1111, lists Joan among the popes. Certain copies of this word the account thus:

> Report says that this John was a woman known only to one of her attendants; she became pregnant and was delivered of a little Pope, wherefore some do not number her among the pontiffs.

This is cautious wording, and more than bears out the statement of Martin of Troppau commencing "Nor is she put in the catalogue of the Popes." The author, Sigebert, was a Benedictine in the abbey of Gembloux, who had been born about 1030. After some years of teaching at Metz, he retired to Gembloux, to teach and write until his death on October 5, 1112. He sided with the emperor Henry IV in the latter's contest with Gregory VII, and later wrote also against Paschal II. He is the author of many other historical works, and, for all of his opposition to papal authority, he died a recognized Catholic authority.

Otto of Freising (from about 1114 to 1158), a Cistercian monk, abbot, and bishop, who went with one

mense *Otia Imperialia,* which appeared about 1211, tell the story of Joan almost in the words of Martin of Troppau.

Surely these, and many other chroniclers earlier than Martin of Troppau (1278), fully establish the historical existence of Joan! How can there be any question remaining of her existence, when we consider the unanimous chorus in her favor, commencing from the time of her contemporary Anastasius, and running down without break to the time of Martin of Troppau?

Those Roman Catholics today who deny her existence have a simple answer to this: that all these entries, preceding the account given by Martin of Troppau, and by one or two we have not mentioned, are later insertions.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, for instance, in its article on *Popess Joan,* says,

> The first who appears to have had cognizance of it (the story of Joan) was the Dominican chronicler Jean de Mailly, from whom another Dominican, Etienne de Bourbon, (died 1261) adopted the tale into his work on the *Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost,*

apparently dating the reign of the woman pope at about 1100. When we consult Jean de Mailly, however, we find that he gets the account from another Dominican, his brother; and there is no way of telling from what source this monk secured it.

There were faint early Roman Catholic voices opposing the recognition of Joan as a historical pope. Bartholomew Platina, the keeper of the Vatican Library under Sixtus IV (1471-1484), in his *Lives of the Popes,*

of the Crusades as far as Jerusalem, includes Pope Joan in his *Chronicon*, which carried man's history down to 1146. Richard of Poitiers, writing about 1172, includes her, in at least one of the ancient manuscript copies of his work. Godfrey of Viterbo, whose life stretched approximately from 1120 to 1196, lists Joan in many of the manuscript copies of his compendium of world history, *Liber memorialis*, and in the revision of the work, called *Pantheon*. Gervase of Tilbury, in his imwritten in the fifteenth century, gives the story of Joan, stating at the same time that it comes from uncertain and obscure authors. Or, at least, so we are told. He is described by the *Brittanica* as the "celebrated author of the lives of the first hundred popes"; and Joan, of course, came *after* the hundred and seventh pope, Leo IV. It is hardly necessary to point out that Martin of Troppau, Ranulph Higdon, Almeric D'Anger, Petrarch, Boccaccio, John Lydgate, and the other authorities cited, were the opposite of "uncertain and obscure": and we have not mentioned the additional list of distinguished chroniclers, Anastasius the librarian, Marianus Scotus, Sigebert of Gembloux, and the rest, of an even earlier period, many of whose manuscripts contain an account of Joan.

Platina, in refusing to accept wholly the story of Joan, stood alone in the 15th century. Even far-off Janos Csezmeczey of Hungary, better known as Janus Pannonius, listed her; as did the individual chroniclers, and the celebrated chronicles of Cologne, of Saxony, of Augsburg, and of Nuremburg—the latter containing a picture of Joan and her child, which all Europe knew.

By the time the seventeenth century came in, the

Roman Catholic church had definitely determined to wipe Joan out of men's memories. Caesar Baronius (1538-1607) devoted the last nineteen years of his life to the compiling of his *Annales Ecclesiastici,* or churchly annals, at the suggestion of St. Philip Neri. In 1592, Clement VIII was elected as pope, after a controversy in which his chief opponent, Cardinal St. Severin, had been struck in the breast twice so vigorously by a cardinal of another party that he was knocked down. This Clement made Father Baronius, who was already his confessor, a cardinal in 1596, and also librarian of the Vatican. The great work of compiling the church annals was done, in answer to the Magdeburg Centuries. This book was the first general history of the Christian church written from a Protestant point of view. Written in Magdeburg, capital of Prussian Saxony, in Latin in 1562, it was published at Basel in seven volumes (1559-1574), and carried the history of the church down to 1400; and it is a remarkable monument to the scholarship of its authors, Matthias Flacus and other Lutheran theologians. The answer of Baronius sought to sponge out what seemed to the Romish theologians the disgrace of having had a woman pope.

But his method does not commend itself to modern historians. He listed Joan among the popes, but rode two horses in explaining her: first, that she had been a mere parody of John VIII, who ruled for ten years beginning 872. True, this pope officially styled John VIII, the 111th pope, had granted the revenues of the bishopric of Torcella, to a eunuch named Dominick; had been manhandled by dukes; had been accused publicly of sodomy;

and had been accused of lack of manhood in his vaccilations with regard to Photius, patriarch of Constantinople. But this explanation evidently did not satisfy even Baronius; and so he proceeded to announce that that Joan, who had held the papacy as John VIII, had been neither man nor woman, but rather a monster vomited out of hell, due to the spells and witchcraft of atheists and heretics.

Of course, this completely admitted her existence.

Clement VIII, the master of Baronius, took another step. He had the marble likeness of Pope Joan in the cathedral of Sienna altered, until it was made to stand for Pope Zacharias, who had died so long before—a hundred and one years before Joan became pope—that no one could remember his features. There is a statue of St. Peter in St. Peter's itself, which your guide in Rome will tell you is the oldest Christian statue in existence. "For it was made just about five hundred years before St. Peter was said to have been born," the guide will smile in the slow Italian way. "The Christians knocked off the head of the pagan statue, and an arm, and put on a new head, and an arm with a hand raised in the episcopal blessing." Somewhat in this fashion Clement VIII treated the statute of Joan in Siena: altering her name and sex as definitely as an oyster alters from female to male.

Alexander Cooke (1564-1632), vicar of Lecks, in Yorkshire, became an ardent supporter of the historicity of Joan; and in 1610 he published in London his quaint colloquy between a papist and a Protestant, in which he adduced in Joan's behalf all the evidence which had

satisfied the Christian world so long of her existence. Father Philippe Labbe (1607-1670), author of the *Collection Generale des Conciles,* evolved the ingenious theory that Pope Joan had been invented by the great Protestant reformers, Huss, Jerome of Prague, Wickliffe, Luther, and Calvin. Well, if this was so, it certainly settled Joan forever. Unfortunately, Martin of Troppau had written his account of Joan a hundred years and more before the most ancient of these Protestants had entered upon his reformist activities; and earlier chronicles established the knowledge of the existence of Joan at far earlier periods. Thus Father Labbe's pious effort must be dismissed as more ingenious than persuasive.

And now a Protestant took the field against Joan, much to the indignation of the other Protestants. David Blondel (1591-1655), a French Calvinist, in two studies, *Eclaircissement de la question si une femme a ete assise au siege papal de Rome* (1647) and *De Joanna Papissa* (1657), did his best to demolish the item of history. Of course, he wrote eight hundred years after the close of Joan's tenure of the papacy. In other words, Virginia had been settled forty or more years, and Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, New Haven, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and Maryland, were all variously thriving colonies, before any person dared question in detail the historical existence of the noteworthy woman whom all were taught had existed, and had risen high in men's esteem.

The fact was first challenged, with some historical scholarship, by Blondel in 1647 and 1657. It is easily understood how long it must have taken before the world

accepted the sponging out process. There had been other Catholic writers—Aeneas Silvius tentatively in the fifteenth century, and Onofrio Panvinio in the sixteenth—who began (we take the word from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*) "to deny the existence of the popess." The same authority proudly says that two Protestants, Blondel and the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, (1646-1716) denied her existence—the latter authority in his *Flores sparsae in tumulum Papissae,* published in the *Bibliotheca Historia* in Gottingen in 1758.

Let us look for a moment at this denial by the great philosophical mind. Just what does Leibnitz say on the matter? Just how does he get around the wide chorus of historians? Here is his method: he says that there might well have been a foreign bishop, perhaps called John Anglicus, who was really a woman in disguise, who gave birth to a child during a procession at Rome, and thus gave birth as well to the later story!

With all due respect to the great philosophical intellect, this is very sorry thinking. Of course, Leibnitz had no evidence to go on, in the matter; he just tactfully said, "Of course you are right, you Roman Catholics; since you say there was no woman pope, you must be right. Why not accept my suggestion, that it was merely a woman bishop who tricked the church into thinking that she was a man, took a lover, became pregnant, and publicly bore a child?" This is about as remote from scholarship and historical thinking as can be; and it does no credit to the Roman Catholic authorities that, in their bulky encyclopedia, they mention such a straw

to buttress their case in opposition to Joan, which needs solid rock, and not straws.

The warfare waged merrily. Among Protestants, Kist (1843), Luden (1831) and Andrea (1866) defended the fact of the existence of Joan. And then came Father Johann Dollinger, on the Catholic side, and did a workmanlike job of the whole matter, concluding in the end, as a good Catholic was supposed to, that Joan had never existed. We will find him, when we come to him, an excellent witness on Joan's side, as well.

The Catholic church today, speaking in the authorized encyclopedia, lists two principal disproofs of Joan's historical existence.

> 1st, not one contemporary historical source among the papal histories knows anything about her; nor is she mentioned until the middle of the 13th century.

The weakness of this is apparent at once, when we remember Martin of Troppau's conclusion. The contemporary historians do mention her; although the Catholics insist that these are later additions to the documents. We will take this point up further when we deal with Dollinger.

> 2nd, in the history of the popes, there is no place where this legendary figure will fit in.

This rests solely upon the word of the Catholic church that Leo IV died in 855, if we are to insist that Joan followed that pontiff. The documents are largely in the hands of the Catholic church. Their record in opposition to truth, scientific as well as historical, that opposes their desires, is not short, nor of recent birth. As witnesses

for the denial, they are suspect in advance. They are not assumed innocent, as any ordinary prisoner in the English legal system is presumed innocent, until he is proven guilty; on their record, they are assumed guilty, until they establish their innocence.

The modern scientific mind has no interest, one way or the other, except to see the truth brought out. The fact of the long continued belief in the historicity of Joan, among the highest in power and learning among the Catholics, is obvious. If they seek to prove that this is only a legend that arose among them, and seek to kill it as history in men's eyes, the burden is on them to do so. Nothing will end the fact that Joan was, for hundreds of years, hailed as a historical character by the Roman Catholic church. It is more than possible that nothing will ever end the fact that she was such a historical character.

But, the spokesmen for the church proceed, if this was a legend, how did it originate? Baronius first blames it on the effeminacy of the later pope John VIII; and, with charming inconsistency, Catholic authorities like Dollinger fly to the defense of this John VIII, and insist that he was manly throughout, and not effeminate. We leave them to deal with the malodorous subject.

Baronius, dissatisfied with his own hypothesis, proceeds to say that Joan was a veritable monster out of hell, evoked by the spells and witchcraft of atheists and heretics. This satisfies no sane mind today; and, besides, it leaves an actual Joan, monster from hell or not, seated on the papal throne for the two years and more: which is what the Catholics are denying.

Aventinus sees in the story a satire on John IX (898-901). Baronius, by the way, calls him "the best of the bad popes." Blondel, that Protestant bulwark of Catholic opposition to Rome, can do no better than decide that Pope Joan must have been a satire on John XI (931-936). John XI was the son of the courtesan Marozia, a mistress acquired by Sergius III. Marozia caused the murder of John X, who had as his mistress Theodora, the courtesan who was mother of Marozia, and who had formerly been another mistress of Sergius III. Already engaged in an incestuous marriage, Marozia had her son Octavian, whom she had had by Sergius, named pope at the age of eighteen, as John XI. His courtesan mother, who became his lover as well as the lover of another of her sons, Alberic, ruled the see of Rome during his five years in the papacy. But there is small likeness between the learned and high moralled Joan, who loved only twice, and then for love, not lust, and this conduit for all of Rome's lechery.

Panvinio says, instead, that the legend—so he calls it—was a satire on John XII (956-963). This John, whose original name was also Octavian, was the son of Marozia by her son Alberic. His mother-grandmother had him elevated to the papacy, either at the age of twelve or of eighteen: and she at once entered upon an incestuous relationship with the pope, who was both her son and her grandson at the same time. The Italian lords accused him of paying for his criminal pleasures with the widow of his vassal, Rainier, by giving her the golden crosses and chalices of St. Peter's. They said openly that one of his concubines, Stephenette, had died

before the eyes of all in the palace of the Lateran in giving birth to a son, whom she declared was the pope's. The papal palace, they said, had become a frightful brothel, the refuge of prostitutes. "Neither Roman nor strange females dare any longer to visit the churches, for this monster causes wives, widows and virgins to be carried off from the very steps of the altar!" So ran the accusations. One cardinal said that he had seen the pope celebrate mass, while drunk; a bishop, John of Narni, said that the holy father had ordained a deacon in a stable; Jerome, a cardinal deacon, said that the pope had taken a courtesan wholly upon the very steps of the altar; and there was a longer memorial of the pope's crimes, which led in the end to his deposition in 963. It seems incredible that such a welter of debauchery could have given rise to the clean story of the learned Joan. Nor, of course, is there any evidence whatsoever justifying the tracing of the history of Joan to the lustful actions of this pope, his mother-grandmother-lover, and his concubines and courtesans.

The Roman Catholic authority, Neander, says that the story rose out of the baneful female influence on the papacy during the tenth century. Leo Allatius connects it with the false prophetess Theota, condemned at the synod of Mainz in 847. But all this is mere unbased speculation, which is not taken seriously even by the Catholics any more.

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), in his great *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (published between 1776 and 1788) refers to the story thus:

> The influence of two sister prostitutes, Marozia and Theodora, was founded on their

> wealth and beauty, their political and amorous intrigues: the most strenuous of their lovers were rewarded with the Roman mitre, and their reign may have suggested to the darker ages the fable of a female pope. The bastard son, the grandson, and the great-grandson of Marozia, a rare genealogy, were seated in the chair of St. Peter. . . . We read, with some surprise, that the worthy grandson of Marozia lived in public adultery with the matrons of Rome; that the Lateran palace was turned into a school for prostitution, and that his rapes of virgins and widows had deterred the female pilgrims from visiting the tomb of St. Peter, lest, in the devout act, they should be violated by his successor. . . . But, to a philosophic eye, the vices of the clergy are far less dangerous than their virtues,—

a proposition which he proceeds to amplify.

Gibbon proceeds to hold that, in his opinion, the story of Pope Joan is false; but that it is not incredible. In case such a person was so raised, he says, her delivery of a child in the street would be unlucky, but not improbable. Gibbon is entitled to this opinion, which rather runs in the same groove as the baseless hypotheses of Blondel and Panvinio. But, after all, as Ince points out, Theodora and Marozia lived about a hundred years after Joan; and the logic is as tenable as to hold that the character and life of the English Henry VIII gave rise to the "fable" of Bluebeard, known to history as Gilles de Rais, Marquis de Laval and field marshal of France, who was put to death for his offenses in 1440, a hundred years before Henry VIII's time.

So far, we have had the story blamed on the effeminacy of John VIII; on a monster from hell; on John IX, John XI, John XII; on the baneful female influence of the period; on the stories of Theodora and Marozia; on a false prophetess Theota. And we are not through. We recall that Leibnitz imagined, as its source, an imaginery woman bishop, called John Anglicus, who was pregnant and bore a child publicly during a church procession in Rome. And now we come to a real historian's treatment of the story, which, for all that his aim is to convince us that Joan never existed, may conceivably prove the contrary of his thesis.

iii

The Proofs of Pope Joan

FATHER JOHANN JOSEPH IGNAZ VON DOLlinger (1799-1890), in his *Papstfabeln des Mittelalters,* or Popish Fables of the Middle Ages, which appeared in 1863, turned the best Catholic scholarship in Europe to the task of demolishing Pope Joan. Father Dollinger became a priest at the age of twenty-three; a year later, he became professor of ecclesiastical history and canon law in the lyceum of Aschaffenburg; and, three years thereafter, he became professor of theology at Munich, where he spent the rest of his life. The poet Heine, who disliked him, called his face the gloomiest in the whole procession of ecclesiastics on Good Friday: which gives us some picture, perhaps of the man's soul, and his mental and spiritual outlook.

His life within the church was not serene. He opposed the new doctrine of papal infallibility to the end; and, rather than yield to this innovation in Catholic teachings, about 1871 he was unfrocked and excommunicated for his attitude. He never rejoined the church: he half affiliated with the seceding "Old Catholics," whose priests were ultimately permitted to marry; and, except for this connection, he remained solitary to the end of his life.

Father Dollinger rejected all the explanations offered

so far to account for the story of Pope Joan, and came to the conclusion that it represented a survival of some local Roman folktale, originally connected with certain ancient monuments and peculiar customs. The chief sources of the legend—for so Dollinger considered it—were, he indicates,

The marble statue of a woman and child.
An inscription.
The street avoided in papal processions.
The pierced chair.

Let us take these up one by one, and see how, if at all, they bear on the historicity of the woman pope.

We recall that the English chronicler, Adam of Usk, had visited Rome about the end of the 14th century, and had seen what was said to be a marble statue of the pope and her child on the narrow street between the Coliseum and St. Clement's church. We have Ince's word for it that Martin Luther saw this statue, when he visited Rome in 1511. As to this statue, Rev. Herbert Thurston writes in the English magazine, *The Month,* apparently an English Catholic organ:

> If we may trust a conjecture recently put forward by G. Tomasetti, the actual statue is still preserved, and is to be found in the Chiaramonti gallery of the Vatican Museum. It is a striking work of art, remarkable on account of the rarity, among our surviving specimens of ancient sculpture, of any such combination of mother and child. Modern criticism commonly believes it to have been intended to reproduce Juno suckling Hercules.

Here we must protest, in amazement. Juno (or Hera) was not the mother Hercules (or Heracles); he was the son of Jupiter (or Zeus) by Alcmena, wife of Amphitriton of Tiryns; to the contrary, Juno, in the old myths, delayed the child's birth, to trick him out of his inheritance; and sent two serpents to destroy the new-born Hercules in his cradle, which the infant prodigy strangled. If any modern criticism, Catholic or otherwise, pictures Juno as suckling the son of her earthly rival, such criticism simply runs counter to all classic beliefs, and is more than suspect. The account continues,

> Tomasetti says that the statue was carried off from the neighborhood of San Clemente to the Vatican by order of Sixtus V (1585-1590), glad for a pretext to put some check on the folk tales surrounding it.

This is an unfair statement. Baronius, first definite opponent of the authencity of Pope Joan, did not commence his onslaught until the papacy of Clement VIII, second after Sixtus V. It is true that the Protestant Madgeburg Centuries had already appeared, when Sixtus sat on the throne: they were published between 1559 and 1574. But no one called the account of Pope Joan "folk tales" then; and, while Sixtus may have felt it was his duty to conceal this shame—as he may have regarded it— of the Catholic church, his attitude, if he removed the statue, would have been to hide a shame, not to unsource a folk tale.

Considering this statue, held so long to be the statue of the woman pope and her child, it seems incredible

that early opinion, on discovering the statue, would not have insisted the rather that it represented the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus, rather than to conclude immediately that it stood for a woman pope, not heard of until the statue was discovered. For instance, there is a heroic sized statue of the moon-goddess Diana in the cathedral of Naples, of silver, with a silver crescent on its head, and other indicia of Diana apparent. This is, even today, pointed out as a statue of the Virgin Mary: and it holds no child. Much more would a statue of a mother suckling her young have been held to represent the Virgin, and not a woman pope, an empress, or a cleaning woman.

Let us pass this by for the moment, noting merely that, from early times, a statue stood on this street, which was popularly believed to represent the woman pope and her child—here on the very street where the early historians said that she had died.

We come next to the monument, said to have been discovered in early times on this street, inscribed with a formula which was long said to have read:

P. P. P. P. P. P.

which the ancient chronicler Jean de Mailly said stood for,

Petre pater patrum papissae prodito partum,

establishing that the woman pope had borne her child here. Other chroniclers interpreted this a trifle differently, making it stand for the alleged warning of the demon to Pope Joan, that she must bear a child publicly, as pontiff, in the sight of all Rome. Certain chroniclers bore this out by reading an "E." for the fifth "P." Dol-

linger spends much erudition on the subject, holding that the inscription probably was,

P. A. P. P. P. P.

the first three letters standing for the name of an imagined Papirius; the last three standing for the common phrase on monuments, "propria pecunia posuit." And again he plays with the idea that the inscription referred to one Papirius, a priest of Mithra, who would have the title "pater patrum" (father of fathers) after his name, as a later Christian prelate might have them.

Does such an inscription, on this ancient street where the statue was found, prove the existence of Joan? By no means. For centuries it is known how often the Christians construed pagan inscriptions as having reference to early Christians; this may well have been done in this case. Mark Twain ridicules this, in the learned discourse following the discovery of the inscription:

B I L
L J O
N E S
H I S
M A R
K

where excellent Latin supplementary letters and translations were offered; but which turned out, in the end, to be a simple farmer's signature, "BILL JONES, HIS MARK."

Let us turn, third, to the ancient custom that the popes did not pass along this street in their solemn processions, perhaps because of its narrowness, Dollinger says. Martin of Troppau referred to the custom, and

laid it to abhorrence of the childbirth here by the woman pope. We have the word of Thurston for it that the street was widened by Sixtus V; and that processions could not pass along it before then.

But there is no statement, in his writings or in other sources and authorities we have discovered, which says that later popes have passed along this widened street. Why did not the ancient popes pass along this street? It might come from the fact that the street was too narrow. It might, quite as easily, have come from the memory of the woman pope's childbirth here. In the former case, the widening of the street would have allowed processions to pass here. and we would expect to find that fact stated by Dollinger or Thurston. Neither of them makes any such claim. If this is true today, let that fact be proved.

Of course, that fact will not settle the matter. Later popes, acting during the centuries when it was sought to discredit the history of Joan, might well have decided that the best way to overcome the force of the ancient custom would be for them to have their processions pass along this street. Such a belated decision could not wipe out the historical evidence that for a long time processions did not pass along this street.

Let us stop for a minute at these three items of evidence, solemnly listed by Dollinger as three pivotal sources of the story. Let us place ourselves in the mental attitude (which Dollinger's explanation demands) that no one had ever heard of a woman as pope, or any of the rest of the story. Three things are discovered—an old statue of a woman suckling her young; an in-

scription "P. P. P. P. P. P."; and a certain narrow street along which popes do not pass. Could these three things conceivably give birth to a story that a woman had been pope, and all the rest of it? Hardly even in in medieval minds. If no woman had ever been pope; if no mind had ever thought about a woman as pope, these three things would never have evoked that thought, much less caused the story to spread until all Christendom believed it for centuries.

It is hard to bring this home to us. But let us make the attempt. Suppose a tombstone is discovered along a narrow street in Washington, D. C., containing a crude woodcarving of a woman and child. Suppose a plank, or a carved stone, was dug up on the same street, marked "P. P. P. P. P. P." Suppose it was a fact that there was an old custom of presidents of the United States, in some ceremonial procession, to avoid this street. Is it conceivable that anyone would evolve, from these three quite disconnected facts, the elaborate story that a woman disguised as a man had been elected president of the United States, in the dim early days of our government; that she had died in childbirth on that corner, thereby revealing her sex; and that the inscription stood for, "Polly, Pretended President, Perished —Parturition Pangs?"

The obvious absurdity of this is apparent. Object at once that our history is too recent for such a myth to grow, and I admit it, while recalling sorrowfully the story of the cherry tree, and other of our homely folk-tales. Yet even this absurd analogy may drive home how impossible it would have been for these three isolated facts to cause the story of Joan to grow up.

If the story of Joan, however, happened as Martin of Troppau records it, we see at once the meaning of the prohibition of papal parades on this street. If the inscription was medieval, and not ancient Roman, we see how some zealot might have put it there. If the statue was medieval, and not classic Roman, we see at once how naturally it would have been erected there. These three facts, or one or more of them, conceivably bear out the story of Joan; but they never fathered or mothered it. Assuming that the story of the woman pope was recognized history, but only in vague outlines, the discovery of these three things may have localized the happenings on this particular street. Beyond that, their generative effect could not go.

Lastly, we come to the pierced chair. The authorized encyclopedia referred to disingenuously describes it thus:

> Further, on the occasion of his formal inauguration, in front of the Lateran Basilica, the newly elected pope always seated himself on a marble chair. The seat was a marble bath-stool, of which there were many in Rome; it was merely made use of by the pope to rest himself. But the imagination of the vulgar took this to signify that the sex of the pope was thereby tested, in order to prevent any further instance of a woman attaining to the chair of St. Peter.

We call attention to the precise wording of this, to call attention to what the world agrees in calling Catholic suppression of the truth. The offense in this instance is the more definite, because this quotation purports,

implicitly at least, to be a summary of what Dollinger has to say on the matter.

If the *Catholic Encyclopedia's* account gave a fair summary of the fact, or of Dollinger's discussion, any sane mind would at once scoff at the idea that this "marble seat" could have had any possible connection with a female pope. But the whole quotation above falsifies the facts and the discussion by Dollinger. In it, we read of only one chair. We read of no pierced chair, but only "a marble bath-stool," which we vision as anything but a potential marble litmus paper to test sex on.

Dollinger comes closer to a description of the actual articles of furniture used. There were two of these chairs, not one, as he admits. He describes the ceremonial thus:

> Here it was usual for the pope to sit first on the right hand seat, while a girdle from which hung seven keys and seven seals was put around him. At the same time a staff was placed in his hand, which he then, sitting on the left hand seat—

Notice that he has changed his position from one seat to the other.

> —placed along with the keys in the hands of the prior of St. Lawrence. Hereupon another ornamented garb, made after the pattern of the Jewish ephod, was placed on him.

Sitting down on these seats, Dollinger says, was meant to symbolize his taking possession. He continues finally,

> It is therefore a mere matter of accident that these stone seats were pierced.

Note that he has not described them anywhere as pierced, before this. Non-Catholic authorities, describing these "marble bath-stools" or "pierced seats" more closely, say that they were shaped more like couches than seats; that one, and one only—the second on which the pope sat—was pierced; and that they are still in the pope's palace or in St. Peter's.

Dollinger proceeds to say that, from the use of these pierced stone seats—for he apparently thinks both seats were pierced, which no other authority holds—a myth grew that the purpose of the pierced seats was to make sure no woman was ever thereafter elected as pope. This first appears, Dollinger states, in the Visions of the Dominican, Robert d'Usez, who died in Metz in 1296.

He goes on to say that Giampetro Valeriano Bolzani, a literary courtier of Leo X, (one of the de' Medici who ruled from 1513 to 1521), who had been loaded with benefices, in a speech to Cardinal Hippolutus de' Medici, printed at Rome with papal privilege, said that this took place openly in the gallery of the Lateran church before the eyes of the assembled multitude; and that then most unnecessarily the fact (that the pope had been elected, and was, by implication, a man) was proclaimed by one of the clergy, and entered in the register. Dollinger apparently does not accept the truth of this literary courtier's description of a current custom, made to a close relative of the then pope, and published under papal auspices. There is no answer to be made to this amazing Catholic scepticism toward an authentic Catholic utterance, except to say that Bolzani was there and Dollinger was not, and Bolzani doubtless knew in-

finitely more about the current papal customs than Dollinger could know, three hundred and fifty years later.

The story was unreservedly believed, at the time of Leo X. The custom of testing the sex of the pope by the pierced chair or couch was practiced at that time—the fact is established, for all of Dollinger's scepticism. And Dollinger himself admits that the first mention of the use of the pierced chair occurred about 1100;

> From the time of Paschal II (1099-1118) mention (was made) that the new pope should sit on two ancient pierced seats made of stone. They were called porphyreticae, on account of the fact that the stone was bright red.

These two pierced seats, Dollinger continues, dated from ancient Rome, and had once, apparently, stood in a public bath; from which place they were taken into the oratory of St. Sylvester, near the Lateran.

The use of the pierced seat—we refuse to follow Dollinger's misdescription of them as two pierced seats, until better proof is offered, to disprove the bulk of the authorities—is established. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says "it was merely made use of by the pope to rest himself." This is deliberate perversion of the records, as the researches of the Catholic authority Dollinger establish. Dollinger implies that the account of the use of the chair to test anything originated in the licentious imagination of a de' Medici courtier. This is a subtle evasion of the facts that Dollinger himself gives. It is unquestionable that, for centuries, the pierced seat or couch was used to test something: and that it was stated, with papal authority, that this was used to test whether the pope elect was man or woman.

There is an explanation of the use of the pierced seat or couch which all these Catholic authorities fail to state: and, in fairness to the truth of the matter, it must be stated here. It is stated by certain Protestant apologists, who oppose the authenticity of the history of Joan, that this pierced seat or couch was used to test whether the pope was a eunuch or not. It is a fact that, from early times, a eunuch, castrate, or emasculated man, was barred from the higher ranks of the Roman clergy, and assuredly from the papacy. Is it not possible that the pierced seat or couch was a mere test against emasculation, and had no reference to the belief in the woman pope?

Of course this is possible. Apparently (the records are in the hands of the Catholics largely, of course) the first mention of the pierced seat or couch is made in 1099. This was long after the struggle over emasculation in the church. Origen, "the most distinguished and most influential of all the theologians of the ancient church" (*Brittanica*) was deposed from the presbyterhood or priesthood in 230 or 231 A. D., because he had made himself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake, as Jesus had commended. This definitive action, thus early in the history of Christianity, renders it improbable that there was any vast fear of a eunuch becoming pope in 1099 or even 855; and renders it improbable that the pierced seat or couch was used as a test against emasculation. The explanation is possible, but improbable.

Which throws us back on the probability that the chair or couch was used to test whether the pope was man or woman; and that such a test could only have

arisen from the fact that a woman had once actually occupied the chair of St. Peter's: or that this fact was so well believed, before 1099, that by common consent the test came in from the believed legend.

But this conflicts with the whole Catholic position, that the story was not circulated before the time of Martin of Troppau, about 1278, with any wide acceptance; and that it was originated or was first circulated by Stephen of Bourbon in 1261, who derived it from the Domican Jean de Mailly, presumably a writer approximately contemporaneous with Stephen. In spite of what the Catholics describe as the silence of the chroniclers before 1261, they must now revise this—in view of the use of the pierced chair from at least 1099 onwards—by admitting that the story of Pope Joan was in wide circulation during the eleventh century, and was not a thirteenth century product.

In other words, the testimony of the pierced chair or couch adds at least two centuries to the antiquity of the story and its wide acceptance, and brings it within two centuries, not four, of Joan's tenancy of the papacy.

Dollinger, referring to the Protestant authorities Hase and Kist, is amazed that these two hold it credible that the church, not content with creating facts, annihilated them also, whenever the knowledge of them seemed critical for the already tottering papacy. He says,

> According to Hase and Kist, we must state the matter thus: that soon after the year 855 an edict issued from Rome to this effect: "Let no one presume to say a word about the fact

> of a female pope;" for at that time Rome did not feel her position to be very secure.

He goes on to say that, by the middle of the thirteenth century, these authorities evidently held that Rome's position was safe enough to justify allowing the story to be released.

To Dollinger, any such procedure is implicitly incredible. He forgets the conclusion of Martin of Troppau, the devout Catholic historian of the 13th century:

> Nor is she put in the catalogue of the Popes, as well on account of her female sex, as on account of the foul nature of the transaction.

A Catholic said, in the thirteenth century, what astounds Dollinger when a Protestant holds it, in the nineteenth.

Now let us face the dilemma. There should, under ordinary circumstances, if no prohibition had issued from later popes, have been a full account of Joan's tenure of the papacy in the chronicles between 855 and 1278. An account of this tenure is found. The Catholics say this is a later insertion. They have the records, in the main. Let us assume they are right. What then?

Does this prove that Joan never existed, or that she did exist?

Martin of Troppau says that her name is not mentioned, because it was forbidden. If he is right, the records would be silent (but for later insertions) although she had existed as surely as Charlemagne. If the story originated in his century (or two centuries earlier, as the use of the pierced chair establishes) the records would still be silent, but for later insertions. They are silent, but for later insertions—this we assume,

for purposes of argument, in order to give the Catholics the advantage of every doubt. What then does this prove? It proves either that she did exist, and that record of her was forbidden, as Martin of Troppau said; or that she did not exist. The weight of the fact, which after all is the main bulwark of the Catholic case, is as strong in the one direction as in the other.

If the entries in the early chronicles are authentic, the existence of Joan is proved beyond a doubt.

If the entries in the early chronicles are later insertions, this does not even faintly disprove Joan's existence, accepting the first extend account of Joan which Catholics accept: that of Martin of Troppau. Neither does it even faintly prove Joan's existence. The same result would appear in the chronicles, whether she existed or not.

But when we add the evidence of the pierced chair, which dates back to the eleventh century, the probability that she did exist grows almost into a certainty.

We may pass by Dollinger's discovery that the papal secretary, Dietrich von Niem, about 1431, first discovered the school that she taught at, in Rome—that school of the Greeks which St. Augustine had made famous. We may pass by his theory that she was made English, because, as Boniface had complained, Rome was full of English ladies on pilgrimage, who had turned prostitute. We may pass by the fact that the *Catholic Encyclopedia,* which purports to give the story as Martin of Troppau gave it, makes significant changes in this account, such as substituting "finally was elected pope" for "was unanimously elected pope," and such as the withering omis-

sion of Martin's vital conclusion to his story—the statement that Joan was therefore omitted from catalogues of the popes. It is enough to point out that all of the early writers whose writings so fully prove Joan's existence were friends of the papacy and subjects of it, and that not one of them was its enemy; that the pierced chair or couch, and the other evidence, comes from them.

Their widest claim today can only be that it was a moral story that they themselves produced, which they now desire to kill. We will take up the moral—that a woman was unfit to be a pope—later. If we gave in every point to them, as we certainly will not do, it would still remain that this story is one of the most interesting products of the medieval mind, worthy of our fullest study. Legend or history, the life of Pope Joan should be the heritage of every one of us; and this book has been written to make this possible, and to end the campaign of erudite smothering which the Catholic church has fathered.

After a careful examination of the records, however, it is apparent that all the probabilities favor the fact that Joan was as historical as Charlemagne.

iv

Reasons for the Attempted Suppression

THE CATHOLIC AUTHORITIES ASSUME THAT Joan never existed, without establishing any reasonable grounds for this assumption; and spend their energies seeking to account for what they call the legend. In this effort they end up in as many blind alleys as there have been attempts. Even Dollinger's erudition landed him nowhere, once its product is carefully scrutinized.

Let us accept Pope Joan for the historical figure she was, and turn to the problem of seeking to account for the double suppressions of her story.

Taking the Catholic attitude at its widest, we have (but for the evidence of the pierced chair, or couch, whose use became public in 1099 or before) a suppression of the facts about Joan from the time of her death, in 855, to the neighborhood of 1278, when Martin of Troppau issued his authoritative work, giving her life. What caused this first suppression—assuming that it existed as completely as the Catholics claim?

Martin of Troppau worded it, "Nor is she put in the catalogue of the Popes, as well on account of her female sex, as on account of the foul nature of the transaction."

The "foul nature of the transaction" is linked very

closely to the "female sex." It is true that, according to the story, Joan had tricked the church officials, by masquerading as a man. But this masquerade was made compulsory, by the church's attitude toward women. Joan had yielded either once or twice to love, it is true: to her first lover, and then to the lover who made her pregnant, who may or may not have been her first lover as well. But the church had had such popes as Damasus, Sixtus III, and St. Virgilius already, whose sexual offenses were matters of general knowledge; within the next century following Joan's death, the church was to know the sodomite John III; the "infamous wretch" Boniface VI (to quote the pious Baronius); Stephen VII and his debaucheries; Sergius III and his courtesans, including Theodora and Marozia; John X, lover of Theodora, strangled at Marozia's orders; John XI, son and lover of Marozia; John XII, at the same time son, grandson, and lover of Marozia, whose debaucheries were the stench and scandal of Christendom, and who was slain by an outraged husband midway of one of his adulteries. Still far ahead lay such licentious profligates as Benedict IX and his orgiastic co-popes Sylvester III and John XX; Gregory VII, who had his mistress Beatrice strangled in a debauch; John XXIII, poisoner, rapist, committer of incest; the Borgia, Calixtus III, who omitted no crime; Pius II, sodomite and worse; the painted and powdered Paul II; the unspeakable Sixtus IV; the Borgia, Alexander VI, who— But this is enough, and more than enough. Perhaps the cardinals, bishops, priests, and monks, were as bad, or worse; perhaps the kings, nobles, and commoners were

as bad, or worse: these things are irrelevant. Masculine popes wrote such a record on the pages of history, of every form of natural and unnatural vice, that no other extended list of rulers ever equalled them. It was not for her one, or perhaps two, slips from sexual virtue that Joan's name was excluded from the catalogue of the Popes. If this had been so, the list would be a short one, and would omit the names mentioned above, and many many more.

The "foul nature of the transaction" lay primarily in the fact of the "female sex." This seems incredible, in view of the important part that women played in the history of the church. For all of the misogynistic writings of Paul, Peter, and the church fathers against women, they had been the mainstay of the church, from the beginning. According to the gospels Jesus rated many devout women highly, including the sister Martha and Mary, and Mary Magdalene. Paul spoke highly of many individual woman converts. Many of the notable conversions of history were due to female influence. The tardy story of the finding of the true cross by Helena, the mother of Constantine, is well known. The woman saints are legion. The tremendous power exerted by the powerful and learned abbesses of the church down through the Middle Ages is well known. In spite of all these facts, the early church held it had been indelibly stained by the elevation of a woman to St. Peter's chair; and for quite a period did its best to wipe out the stain, and make sure, by the test of the pierced chair, that in future no woman should ever duplicate Joan's feat.

This condition remained, as long as the event was

so near that living churchmen could feel themselves guilty vicariously of the stain. Then came an age of wilder marvels and beliefs, when nothing was too strange to be accepted. It was an age which took as a commonplace the rule of the church by two courtesans, and their son-lovers and grandson-lovers: and, perhaps for the reason a Catholic authority gives, the mere spicy nature of the happening, the story, which must have flourished sub rosa during all the intervening years, suddenly emerged into the light.

There was no uncertainty in the telling, once a venturesome chronicler embarked upon it. He did not fear that he would be disbelieved—perhaps because all knew the story by word of mouth; he did not fear, apparently, ecclesiastical nor popish censure, nor did he receive these. Instead, from his position as confidential adviser and confessor to popes, he uttered the story as accepted history: and such at once it became.

The story was not actually contradicted until the Protestant movement was well under way, and the church was on the defensive against secessionist attacks. Now was the time when it felt that it must purge itself of all its purgable shames and disgraces; and so, forgetting the high role it had given to the Virgin Mother of Christ, it branded the historical item (speaking through Baronius) as untrue, since indeed a monster from hell, and not a woman, had sat on the throne of St. Peter's as John VIII, described as "the female pope" under her marble bust in Siena cathedral; and, speaking through Father Labbe in less than a century, it alleged that the whole story was an invention of Protestants. And it

has persisted in this attitude, while constantly shifting the ground of its attack, ever since.

What is the cause of this long continued opposition?

Catholic opinion is made primarily by Catholic clerics. As matter of description merely, and not at all of reproach, Catholic clerics, by virtue of their church's teachings, which they accept, lead an unnatural sex life: a life of continence and abstinence from normal sexual intercourse, theoretically at least, and actually perhaps in many or most modern cases. If Catholic clerics maintain their theoretically inviolable virtue, they can not fail to regard woman, normal love with whom is forbidden to them, as somehow a lesser, inferior, and degraded being. If they ever yield to the desires of physical love, they regard the act as criminal, and their copartner in it as somehow lesser, inferior, and degraded.

To word the matter more psychologically, the moment they let slip, even for a moment, their self-chosen armor of abstinence, they find themselves on the defensive in the presence of other men who are not clerics. For other men live or may live a normal and natural sex life; and they must look down—so the Catholic clerics must feel—upon the wholly continent as something akin to eunuchs. Out of this feeling of inferiority which their life imposes upon the Catholic clerics, they must assert their superiority, as a beneficent compensation, by maintaining woman in a lesser, inferior, and degraded status. Hence it is unthinkable to them that one of these lesser, inferior and degraded beings could ever have presided over all Christendom—over the highest of the continent half-men who composed the clergy of the time.

I do not hold with Renee Dunan that the church's attitude is primarily explained by the fact of its Oriental origin, carrying with it the idea that women are useful, but relatively unimportant. This is important; but, if the Catholic decision had finally been that all of the clergy could marry, the origin of the Occidentalized faith would never have demanded the alteration of history, to subordinate a great and learned woman who tricked her way to the head of Christendom. The alternative which the Catholic presents to every man is: celibate devotion to God, or potentially married devotion to the ordinary affairs of life. The papacy is the height of the Catholic's conception of devotion to God; and one of the excluded sex could never have occupied Christendom's highest seat, if their teaching is right, without enduring shame to the church, which it must do everything to wipe out.

Joan of Arc, whom modern scholars identify as an actual witch worshipper who never regarded herself as a Christian (compare Margaret Alice Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology,* Oxford, 1921, Appendix IV, pages 271-276, and other authorities) and who was therefore guilty of the churchly charges for which she was ultimately burned at the stake at Rouen, has suffered a strange metamorphosis. Chosen by popular thinking as the national hero of France, the church, almost five hundred years after her death, solemnly elevated her into the list of Catholic saints. Pope Joan, a far more learned woman, "in great esteem in the city (of Rome), both for her life and her learning," to quote pious old Martin of Troppau, has suffered a fate in strange contrast to that of Joan of Arc.

The latter at best was the military savior of France; the former, who by a presumptuous deception became pope, has been denied historical existence, as far as Catholic authorities go, and have been able to drag Protestant authorities with them.

Is the story of Pope Joan probable? Gibbon, who did not believe in the history of Joan, said that he could not call the story incredible. Not a year passes by, today, without the accurate account of some woman who, for business or other reasons, has lived and dressed as a man, without detection for years or until the time of her death. The monastic garb of the Middle Ages would have made the feat much easier. The records of the church itself contain many accounts of women who disguised themselves as men to enter holy orders, and lived —some of them until their deaths—with their sex unguessed. We can only conclude that there is nothing improbable in the story.

One other objection we have not taken up—that, regarding the matter of the silence of the chroniclers from 855 to 1278 as an accepted fact, no matter its reason, the existence of Joan is disproved by the absence of references to her, during these years, by enemies of the church, such as the emperors of the east, the patriarchs of Constantinople, or the Moslems.

First of all, the thing would seem a disgrace only in continent Catholic eyes. The orthodox Greek church still permits marriage of its clergy; so does the Mahometan church. The Catholics, when they addressed letters to these outsiders, did not remind them of their personal failings, in many cases. Joan's record established her as

learned and virtuous, and a credit to the Western church; its enemies would naturally overlook such matter for praise. It is strange, perhaps, that there are no such contemporary or nearly contemporary references to Joan; but it is not inexplicable.

So far, I have abstained from any theory of my own, as to the story of Joan. But, saturated with these differing Catholic theories, let me contribute one to answer this objection—one far simpler than any of the Catholic hypotheses, quite in keeping with medieval thinking, and a complete answer to this objection.

There is one element, and one only, in the ancient accounts, that sounds like medieval embroidering: and that is the public death of Joan. There is nothing outside the realm of factual probability in the account of her passing as a man in a monastery, in a school, as a prelate, and as pope; nothing outside the realm of probability in her having one or more love affairs, and becoming pregnant. But she was a learned woman, according to the accounts; and it seems hardly credible that she would have taken, in her condition of late pregnancy, the ride in the procession that preceded her public death. As pope, she would have had the power to suppress the fact of her pregnancy, by an abortion, or, if that violated her Catholic conscience, by having the delivery in utter secrecy, and having the child adopted or otherwise disposed of.

The medieval embroidery comes in, if at all, in the delivery being in public, followed by her death. This received further embroidery, which any modern scientific mind must regard as a typical religious delusion, in the

account of the interview with the demon, who warned her that she must bear her child in public. The addition of the dream, in which an angel presented her with the choice between an eternity in hell, with her secret preserved, or immortal bliss, with her shame revealed to all, plus Joan's acceptance of the second alternative, completes the picture, and adds a typical medieval moral: that God publicly punished the guilty on earth, before admitting her to his heavenly halls.

It is quite as probable—I almost wrote more probable—that the delivery of the child was secret, if indeed the child was a part of the actual history; and that somehow the secret of the sex of the pope was discovered by one or more of the cardinals, either after Joan's death or during her life; and that the cardinals saw to it that the story did not spread widely. This would account for the silence of the enemies of the church on the subject, if this silence needs accounting for. The story would hardly have been entirely suppressed; it may have passed on from mouth to mouth, discreetly whispered as a choice tidbit of papal gossip, until finally, when it was known to much or all of Christendom, it emerged without question in the chronicle of Martin of Troppau, or some earlier writer.

I do not insist upon this theory. But it does, reasonably and simply, wipe out the final Catholic objection to the historicity of Joan.

The story of Pope Joan was once so widely known among our English ancestors, that a popular card game was named after her, in which one of the cards is named Pope Joan. In the appendix will be found the rules

of this game, which is about due for a revival of popularity.

As for the future of Pope Joan in Catholic chronicles, a distinction must be made between the Catholic clerical attitude and the lay attitude. The analysis of the clerical attitude above by no means applies to the lay Catholic. His teaching has usually been to accept the word of the cleric as final, and of the pope indeed as infallible. His own tendency, once he surmounts this teaching, is to hail the truth as surely as any other man or woman hails it. Once he discovers that the whole history of Pope Joan contains nothing discreditable to the Catholic church, and nothing apart from the truth, he will hail it, unless he is forbidden by his clerical superiors.

But even the attitude of the clerics may conceivably change, within a score of years, or a century or so. The church shows wisdom in its power to adapt itself to changing conditions. Galileo, we are informed, once branded as a heretic and forced to recant his discoveries, has been removed from the papal *Index Expurgatorius.* Joan of Arc is now a saint. One by one the citadels of error crumble, even inside the Catholic church; and we may expect ultimately to see Pope Joan restored to her proper place in the papal lists, and honored as she deserves to be.

V

Joan and Her Century

WE ARE, AS THINGS HUMAN GO, A LONG way from Pope Joan and her century. She died almost fifty years before Leif Ericsson, according to the old saga, was driven out of his course for Greenland to his so long forgotten discovery of America. She died two hundred years before the coming of the Normans into England, more than two hundred years before the first Crusade, almost four hundred years before Jenghis Khan stretched his sway from Europe to far off China. She died a thousand years before our own Civil War, and the opening of sealed Japan to the jambalaya of Western culture. She was born while a son of Harun al-Rashid ruled resplendantly in Bagdad; she grew up during the raids of the black pagans, or Danes, upon the English coast, the lashing attacks of Northmen and Saracens upon the body of Europe, the hectic strife of the blues and greens in the hippodrome at Constantinople.

A snarling, writhing, troubled age, where emperors who lived long might learn to sign their names before they died, and filled their imperial treasuries with turnips and eggs from the imperial farms; and a rare, rare scholar knew that a newly discovered letter of Cicero's was fit for something beside being used as a palimpsest

for the miraculous life of some saint. We know not too much of the ninth century, even the most learned among us; to most of us, it is as sealed as the Hittite inscriptions or the names of Solomon's wives. The amplest biography of Joan that has come down to us is brief: is it possible, without falsifying one of her acts, or words, or emotions, to tell her story today, so that we of today can see her life through her eyes and the eyes of her time, in all of its rich nobility?

It is worth remembering, here, how little we know of the lives even of our most resonant contemporaries. Theodore Roosevelt has been in his grave less than a score of years, and thousands of his fellow citizens, I among them, remember the piercing blue of his eyes, the high pitched voice that rose to a squeak in moments of excitement, the bear grip of his handshake. Few men of today wrote their public records more amply than the spotlit Rough Rider president: yet we know little enough of what thoughts passed through his mind, what motives led to his sonorous actions, or, indeed, the real truth concerning many of his public and more of his private activities. A biographer of Roosevelt must write from the outside, not the inside: for it is not given to any of us to be within more than one person, our own self.

Yet it is possible for us to seek to stand within him, or any man or woman, and seek to look forth for an hour—

From those few windows in the tower
That is the head of a man.

We can take what is known of the man's or woman's

life, and collate that honestly with the actions and uttered thoughts of the men and women of his or her time, and do our best to interpret the life, so that others may secure a fair picture of the inner and the outer activity, and of the age. We are learning, now, not to postdate actions, thoughts, and motives: not to give, for instance, thoughts to Queen Elizabeth which could only have come to birth in the time of Victoria or later. We no longer dress Jesus in the costume of an Italian magnifico of the Renaissance, as so many of the painters of that period did; we turn our faces from Hamlet in a derby and plus fours. This is the art of interpretative biography; and the account of Joan's life, which follows, comes under this classification.

Hers is a difficult period to deal with. In writing of Alfred the Great, who lived in the same hundred years, Chesterton writes:

> His century like a small dark cloud
> Drifts far; it is an eyeless crowd,
> Where the tortured trumpets scream aloud
> And the dense arrows drive.

And here are more lines of the same description, which must be quoted:

> When the ends of the earth came marching in
> To torch and cresset gleam,
> And the roads of the world that lead to Rome
> Were filled with faces that moved like foam,
> Like faces in a dream.
>
> And men rode out of the eastern lands,
> Broad river and burning plain;

Trees that are Titan flowers to see,
And tiger skies, striped horribly,
With tints of tropic rain. . . .

And men brake out of the northern lands,
Enormous lands alone,
Where a spell is laid upon life and lust
And the rain is changed to a silver dust
And the sea to a great green stone. . . .

And there was death on the Emperor
And night upon the Pope. . . .

It is in something of this mood that any study of the life of Pope Joan must move.

Yet there was learning still, as the records attest. Alcuin, that Englishman who was the most learned man in Europe in Charlemagne's time, lived four years into the ninth century. Hrabanus Maurus, the erudite abbot of the resplendant monastery and school at Fulda, which Joan attended, had been a pupil of Alcuin's; and he, in turn, sent out such pupils as Walafrid Strabo, abbot Loup of Ferrieres, Otfrid of Weissenburg, Joan herself, and the turbulent Godescalus, whose teachings Hrabanus afterwards combatted so vehemently. Even Hincmar, archbishop of Reims, was learned; bishop Prudentius of Troyes, Wenilo of Sens, Ratramus or Bertram of Corbie, Florus of Lyons, were distinguished for their learning. It is even said that Leo IV, who preceded Joan, was isolated among the popes of his century, except for Joan, for his learning.

We have the skeleton of Joan's life: how shall we

proceed to enflesh it? We know, from the old records, that, in France, Joan vanquished abbot Loup of Ferrieres, Ratramus or Bertram of Corbie, and St. Anscairus, that monk Anschar of Corbie who first preached to the Scandinavians, in the scholarly disputations that were so popular in that period. How, for instance, is Joan's biographer to deal with these disputations? No one knows what were the subjects talked about; or which side of the subject, in each instance, Joan took: for, as an accomplished logician, she could no doubt, as the others could, sustain either side with facility.

The one thing that must be kept in mind is, that the subjects under discussion must be the subjects which were foremost in the minds of the ninth century; and that the attitudes must be such attitudes as would have been taken by thinkers of that century. Thus Joan and Anschar are made to discuss a reported miracle; Joan and Bertram expand upon the matter of veneration of the saints; and abbot Loup (Servatus Lupus, to give him the name he preferred) takes the side of Godescalus, the side he actually took in the controversy that shook the whole church in this period. All are authentic themes of the century, and authentic attitudes on these themes. Beyond that, the faithful interpretative biographer can not go.

There are wild things narrated in the story—a woman who gave birth to three hundred and sixty five children at one birth; the miracles achieved by the great toe of St. Vitus, patron saint of Saxony; St. Colman, his cock, his mouse, and his fly; the maggoty existence of St. Simeon Stylites; the infinite sinfulness of wigs, and the

useful lesson of the pelican; and, wildest of all, the Christian attitude toward woman. But none of this is imagined by this author, not even the smallest part of it. All this is taken from authentic pictures of the century, its uttered thoughts, its contemporary words. The life of Pope Joan is a true picture of all that is known of her, with no additions but those her own century would have made; and a truer picture of that century. It was a gross century, as well as a lovely one; as life is gross, as well as lovely. Both elements appear fairly.

There are certain anachronisms which the more erudite will discover—never in the actual history, but only in the overtones. It was a later pope than Joan's age who announced his bargain list of cash absolutions for all crimes. In this biography, a similar list of absolutions is accredited to a minor priest of an outlying land. John XXII did not invent the idea of a bargain counter for crimes; it must have had its humble roots, before it could grow vast enough to appear with papal sanction. Such a humble root is shown, and frowned upon, in this biography. Beyond this venial and not uncharacteristic use of later happenings, there is nothing in the life which might not have passed through Joan's own mind.

To sum her up: she was a very virtuous woman, who loved only twice, and for love each time; who was unequalled for learning and wisdom in Christendom; and who deserves this belated restoration to her rightful position among the noblest of women.

PART II

THE LIFE OF POPE JOAN

The Death of Pope Joan

CHAPTER I

A Monk and His Maiden

THE MONK, EYES BLEARY, FACE RED FROM endless mugs of strong ale, teetered back and forth on twitching legs at the foot of the vast table that centered the abbot's refectory. He did his best to narrow his eyes, to hold in steady view the frowning face of Bishop Ealhstan, that lorded the candle-lit room like a thundercloud cloaking a sunset. "But, your reverence, I have no will to leave Sherborne. It is a godly place—"

"And you're a godly man, Friar Cythbert, and the word of God has plucked you by the nape of your godly neck, and is about to plop you down in this heathen hell-hole your ancestors and mine came from, to cram the words of Christ down their godless throats." The bishop, a half head higher than the highest man in the monkish community, threw his lion's head back, and glared, lips clenched. He had daunted kings and legates often enough; was a mere monk to hiccup away his decree?

The trembling old man seated at the right hand of the bishop put trembling fingers together, leaned over toward the episcopal ear, and quavered something in a queer speech. The bishop turned in irritation to the pale-faced clerk at his side. "What does he say, this time?"

Friar Cythbert lunged forward, and took the words

from the interpreter's mouth. "Am I a learned priest, he says, or learned only in imbibulation? To expound the Frankish text, do I say my matins in ale, my angelus in mead, my vespers in spiced wine, and my Pater Noster in all of 'em? The reverend father is a Frank, speaking the Frankish tongue; tell him I learned it before I'd been weaned from my mother's dugs. Tell him I speak the speech of the Romans, and the Greeks, and these godless Britons, and that I was born speaking Saxon, the speech the angels use in the courts of heaven. I'll tell him, reverend father—"

The bishop snorted impatiently. "I forgot that you were only sober on odd Sundays in Lent, Brother Cythbert. Tell Father Hildwyn," curtly he ordered the clerk, "that Bishop Ealhstan does not make mistakes. His master, the emperor, called on me for my three most learned clerics to send with the gentle message of Jesus to these bastardly Saxons. Brother Cythbert, you can get as drunk as you want tonight; but, if you're not a sober man by high noon tomorrow, I'll have you dipped in the deepest pool in the Yeo, until you've swallowed enough cold water to float a fleet of the black pagans. Take your stinking breath out of here, and God be with you." One vast sweep of his hand, and the affrighted monk backed into the shadows, and tumbled somehow out of the hall.

Once in the refectory of the cloisters, he ignored the riotous roars that welcomed him, and subsided upon a bench, head clenched in gyving hands.

"Come on, Cythbert—"

"—Your ale's stale . . ."

"Deserting the ship of fellowship this soon?"

One brawny brother lurched on tipped toes behind the collapsed man, and crashed his broad palm against Cythbert's back, sending his body clumping upon the floor.

Cythbert rose, flame in his eyes. "You misbegotten son of a stinking sycophant, I'll teach you to— Our Father, what I haven't been through, this last half hour!"

"What's the matter? We knew old Scarface sent for you—"

Cythbert threw wide his hands for sympathy. "Brothers, the devil has got into the reverend father! Here I am, as comfortably fixed as a mouse in a drum of cheese, and his reverence the bishop is shipping me off to Saxony!" Wide bibulous horror was in his eyes.

"Saxony!"

"You're not leaving—"

A pert-faced deacon fixed beady eyes on the condemned man. "That was the venerable Hildwyn, the abbot of St. Denis, who was closeted with our abbot. I learned from one of his equerries that the most Christian emperor, Louis the Pious, is scouring England for learned priests to rivet the work of great Charlemagne among our heathen ancestors. But—there must be some mistake! He has not sent for me—"

A roar of laughter, not kind. "You! D'you think a learned priest is a man who knows only his books, and doesn't know a Saxon calf from a Welsh ankle? —Doesn't know ale from essence of dogbane? Not for you, Cenfrith; stick to your vellums, and leave learning for men who can cosset and tumble a wench, as well as exorcise Belial and Beelzebub." It was the crinkle-faced old friar at the head of the table who spoke; and all knew he knew whereof he spoke.

The brawny brother who had sent Cythbert from his bench to the floor swaggered before him, arms solemnly folded over a portly paunch. "You go, Cythbert—God is calling you. Old Scarface said that, my sacred rib of St. Helena upon it! You go, and leave Gilberte to me!"

"But I have no will to go!" Evidently he had heard only the first of the man's words. "The bishop says God calls me; why doesn't He tell me so, directly? I'm a bit suspicious of interpreters; and the bishop's interpretation stops short with a sword thrust, or a buffet from a battle-ax. Leave England?" A wide unanswerable query, as he paused to drain the nearest mug of ale.

"But—to see the world—" The pert-faced deacon's eyes woke at last.

Cythbert wiped his chin on the sleeve of his robe, and surveyed the scholar disfavorably. "See England, and you've seen the world. I was born in this green England, on a rainy day. It's rained ever since, but I love it. This is the land Noah came from; we've got a flood all the time. This is the land I came from. It's in my blood, my brawn, the very bones that bear me from here to there, from there to here, from drink to drink to drink to drink." He roused himself suddenly. "I was born here; I live here; I want to live here; I want to die here; and if I find they don't speak Saxon in heaven, I'm coming back here. Send me to Saxony?" A groan, as of a damned soul.

"But other lands, they say, have things to see," some one fed his mood.

"There's no land like England. My ancestors came over here naked pagans, clothed in the skins of wild

beasts. They left a brown land; they found a green one. They were fighting men; I'm a fighting man; the bishop's a fighting man. They found stags to chase, mast for their swine, women to take, men to kill. They left the red light of their burning from Land's End to Tweed: the bellowing of the tempest, the howling of the thunder, with a sword for a bride and a body to plunge it in—so they lived, and laughed, and loved, and bore us who came after, to live and love and laugh after them; to eat and drink and be merry after them. Hot meat for the wolves, food for the ravens, blood for the thirsty soil, women for the clench—Ho, drain another mug with me to England, England, Eden on earth as sure as God made grasshoppers." As the ale mounted to his head, the hiccuped words fell into an old rhythm, and his feet capered solemnly to it.

The rest nodded agreeing heads.

"We have kings who kill their scores of kings, and whose sons call them cravens if they die in bed. Our kings lop off a carl's head, and pickle it, as a Christmas gift to their brother kings. A worm and a dragon are two worms, to be trod on." He broke into a rude chant:

> "The worm became frantic, the foul insidious stranger,
> Veined with waves of fire, hot and warlike fierce;
> He clutched the bared neck with bitter hands of bane;
> He was bloodied with life-gore, the blood boiled in waves!"

"You know your Beowulf better than your credo," jibed the pert-eyed sub-deacon acidly.

"I know both better than you," taunted Cythbert. "This is my England—"

"—Which you are leaving," continued the interpreter, "as a learned evangel of Christ's word."

"Leaving Gilberte to me," added the brawny swaggerer.

Cythbert subsided heavily upon a bench nearer the table, and thoughtfully sipped a new-filled mug. "Which I am leaving," he agreed morosely. "And Gilberte with me. She is my woman; I took her; I leave her for no carrion kites to unflesh. Where Cythbert goes, she goes!"

"But, brother, you can't—"

"—A woman, amid the dangers of the long journey, and the savage wildernesses of Saxony—not to speak of the savages there—"

Cythbert chuckled. "Imprimis, she goes with me. Finis, she goes with me. There." Down went the rest of the ale.

The crinkle-faced monk at the head of the table nodded. "There is reason in that, brother. But—in her condition . . . She looked a bit swollen, when I saw her last."

"—Four months gone, if she's a day," corroborated a monk who specialized in healing, both by herbs and by relics.

"What if she is great with child? Our ancestors bore their young in the swampy morasses of that pagan hell on earth; Gilberte can do as well. She goes with me. Well, brothers," rising sorrowfully, "my heart is split apart at this; but God has called me, as well as the bishop, and I leave at high noon tomorrow. While there is still a little soberness left in me, I'll go to my

cell and bundle up a few things, and have Gilberte do likewise. Then I'll come back, and drink you till cock-crow!"

With one final mug all around, he left them.

Instead of going to his cell, Friar Cythbert strode, still a bit unsteady of footing, past the dormitories, to a little gate on the south side of the cloisters that opened out on the slow wooded slope down to the river. He muttered a confidential word to the drowsy brother who was watchman, and the gate was opened for him.

He stood, shivering at the outer cold, facing a huge starless night. There was a mournful soughing, as the damp wind tussled with the drenched branches of the oak forest. A far-off vixen barked brittlely; the hooting of an owl came from nearer at hand; there were weirder noises. The devil and his legions were abroad; no night for a God-fearing Christian brother to be venturing forth, at the risk of being tempted by some plump-breasted demon into eternal damnation. Well, it was but a sorry bowshot to the cluster of houses where Gilberte lay. Drawing his robe closer about his shivering body, to keep out the icy rheum of the night, he bent his head against the driving wind, and buffeted his way forth.

One thing the huge night did: it cleared his brain of the fumes of the ale, as if by magic. He could drink the abbey dry, when he returned . . . .

His roughened knuckles beat a rude tattoo on the door of the third house. "Open, in God's name, if you would not have these pesky mistdrops turn into icicles on my nose. It's I—Cythbert. I seek a word with Gilberte."

The portly widow who kept the house unsocketed

the bar drowsily, and opened the door. "Mercy of Mary, what a fright you gave me! I thought sure it was the Danes, and I'm far too old to be raped again too often. Come right in, Father, while I rouse the poor child."

She lit a torch, hanging in a bracket, with a coal from the drowsy brazier, and waddled off. Friar Cythbert rubbed his chilled hands together, stamped with his feet, and at length, the chill rubbed away, disposed his body thoughtfully on a bench against the wall. A light step down the hall, and then she stood smiling at him drowsily in the doorway. The red gold flare from the torch woke her hair to red gold; her blue eyes had the lure of far summer seas. Around her body she clutched a woven blanket of undyed wool. "I did not dream that you could come tonight."

He threw out a possessory arm, and brought her close against him. "Give us a kiss, lass; you look a morsel fit for a bishop. Aaah! There—that's better. Now sit you down, and harken. Tomorrow, at high noon, we start out, you and I, for Saxony."

"Yes, Cythbert," obediently. If he had said Taunton or Tartary, she would have agreed as blindly. She had travelled twice to Ilchester, and once as far as Long Sutton; the rest of the world was just somewhere beyond.

"You are not my wife. I have no wife, Gilberte." He laid it out as patly as if it were a disputation with a doctor.

"No, Cythbert." She had heard it all before; and, like a wise woman, conveniently forgot it, to give her man the pleasure of saying it all over again.

"It is thus," he continued sonorously, "that I es-

cape condemnation by the decretal of old Pope Siricius, as augmented by pronouncements of great Leo, great Gregory, and many more. I might have married you, if I had been a less godly man. This is certainly the most popular crime the length and breadth of Christendom. More than half of the monks in this abbey are married; and surely, if that is true of the abbey of St. Mary the Virgin, it is more true of the rest of the Christian world. The bishop's married, and doing well at it; the saintly Swithin cherishes his wife, and the odor of his sanctity is known even to the Danes. I have maintained my chastity by eliminating all of my concubines but you."

She giggled. "The Danes eliminated most of them. If they'd have looked up into that oak tree, they'd have found me."

He cleared his throat gruffly. "So it was I maintained my chastity. Now the word of God has come to me, speaking through his humble human vessel good Bishop Ealhstan, summoning me to carry the saving message of mercy to our benighted ancestors the Saxons. Shall I leave you, or shall we twain journey as one? It was thus that the problem presented itself to me."

"Whatever you say, Cythbert," dutifully.

He frowned portentously. "I owe a duty to you, my dear. These ravening wolves in the monastery here have cast lewd and lascive eyes upon you. To be specific, Friar Egwulf offered to take you; half a dozen more looked the offer; even that spindly little Cenfrith, who's never been able to get a woman, would kiss my great toe for the privilege of tilling my soil in my absence. More than this, there are virgins in Saxony, make no doubt of it; for Christianity has not yet spread through-

out the land, and some of its blessings are as yet unappreciated by the heathens. I thought of that too . . . . But no man, with a good steed, turns him loose at sight of a flock of wild mares; you have shared my days in the Eden of Sherborne, and you will share them in the Gehenna of Saxony."

"Yes, Cythbert. Will—will we be gone long?" Her eyes began to sparkle in widening wonder. This was a more elaborate oration than she was usually treated to . . . .

"That is as God decides. The journey is long. We will go over land and sea, mountain and desert, forest and barren plain— Just think of everything you ever heard of: we're going over that. I had hoped to have you here, in comfort, until your child was born. Once I had intended to be bishop myself, perhaps even pope; ever since Gregory's time, it's seemed quite the thing for a monk to aspire to. But I've gotten on, and you know the Dorset ale is excellent, and I'm not worrying about it any more. But if a monk has a good chance to be pope, the bastard of a monk has a much better chance. Keep that in mind, about the son you're going to have. Don't let it eat meat in Lent; they cut off your head for that, in Saxony. Take especial pains with it; after all, you're the mother of a possible Pope, now that I've told you what's in my mind. At high noon tomorrow we start. We'll have gold, my dear, from the emperor's self; he's the one who heard about me and my learning, and wrote to old Scarface, 'Your monk Cythbert is the one man I need to turn the Saxons from robbers, pagans, pirates, heathens, cutthroats, murderers and rapists, to decent Christian drinkers.' He's paying the tariff; we'll

have gold to buy clothes such as you never dreamed of, and wines and ales, fat fowls and hot smoking venison, and anything your heart desires, that I approve of. At high noon you'll be ready, by the big oak on the south road. Join me quietly there."

She nodded shining agreement.

And now a round smile creased his face. "And, now that God's word has been shared with you . . . ."

Possessory fingers opened wide the woven blanket, and there was no more speech between them for a long space.

CHAPTER II

And After Nine Months—

IT WAS A SOBERED CYTHBERT WHO STOOD before the bishop the next noon; and Cythbert needed all of his soberness to make tail of the bishop's maunderings, much less head of them. For Ealhstan of Sherborne was tipsy, no doubt of that: he had drunk the venerable abbot Hildwyn under the table, he had drunk his own chamberlain under the table, and he had almost succeeded in his final effort, to drink himself under. He stood, stiff and sturdy enough, the ivory scar from temple to chin white lightning against the sullen red of his face: and thickened speech and thicker faculties sent off the three monks on their far pilgrimage.

To Cythbert's disgust, young Cenfrith had been selected as one of the missionaries; the third was a kindly old scholar, whose brows the gray fingers of death had already stroked. Shrewdly Cythbert summed it up: one man, one parchment, and one corpse—or nearly: these it was that Ealhstan was sending. Old Egwulf's departure would save the abbey a funeral; Cenfrith's would rid it of a pious bore; only he himself was still a man, in this man's world. He saw already that he would have to convert the Saxons by himself.

The trembling old abbot of St. Denis looked bleary-eyed too; but the bishop wasted little heed on him. His

words went to Cythbert: of this road and that, of a ship that would be waiting in Dover waters, of Mainz far up the Rhine as the first objective. There was a confused blur of words concerning gold for the journey, a wallet solemnly consigned to him. There was food for the first stages, and three of the abbey's horses at their disposal, with serving hinds to tend them.

Cythbert vaguely plead for a fourth steed, mumbling obscurely of a daughter in Christ who would fare forth with them.

Ealhstan lurched this objection away. "Young Cenfrith has never looked upon the flesh when it is pink, old Egwulf is too late for the livest Shunamite, and that leaves you, you hulk of ale and learning, of earth and heaven. In God's name, set your trull on the pommel before you, or trudge the grassy stone yourself. It's no matter of mine if you bury old Egwulf out of sight of St. Mary's walls, or if the Danes conveniently take Cenfrith as a thrall—though God knows what they or any will make of him. Three horses you get, and no more. And now, God's benison . . . ."

He got through the blessing very creditably, a beaker of spiced wine in his hand at the end. He was still at the doorway, arguing out of his hiccups with the envoy upon the triple nature of the Holy Spirit, when Gilberte slipped from under the shadows of the big oak, and mounted the saddle before Cythbert. And so to Saxony.

The three abbey hinds, sent by the bishop to return with the horses, trotted tirelessly beside them, as they made for Ilchester, where they would strike the Fosse Way northward for Bath, and then bend eastward toward

distant London. Cythbert went over his directions again and again, correcting them by his own shrewder knowledge of the land: for the bishop was no scholard, and he and Cythbert both knew that he was turning the direction of the journey over to the learned monk. It would not be so difficult, if only the black pagans kept away, and the forest outlaws, and the wolves, and the ranging hosts of the evil one. It would not be so difficult. . . .

Once out of Ilchester, he stopped his brief cavalcade abruptly. "Cenfrith, one thing his reverence told me specifically—to see to it that you strengthened your damnably flabby legs, by stretching them along this leg of the journey. Tumble down."

"But I'd rather—"

Cythbert drove his double-burdened steed against the other man's horse, and lowered into the scholard's face. "One yap from that pious gullet of yours, and I'll buffet you one on the mazard that you'll never wake from till Gabriel's trump. 'I leave him to you, Cythbert,' said his reverence; 'make a man out of him,' quotha; and a man I'll make out of you, much as it pains my heart to aid the devil in any of his handwork. This is man's work before us, my son; before we make Mainz, you'll be leaving bastards from Thames to the Rheingau, and proud to do it. Tumble down!"

This was no time for argument, here in the gloomy depths of the sullen wood, Cenfrith decided. He dismounted, and took his place beside the trotting hinds; while Gilberte, smiling demurely, took her seat on the mid palfrey, with a display of knee and thigh in the process that brought joy even to the heart of old Egwulf,

"As I was saying," the abbot testily regained the tale, "this princess Quenthryth slew the child, and had him secretly buried. Yet note how murder will out, in God's good time! A white dove was sent by God himself to Rome, bearing in his beak a letter writ in gold in our tongue—writ by God's recording angel."

"Marvel to hear!" sonorously chanted an ambitious young monk beside the abbot.

The reverend father nodded. "This letter, describing the exact place of the boy's burial, was dropped on St. Peter's altar. Pope Pascal himself lifted the missive, perused it, and sent his favorite sub-deacon, Valentine, clear to Mercia, to unbare the perfidy of the princess. The mound of earth was delved into, the saintly child's body was found, and a vast multitude bore it to its interment in Winchelcombe. And now mark how God's avenging hand punishes the impious, the fratricide, the female Cain! So far, no one was sure whose hand had struck the lad; but tongues began to wag against Quenthryth—"

"I myself heard them wag," corroborated the priest who had spoken before. "I was in Winchelcombe at the time—"

"And can bear eyewitness to all I state," crossly continued the abbot. "Stung by remorse of conscience, this evil woman stood in the sight of all in an upper chamber at the window, and sought to cry aloud the psalm commencing, 'Be not silent, O God, at my praise.' But God himself laid his finger upon the wicked tongue, and the words that came forth were, 'Praise my at, God O, silent not be!'"

and caused the young sub-deacon to cross himself fearfully.

At Bath, they turned east toward Silchester; and there they bent their course again, and made for London. The nearer they came to the capital, the more troubled seemed the state of the land. There were rumors of the black pagans seen on the seacoast; there were mutterings of mad doings in Mercia, for all that Cenwulf had taken the king of the rebels, Eadbert Pren, and had let his eyes be picked out and his hands lopped off. Evil doings: in London, where they lodged with brother monks, even the noise of the harp was hushed, at the tale of the new miracle at Winchelcombe.

Cythbert made careful note of the details of the marvel, for the edification and confusion of the pagans to whom he was going. It was an abbot himself who told the tale in its fulness. Cenwulf of Mercia, grown old, and nigh death, had entrusted the care of his young son Kenelm to the child's sister Quenthryth.

"I myself saw the child," corroborated a priest seated beside him. "No more than seven he was, a lovely child with flaxen hair and a face like a cherub."

"It was so," the abbot hastened to continue. "And then came the devil, with a vast stink of brimstone, and tempted the Mercian princess to put an end to the boy, to add to her power in her father's kingdom."

"I myself was there," the priest interrupted again. "I smelled the brimstone throughout the castle at Winchelcombe, and knew evil was afoot."

Cythbert himself spoke. "We smell brimstone in St. Mary's almost every night, just outside the postern gate; but the sanctity of our Saxon brothers is so great, that the devil has never dared enter."

There was an awed silence, with no interruption, at this.

The gratified abbot nodded, eyes shining. "No sooner had she reached the words, 'Lord the with me malign who those of work the is this'—" he paused impressively, "than all at once her two eyes burst from their sockets, and splattered upon the page that she was reading. Father Egbert here has seen, as I have, the psalter, wrought with silver and gold and inlaid with precious stones, stained eternally red with the gore of her eyes that fell upon it. So may God deal with all fratricides!"

Ah, this was a God worth serving, Cythbert glowed within himself—a God whose eyes reached from Heaven to Mercia, and whose finger gave the wicked no rest on earth or in the hereafter. Surely the Saxons would hurl themselves pellmell into baptism, once they learned of a few marvels like this!

London and its sputtering hearths left behind at last, the cavalcade, augmented with other learned priests from other monasteries who had been collecting in the chief city, set out toward that port which the ancient Romans dubbed Portus Dubris, and which was properly named Dover, in God's speech. And now the landscape altered to swamp and marsh and brackish waste. The sluggish swollen rivers dragged themselves drowsily along. Thick mists clung low about them, lifting to reveal their violet flanks, suddenly blackening in a brief pelting shower, and then palely gray again. The oaks still ringed their way, but there was a new tang in the air, a briny tang that woke the heart to an old gay song too long

forgotten. Their feet were slimed, but their hearts were lifted. Gone was the lulling call of smoky rafters and the hearth-embers; their hearts were set upon the prancing hordes of wild white-maned sea-horses, upon the whistle of the wind, with its wild tales of storm and triumphant riding of the storm.

Many of the company of clerics had their wives or their women along. A monk of Bristol, unaccompanied, attached himself to Cythbert, the latter could not be sure whether for love of his learning, or due to the smouldering lure in Gilberte's eyes.

"It is wise for a monk to have the comfort of woman's breasts ever handy," the holy man of Bristol, named Wolstan, agreed. "But, seeing the state the wench is in, it is a God's pity you did not journey by Bristol first, and line your wallet more goldenly than you can have done."

"Is there gold, then, to be had for the plucking at Avon mouth?" Cythbert studied him closely.

The monk's eyes were fastened on Gilberte again; but it was an appraising look, as of a vendor who studies his wares with shrewd eyes. "Bristol is our port of export to Ireland, my friend; and our merchandise is men and women—chiefly of the Britons, of course; but a comely Saxon wench is welcomed as well. Custom is for the buyers of these slaves, who become the vendors to the Irish, to make their wenches pregnant. This almost doubles the price, in Irish eyes. You could have gotten a pretty pile for a wench as far gone as your comely trollop."

"One cannot sell one's cake, and munch it too,"

Cythbert sagely commented. "As for me, I was man before I was monk, and as both I suffer from a man's normal pangs of hunger. I think I do well to take my wench along."

In this pleasant discourse they covered the last stages of the journey, until at last they wound out of a forest, past a row of blackened corpses hanging from low oak limbs, into a sight of the sullen gray sea. And now the blood leapt like men stirred by a bugle in Cythbert's veins, and the veins of the other travellers. Old Egwulf, the aged monk from St. Mary's, fell on his knees to give thanks to his God, who had vouchsafed him a sight of the sea once more. And then, with no further words, he toppled gently forward in the slime, and breathed his last.

They bore the body into the seaside village for interment, lodging for the night in a tavern much patronized by wandering men of God; and, at sunup, distributed themselves between two rocking two-sailed ships that were tethered not far from the shore.

The sails were raised, the prows bent seaward, a last waving of hands, and they were off. A villainous enough passage it was, that soon drove all thought of God out of Cythbert's head. All of the monk's past came up before him, what with the jouncing of the rude waters: especially that huge meal he had consumed the night before, to fortify him for what came next. Gilberte lay moaning at his feet, wretched and retching; few of the monks and women escaped the ancient tribute demanded by the pagan god of the waves. The sailors roared at the plight of the soft landsmen, and helmed the ship so that she jounced the more.

The channel crossed at last, the boat bent to the northeast, toward the mouth of the mighty Rhine. Close to the shore she sailed, a shore like an infinite multiplication of the lower reaches of the coast of England left behind them: marsh and waste and shoal, with ever the silent hordes of the vast oaks, and darker cone-bearing trees, crowding down to cool their feet in the lapping waves.

At length they reached the wide mouth of the river, and the last trace of nausea left the last of the travellers. There was some food on board, and the captain augmented this at point to point up the river, haggling like a fish-wife at the bustling markets. And ale they had, all that they could drink. Voices were lifted high in praise of God, with constant outbursts of more savage ancient song to the sea and the fray, the chase and the couch. So it was at last that they came to a vast widening of the river, and on the right side saw the gleaming marble pillars that marked the city of Mainz. There was even a bridge that they must pass under, before they could disembark; and no sinner arrived purged in heaven ever gave thanks more devoutly for his deliverance, than these overseas journeyers when they could fall on their knees on God's firm land once more.

Brother Wolstan, of Bristol, had visited this land once before, and he called Cythbert aside for a conference. He had attached himself to the group from St. Mary's, on the death of Egwulf; and, since the puny sub-deacon Cenfrith was still little of a man, in spite of the rigors Cythbert had imposed upon him, the leader of the little group welcomed his company. What if his eyes strayed

often, when there was light, in Gilberte's direction? In the dark, Cythbert knew well enough in whose arms she lay; and a man's eyes were his own. Once let him get a sight of these Saxon virgins, and all things were conceivable.

"Mainz is a vast city," Wolstan confided to his new leader, "but the gem of this land is Nieder-Ingelheim, no more than nine miles as the kite flies. It was there that mighty Charlemagne was born, I care not who says otherwise; his palace is a sight such as your eyes have never seen, with sculptures and mosaics sent all the way from Rome by Pope Adrian. The wine is unequalled in any land, the maidens are as lively as crickets, the hunting is unsurpassed. What say you if we lodge there, so that you and the studious castrate and the fair Gilberte may learn more of this land?"

Cythbert pursed his lips doubtfully. "There is Saxony waiting."

"It has waited a long time; it will not scamper away in the night while we prepare our souls for the arduous tasks before us. Think you it is not seemly to crowd God's work too much. A task like ours needs prayer and meditation in advance; souls should not be saved as a man downs ale, but rather as a wise man sips choice wine spiced with all the sweet savories of the East. Is it not so?"

A nod, weighty, decisive. "There is much reason in your words, brother Wolstan. To this Nieder-Ingelheim, then, we four will go: the monk, the maid, the friend, the booklouse, to meditate and compose our souls for the salvation of Saxony!"

Within two days, they were lodged, the four of them, in a little house above the swirl of the Selz, which had been abandoned some time before, and, but for a scurvy plague of tiny bugs in the floor where the bedding had been, was like a terrestrial Paradise.

The four of them set to work with a will, and soon had full order restored. Cythbert, who directed most of the work, and had most time on his hands, secretly cast his eyes abroad upon these Frankish women that he had heard so much of. But they were a bit skittish and shy, in the presence of the huge monk; and, in talk with the monks of the neighborhood, there were so many words of one woman to one man, of adulterers having their tongues slit and then being put to death, of adulteresses stabbed to death by the knives of their companions, or forced to hang themselves, to their eternal damnation, that he wisely decided that Gilberte would suffice, for the time at least.

Wolfstan mourned a little, when Cythbert tactfully shared this with him: he had been of a different mind, no doubt of that. But one day he returned from an ambiguous oak festival, followed by a shrinking little mouse of a maiden who called herself Hilda; and now there was no more mourning in the house the five of them occupied.

Time enough to have her, too, for Gilberte was now far gone with her child, and the minds of all of them bent upon the important event soon to come to pass. Many an argument Wolfstan and Cythbert had, as to whether it would be better to plan the boy's future life toward St. Peter's chair, or to make a merchant and sea-

rover of him. Thus they whiled away the time, while Gilberte consulted Hilda, and through her several wise women of the neighborhood, and every day felt her burden sag lower and lower.

There was snow on the ground, and whistling winter in the air, on the day that her confinement started. An old used couch had been acquired somewhere, and the wise women drove all from the house but Hilda and the groaning Gilberte. There was much to be done, and this was woman's work. The dove's dung had been flung on the brazier, to clear the air of evil spirits; and, while it had not been possible to secure any part of a unicorn's horn, there was a stock of usnea, or moss scraped from the skull of a hanged criminal; there were crushed sow bugs, Burgundy pitch, fennel seed, and many other healing substances.

The confinement was slow. All day it lasted, and when the three monks returned to the house, almost at sunset, the baby had not yet been born. They saw Hilda dart from the doorway, and make for the forest, evidently to pluck some forgotten herb that had become essential. Wolstan and Cenfrith stayed discreetly away; Cythbert, heart torn at the sounds of agony from within the house, crept closer and closer, fascinated by the yawning door, and what went on within it.

Pray God the baby came forth as babies should, and a sow-gelder need not be called on, to bring forth a mangled child from a mangled mother!

A wilder scream of agony, and, disregarding all caution, Cythbert flung himself to the ground, belly down, and squirmed to the door to get a view of what

tortures poor Gilberte was undergoing. One dreadful picture he had, of the groaning girl strapped to the couch, which stood on end in the husky hands of the wise women, and was being jounced violently up and down upon faggots piled upon the floor. Devil's mysteries, these! Surely man was brought forth in sorrow. Shivering with abashed fright, he slipped back and joined his companions at their ale.

As the sun sank, a tiny girl was delivered to the wearied mother. Cythbert wept into his mug when he learned that it was not a boy, and could neither be pope nor sea-king. "John he was to have been; I suppose we'll have to name the little squaller Johanna, as the closest we can come to my planning." But, before morning, in his celebration of the end of the agony, he had forgotten even that there was a child.

So it was that little Johanna, or Joan, came into the world.

CHAPTER III

Joan Astounds the Doctors

INGELHEIM WAS A PLEASANT ENOUGH MARket town; there was always the easy bustle of the marketplace; ale and red Rhenish to drink with the local monks and fathers, and a rare visitor; the emperor's palace to visit, with its hundred pillars of gleaming marble; and the infinite forest and cragland all around them. To the little prattler, Joan, it was heaven on earth: for it was all she knew, and any coign of the square earth is heaven, until the blight of wider knowledge and comparison depresses it to mere earth. Gilberte was happy and contented too: she knew nothing but shrewd obedience to Cythbert, and the joy of seeing her little flower of girlhood brighten upward toward womanhood.

But it was not enough for Cythbert. He and sluggish Wolstan still nodded their heads together, as they mapped out their conquest of Saxony over the mug or the beaker. Cenfrith had long since gone on into the pagan north, and a ribald story had filtered back of what had happened to him at the hands of three lusty Saxon maidens, at one of their midnight oak festivals. But this was no doubt an invention of the evil one. Solemnly the two crony monks agreed that he was destined to be a saint; and, for their parts, they did not grudge him his prospective halo.

Wolstan could drink with Cythbert as long as there was drink to be had. But he had never been a bookish man, and the tongues of the ancients were sealed to him, even that Latin speech in which the services of the one church should be uttered. To him, the Son could be like, or the same as, single or double natured, divinely in agony or divinely aloof, and no matter; Constantinople might approve or suppress the sacred pictures, as a queer stuttering Greek monk had told them, and it was all one—for, to Wolfstan, Constantinople might be in Spain, for all he knew or cared. When he was drunk, Cythbert was happy, and Wolfstan was enough; when he was sober, which uncomfortably happened on an increasing number of icy mornings, his shaped brain and skilled logic hungered for the food of subtle controversy, the heady wine of learned disputations.

And so, when Joan was seven, he moved into Mainz. Wolfstan and Hilda took over the little house, and would not be shaken free of it; as the comfortable physical indolence of middle age settled down upon Cythbert, he regarded the Frankish maidens less and less, and determined to make an honest woman out of Gilberte, and an honest child out of the treasure Joan. Pope Siricius was wormfood long ago; so were Leo and Gregory; marriage of monks and priests was the rule, and why oppose it? The archbishop of Mainz himself solemnized the belated rite, and it was with a wife that Cythbert set up housekeeping in the great pulsing heart of the Rheingau.

And what a city this was! The ancient Celts had builded it first. The Romans had built a fortified camp here, and had flung the bridge that joined this to the

camp across the Rhine. What if tribe after tribe had wiped it out, during the wanderings of the peoples? Bishop Sidonius, three hundred years before, had built a new city of it; the great Boniface had made an archbishopric of it, and it was already the home of the chief prelate of all Germany. Boniface was buried in its imposing cathedral; one could walk the streets, and find Roman temples and houses still standing, not to speak of the vast ruins of the aqueduct outside the town. The religious center of all Germany; and Germany was now the world, or most of it. . . .

When he was sober—and, in Mainz, there were increasing periods of sobriety—Cythbert spent much of his time instructing the young fertile mind of Joan in all the lore that he possessed. He taught her the speech of the Angles and the Jutes, as well as of the Saxons; he taught her the barbarous jargon of the Celts, and the holy speech of Rome; he taught her the winged words of the Greeks, and still stranger tongues. Not out of musty books of grammar, for there were none of these to be had with ease; but by disputing with her the history and doctrines of the church, until her young wit was sharpened like a stake whittled to impale a bear. He still held his own well, in any disputation in any of the cloisters of the abbeys and monasteries of the city; but he could always triumph in his learned arguments with the growing girl. Or, at least, he told her so: and who was she to contradict the giver of life to her?

She was but ten, when he brought word of a new marvel to her. "It is Hatto, the monk, who shared this with me. In far off Spain lived a girl, twelve years old.

One morning, she woke up, and sought to clothe herself. She was a girl no longer; overnight, her body had altered to the body of a boy. Hatto himself learned it from a Spanish abbot, who knew a monk who had seen the boy's body, which had been a girl's. Is not that a marvel?"

"It is a marvel, father. If only you could have seen it, or I!"

He nodded, half morosely. "Now if a girl in Spain can do that, Joan, what's to hinder you from matching her feat? I've told you before, I had planned you as pope in Rome—as a boy, who would mount up the rungs of the church, until you stepped upon Peter's platform at the end. That's all spoiled, now; you're a girl. But they do say girls are turning into boys, in Spain. We might make a pilgrimage there—"

"Yet of a thousand birds, only one is a phoenix," she objected, with clipped logic.

"True, daughter. Prettily said. Well, we'll see what we'll see. Now, concerning this matter of the errors of the Donatists—" And he was off again, in fluid Greek, with the youngster matching his every point with another even better.

Gilberte took no part in these discussions; truth to speak, she sniffed at them rather openly, and said that the youngling had better be at home busied with her needlework, than shortening her life with all this useless learning. She had grown a bit stout now, and more than a bit shrewish, what with the rising cost of living in the bustling city, and her irk at Cythbert's increasing absences, due to his habit of spending most of his hours drinking with fellow monks, who were also planning the

conversion of heathen Saxony. Of the two of them, Joan much preferred her father's company, drink and all. How much more marvelous, to sit spellbound, among learned men, listening to the magical tales of some stranger who had been to Rome, or far off Constantinople, or even holy Jerusalem itself,—than to be busied about such unimportant chores as housework and swine-tending!

Her bright eyes missed nothing; but her tongue was bridled, by a sort of precocious wisdom. She could have told her mother, if she cared to, of certain jaunts her father had taken, alone or with some fellow spirits among the monks, to certain houses in the lower section of the city, which Cythbert gravely explained to her were occupied by noble females who devoted their lives to charity and high discourse, especially with wandering monks. These females, little Joan noted, were clad with indiscreet revelations of breast and leg, at times; they greeted her father and the others with surprising familiarity; and evidently this converse alone of all things on earth was unfit for the ears of youth, for she was invariably sent on an errand by her father, when he was closeted with one of them, or else she was ordered to wander in the neighborhood until the sessions were ended. She never mentioned these, at home. . . . Nor did she tell Cythbert of visits that Wolfstan of Ingelheim was in the habit of paying her mother, and even Hatto and a few others, when Cythbert was known to be away with some of his Mainz cronies. Once, when Hatto appeared, and her mother had sent her off to market, she had returned unexpectedly to the house, and had unintentionally seen the two of them together in the house, in an intimacy

that amazed her as much as it enlightened her. She had tiptoed away without being observed, and had kept her counsel. She did not mention this either: she had not forgotten her father's teaching, that there were some things which even the good God overlooked.

The monk grew prouder and prouder of his daughter's scintillant and subtle wit, and her lore in many tongues, as she grew older. There was one especial day she never forgot, which marked her own twelfth birthday. It was just before Yule, and as a special favor, in honor of the day, she went trudging off with him for a visit to the cloisters of the chief abbey in the city.

The watchman's eyes were wide, as he greeted them. "Go right into the refectory, brother, and take your young skirted clerk with you. All the way from Rome he's come—Brother Paul, of the Benedictines; and the things he isn't telling! I could hardly pull myself away to answer your knock. . . ."

The room was packed with an awed gathering from all the neighborhood, Joan noted; it was all they could do to gain a place at the lower end of one of the tables, so dense was the throng. The strange pale-faced visiting friar was speaking, as they entered: "I was in Rome myself, on the day that he dug her up. The good saint had appeared in a dream to the holy pontiff, and told him where she was buried, which no man else had been able to find. Pascal himself led his clergy to the spot; and he himself drove a spade into the earth, and discovered the body of St. Cecilia clothed in a robe of tissue of gold. At her feet were linen rags soaked in her freshly shed blood, and by her side were the bones of Valerian

her husband. It was a miracle, my brothers! All Christendom gave gifts to the new church, named in her honor, which soon housed the sacred relic; and it was from Pascal himself that I secured this sacred finger bone from the saint's own body, which I have seen miraculously cure the scurvy in every land I have visited!"

"That old hermit by the Eigelstein has scurvy," volunteered an awed deacon. "If he could visit you—"

"Tomorrow I shall look him up. But that is not all I have. You will see. I was commissioned by Emperor Louis himself to secure sacred relics for many of his churches, and three splinters of the true cross, a thigh bone of St. Mark, a whole hand of St. Clet, a robe the blessed Helena had worn, and even some of the hair from the secret parts of St. John the Baptist are now in cathedrals in France, due to my unaided efforts!"

There was a gasp of admiring wonder from all.

"What my eyes have not seen! The greatest relic of all, the foreskin of Jesus, is now in a crypt in Rome, guarded by holy fathers who let none but popes and emperors and kings behold it! By unspeakable good fortune, I was vouchsafed one peep at the sacred memento of our Lord. I myself have a rib from St. Theodora—"

"Marvelous!"

"—Some of the hair from the head of St. Anne, fingernails of St. Hyginus, and a great toe that once belonged to St. Vitus, the patron saint of Saxony."

"Miraculous!"

"There is no ill I can not cure, by one or another of these holy relics. Why, as I was leaving Neustria, we

came upon a woman wounded in the groin by men who had ravished her, and left her dead. One touch of the great toe, and she was well again, and a virgin again! My own eyes saw it!"

"I should like to have looked into that," grunted a scoffing old pagan of a monk, named Boniface after the first archbishop.

"But is that not contrary to the will of God, to make a virgin out of a woman who has ceased to be? If that toe is still working, I know quite a few wenches who'd like to see it, before the next nine months is up!"

"The bones of one of the saints—" began the pale-faced visitor, doubtfully.

Joan's clear young treble sang out, "It is contrary to the will of God for a woman to be forced to yield her virtue, as was this maiden in Neustria. God himself, if properly approached, would undoubtedly perform a miracle in any such case. It is recorded that he performed the identical miracle in the case of St. Theodora of Alexandria, and at least a dozen more saintly Christian maidens who were forced to yield to barbarian ravishment."

An awed silence. Then, fervently, from Brother Paul, "The young lad is right. Set him before me; let me see his face."

Proudly Cythbert pushed his way forward. "Only, it is no lad, but a learned Christian maiden, and my daughter, holy brother."

"She shall sit beside me; for there is wisdom in her heart, and golden eloquence on her tongue. There. I have come, too," he continued, "from Constantinople,

where I saw the poor victims of the image-breakers. Know you, my brothers, the penalty imposed by the patriarch Theodosius upon holy Christians who reverenced statues and paintings of the holy saints, as God commanded us to?"

"Killed 'em?"

"—Threw 'em to the beasts in the circus?"

Cythbert's head was pushed forward. "They were demanned, had their tongues pulled out by the roots, and were then crucified head downward! So it is."

Joan shook a positive head. "Their tongues were cut off, and their eyes torn out. This was the decree."

"A marvel!" the respect in Brother Paul's voice was contagious. "Our learned little clerk knows the decree aright. So it was; and I myself saw the victims of this red persecution, still alive, but untongued and blinded. What lies they tell there! They claimed that Christians in Constantinople, inspired by the Holy Father at Rome, put images in place of the crosses in the churches!"

"No!"

"Impossible!"

"It is so. They claimed that these images, swathed in fine linens, were taken as godparents for their children; that the first hair of the newly born was offered to them; that priests of our church scratch the colors from the paintings, and mingle them with the wine of the eucharist, Christ's blood—"

"What dreadful profanation!"

"—And even make the communicants take the bread of the eucharist, Christ's body, from the marble hands of the statues."

"God will damn them all!"

"The Council of Paris, six years ago, indicted the pope for error, for permitting these things," said a visiting Neustrian monk flatly.

"In his own time the holy pontiff will answer that council," said Brother Paul as curtly. "Leave that to him, the head of us all. I left Rome, after the dedication of the oratory of St. Gregory in St. Peter's, with the holy fourth Gregory in person presiding. Can you tell me what other saints' bodies our holy father placed within the same oratory?"

There was a troubled silence. Joan cudgelled her brain vainly; she had heard, she was sure, from Hatto, or some other. . . .

A tall, handsome flaxen-haired monk, standing just beyond the eloquent visitor, suddenly raised alert eyes. "St. Sebastian and St. Damian?" he asked, voice faintly troubled.

"Good for Brother Cenwulf! I have Mercian blood in me, too," cried out the monk beside him.

But Joan, in her excitement, stood erect upon the bench, and threw back her head triumphantly. "Was it not Saints Sebastian and Tiberius, holy brother?"

Paul lifted his hand in blessing. "The damsel has spoken truth. God has filled her mouth with verity, and no doubt destines her for some noble role in the history of the church. Sebastian and Tiberius it was; all honor, holy maiden, to you, for your learning and your right teaching."

Her eyes met, at this moment of tingling triumph, the alert blue eyes of the young monk Cenwulf. There

was admiration in them, and something else, which caused her suddenly to let sink her own.

She subsided upon the bench, and listened to the further stories of the travels of the visitor; but she felt a little drowsy, and spoke no more. Cythbert had already vanished vaguely toward the rear of the refectory, in search of a livelier movement of the mug or the beaker. The hot fetid air of the crowded room must have made her sleep, leaning back against the wall, body pressed close between two intent listeners to the marvels that flowed from the lips of the visiting monk.

She awoke some time later, at a touch on her body. Hatto, face flushed, was kneeling before her, evidently a little tipsy.

"O-oh!" She sat up suddenly, pushing his hand away.

He stroked her slim breasts familiarly. "I wanted to be sure you were really a girl, and not a lad in disguise," he leered at her. "It's a miracle, with your learning—you are a girl. Your father's off somewhere, singing Saxon hymns to Yule with a group of the monks: he'll never find his way home tonight. Come on, little one," with a possessory chuckle, "I'll take you home to the bright-breasted Gilberte. I've been with her, much of the afternoon, as it is."

She stared at him, perplexed and a little troubled. "I can find the way home alone, if I can't find father—"

He winked grossly. "I have a holy relic I want you to see, in my own cell. You come with me." Disregarding her faint protest, he had her hand in his, and made for the door.

A firm step beside them, a quiet voice at her ear. "May I walk with you? There was one matter you mentioned that I would like to talk over." It was the young English monk, the one someone had called Cenwulf, whose quick eyes had observed all that took place, and who had acted as quickly.

Hatto regarded him with great disfavor. "See here, brother, this young lady is going to my cell now. I have a relic she wants to see—"

Cenwulf's eyes met his aloofly. "By now, it should be. Permit me to go with you, and see it too."

Confidingly Joan slipped her hand in his. "Oh, he must come. He comes from our own England, my land, though I have never seen it. There is much we must talk over—"

Brother Hatto frowned ominously. "Young clerk—"

"Brother Cenwulf, if you please—"

The other man continued morosely, "This is no chick for your plucking. She's too young. I'm her father's closest friend—"

"And I am her friend," said Cenwulf firmly.

Joan's eyes were shining.

"In that case," grunted Hatto, "you take her to your cell. My time will come. God be with you."

So it was that the young Mercian walked home with Joan. They walked slowly, for there was much to be said, and slow sweet minutes of silence, as they drank in the soft humor of the night, and watched the winter stars multiply themselves infinitely on the snow-enameled ground.

No, Cenwulf would not come in. But, at the end,

he held Joan in his arms for one breathless minute, and let his lips brush hers lightly. "Good night, dear child, and God shield you from all ill to your last hour!"

CHAPTER IV

The Tryst in the Forest

HE WAS ONLY A VISITOR AT MAINZ, JOAN learned—a distant relative of that Cenwulf who had ruled Mercia a dozen years before, and now a student monk at the resplendent abbey of Fulda. He was leaving on the morrow for the great school, to resume his studies under the stern abbot, Hrabanus Maurus. He promised to see her soon—as soon as he could return to Mainz. It was almost three years before she saw him again.

They were troubled years, for Joan. In his few sober hours, Cythbert continued his lessons to his daughter; but he was in his cups most of the time, and only her access to the library of the cathedral permitted her to widen her knowledge of the world's lore. Moreover, her father had tired of Gilberte at last, or, at least, had tired of his furtive sampling of other sweets: the mother was still his only wife, but there were two comely wenches, that Hilda who had once lived with Wolfstan, and a girl from Mainz, who now shared the house with him. More and more often Gilberte's time was taken up by the monk who had hailed from Bristol, or Hatto, or one of the brothers from the abbey here: more and more often Joan felt herself neglected by them.

Yet there was much to win her mind, in chance

disputations with the few learned clerics that frequented the archepiscopal see. Word had come from the Eastern empire that images had again been sanctioned. A French abbot had preached baldly, the Easter preceding, that it was better for a Christian to frequent taverns and brothels, to commit adultery, rape, incest, and even murder, than to abstain from adoration of statues of Christ, the virgin mother, and the sainted martyrs. In vain Joan pointed out that Charlemagne himself had condemned an earlier prelate, for saying no more; the Frankish opinion, at Mainz, sustained the sermon, and many a friar took advantage of it to achieve both the adoration and the catalogue of acts coupled with it.

Joan, emerging from girlhood to womanhood, kept close within herself, as much as possible, and no longer flaunted her learning. On more than one occasion, she had much ado to avoid wandering groups of outlaws, who descended suddenly on the town, seeking wealth to enjoy, and maidens to cosset. Once she barely escaped from a tipsy monk, who chased her all the way home from a deep oak wood high above the Rhine. But he was too fuddled with wine for her to blame him much, even if he had caught her; and, fleet of foot as she was, she found even this chase amusing, once she had made sure she would not be overtaken unless she willed it.

Her chief danger, if she could have realized it, did not come from wandering ravishers: for, after all, but for rare cases, these did little lasting harm to a woman; and they were rare, and usually avoidable. The real danger was too near, too familiar, to be seen: the lazy good-natured luxury of her own home. Gilberte, disre-

garded largely by Cythbert, took men as they came, with little discrimination; the father, especially when aled and wined, was never reluctant to follow a tempting glance, and catch up with it. Hilda stayed; the girl from Mainz left, and her place was taken by a nun from a nearby nunnery, and then by two hot sisters from Lombardy who had come to Mainz in company of a papal legate, and were left by him there; and their places by unnumbered others. Where the blossoms were ripe, the bees gathered; Wolfstan, Hatto, a dozen more, rarely let a week slip by without seeking and finding some consolation in the little house below the cathedral.

And Joan was a blossom who was ripening; and, in tentative good nature, one by one the bees hovered over her, seeking the forbidden nectar. Even Cythbert, vaguely sensing in her the keen white flame that he had once been, and was no longer now for so long, could not resist clipping her waist for a long caress whenever she came near: and, what he took, others sought. If she had yielded to the grape or the malt as these did, she would have yielded that more that men longed for: but something in her recoiled from what was the slow poison and befuddlement of her father and mother and the rest; and, after a disturbing evening of such caresses, she slipped quietly away to sleep alone, leaving the rest to mate as they had a mind to.

One by one the men who were familiars at the place sought to wake her to their wills; and, when she shrank away, they found an easier prey. With Hatto, it was different. He was a shrewd monk, who had journeyed much, and seen the world, and known pallets from the

Palatine to the pyramids. Since his first rebuff, the night of Joan's twelfth birthday, he had weighed rightly the worth of the burgeoning maiden, and bent all his wit to achieving it.

Not by crude drunkenness: that might be the way of the Frankish maidens, especially in the rut of the lurching oak festivals—that was no way, he adjudged, to win a maiden who had the lore of the ages at her tongue tip. Not by cruder violence: that would give him a hot red moment, and no more; and he longed for the slow subservience of the proud young will, the self-corruption that is so pleasing to the connoisseur in women. He used his wit, and came closer and closer to his goal.

He wanted Joan to want him for a lover: and constantly he came nearer to this. In her presence, at least, he wore a sobriety that glittered, framed by the drunkenness of the others. With her, he flaunted the wit, the worldly knowledge, that she had hitherto met largely only in books. Restless little bitch, with a souse for a father, a sot for a mother—what stood in his way, but the slow passage of time, until the ripened fruit was ready to tumble at the first touch of the wind? So he reasoned, and shrewdly angled for: and, with no comelier lot in store, Joan almost yielded.

It was hard, it was impossible, to seduce her mind: she knew too much of what went on about her. The way of a monk with a maid was as familiar a story to her as the upward beating march of the sun on high, the great star, God's brilliant candle, the noble light-giver. But his call was shrewd and constant: flattery of her

wit, half said praise of her ripening loveliness, sighed hints of his long need of a mate—these insidiously undermined the bank, until it was like to crumble into the swirl of his desire.

Three years went by, in this fashion: and, more than once, he had openly offered to take her with him, in a journey to the bright capitals of the world,—without her final nay. If she could not do better . . . . Something in her spread its arm outward, seeking a clip and a caress: she was too young to know that the will was more in her, than toward him.

Joan sat, troubled, in the library of the cathedral, mulling over these and more matters. The tome of Anastasius, open before her, was neglected: her eyes roamed from the minim throngs in the square below her, seen through the yawning window, up to the blue sky and the ivory clouds that skurried in the wind rip. Human concerns so small, God's sky so vast . . . . Her breasts lifted; tonight, she had given her word to Hatto that she would go with him to the oak festival, to study the quaint Frankish custom. Or practically given her word: perhaps this would balsam the unease in her body. If only it were sunfall already, and she were beside him, shoulder to shoulder, dissolving into the violet velvet night toward the ebon wood, with its golden heart of upflaring torches and upflaring hearts!

She turned in exasperation from the window, the sky and the throngs below, the vellum before her—and saw, staring oddly at her, half a dozen feet away, a tall stranger, handsome, flaxen-haired, sea-eyed. And then in a moment she knew he was no stranger. "Cenwulf!"

He was beside her at once, hands clasped in hers. "My learned little doctor! I have sought all over town for you—at the market, the stadthaus, the cathedral refectories—even in the walk below the Eigelstein. The esteemed Gilberte, your mother, said—"

"Oh, my dear scholar!" She could not take her eyes off his face. "I thought I would never see you again."

He chuckled softly. "As a last chance, I wondered where I would be, if turned loose in this mart of monks and Mammon. And so I came to the dim world of books; and here you were. How—how have things gone, with you?"

She shrugged aloofly. "Not so ill, but that the devil might have made them worse; not so well, but that God might have bettered them. How tall, and. . . . and studious, and learned you look!"

Again the comfortable chuckle. "It was you, not I, chick, that spoke like a scholar to that Friar Paul, with his ribs and his great toes from God knows what animal carrion piles throughout the world."

"Cenwulf!" in shocked surprise.

A shrug. "A bone is a bone; and, in the eyes of a devout believer, a monkey's bone is as good as a monk's, every day. I have seen four great toes of St. Vitus, since I saw you; they are the year's style in relics; and, unless the good saint was a centipede—"

She laughed, against her will, biting rebellious lips, chastising him with her eyes. "But this is not reverence, Cenwulf."

A sober nod. "You will outgrow a child's reverance,

Joan, as I have done. I reverence the square earth, the tumbling seas, the chanting storm, the mounting peak: I reverence sunrise and sunset, the jet pall of midnight and the silver rain of starlight; I reverence whose fingers shaped these, whose heart willed them. Shinbones of saints I abominate. But, come, we will have time enough for that. Tonight, after a supper with the cathedral deacons, we'll climb some rigid hill, until we can cup stars in our hands! I've planned it all—I have so much to say to you—"

Perversely irked by his planning, without her aid, she shook a determined head. "Tomorrow night, maybe, these things. . . . Tonight I am bidden elsewhere—by another," slowly, shrewdly watching him.

He flushed, stiffened, drew faintly backward. "Oh. —Another," dreamily, unbelievingly. "Some one you—you care for?"

"I love all of God's creatures," cryptically, "and a monk is surely among them. It is that godly monk Hatto—you must remember him— The one who wanted me to see the relic in his cell, that one night so long ago. . . ."

"You have ever visited his cell?" anxiously, with etched furrows in his brow.

A light lovely laugh. "How curiosity rides the inveterate scholar! What's it to you, if I've disputed theology with all the monks of Mainz? You were away, long enough. . . ." Then, in a sudden burst, "No, Cenwulf. This is the first night. . . . And he has been so kind to me, and there is that we both seek to see together."

"Could I come along?" hopefully.

She shook a determined head. "He did not relish that, three years ago. . . Tonight for him; tomorrow—"

He could not budge her from this. Together they wandered out of the dusky library, and along the walk that led south of the city, with the looped scarlet of the river far below in the sunset glimmer. There was much to be said; and they had ended none of it, before she made him lead her steps back to the town, and bade him farewell until the morrow.

It was not easy, this farewelling him, after so long; she repented of it, every step of the way home. But he had assumed so much. . . . Soon enough, here was the familiar house, with the sweet savor of Hilda's venison spicing the air, and her father greeting her with a roar of welcome, and the offer of his own beaker of spiced wine.

To his amazement, she took it, sipped it, drained it. . . . A reckless imp danced in her heart tonight. She called for another beaker of the heady Rhenish.

Here was Hatto at her side, smiling, shrewdly appraising, subtly ready with a fresh supply, before the first was emptied. "It will be the great oak on the western hill," he whispered, setting down his own beaker after a huge swallow. "Hulda, the wise woman I told you of—from her I have learned all. It will be a sight to swell the girth of the moon, this night!"

She let cares and perplexities slide down some vast slope of forgetfulness, and gave herself to the heady intoxication of the drink and the oncoming night. Somehow she ate, although she had small memory of it afterwards; somehow they left at last, hand in hand. . . .

A confused sense of a cool sobering walk out of the city, a quickened step as the contagion of those hurrying darkly beside them reached her; and so they came into the forest. It was as hidden black as eternal nothingness, at first: only the soft whispering of the vast trees above, the warmer gasps and whispers of their unseen companions, broke the dark solid stillness. And then, off to the right, the dancing red glow of torchlight against vast columned aisles of tree boles; to the left, the dancing glimmer of another torch; then all around them, cohering slowly toward the immense oak that had known so much of spring fired to summer, and autumn warmed against the winter chill.

The night had sobered the clutch of the wine; but the blurring madness of the gathering scorched her into a hotter mood. All a leaping, chanting blur of dark silhouetted figures, of whirling dizzying service around the horned giant blank-eyed below the great oak, of gleam of torchlit ivory flesh and flamelit flaming hair. . . .

All vaguely familiar, like a mass said backward, or in rosy scraps. . . . all vaguely desired, like the uttered word that her tongue had been sealed against so long.

And then, in a moment of clarity, she found herself alone with Hatto, in a glade noisy with its very silence. All around them, the forest seemed to be heaving and sighing in ecstasy, and not of trees alone. She let herself slide down the vast comfortable slope of self-forgetfulness. And then, suddenly, an icy blast of reason and self-understanding swept over her, and she struggled to free herself from his clenching arms.

"Let me up! Let me go! I had no dream— We came to see, not to—"

His arms were cords of fire, binding her to the sacrifice. A chant of golden certainty in his tone: "The spring is come, and the hour of the spring ploughing. The harrow is ready to cleave the willing earth, the seeds are here to be buried toward their harvest: love and the hot clench of love— It is too late now!"

With superhuman strength she sought to break the clench of his arms: in the night of May madness, she was nothing in his grip. She writhed brokenly against her panting chains, as she felt burning lips nuzzle against her neck, lower. . . . She felt her utmost strength flowing into the man, to bind her the more. A merciful wave of forgetfulness. . . .

And then, she felt the Ossa above her flung crashing back against the nearest tree-bole, and a voice cut like a sword through the black heat. "What devil's business is this? I have heard her say no—"

Crouched dizzily against the ground, the older monk gathered himself for the spring. "I'll teach you—"

A sudden torchflare, down an aisle of trees, lit up Cenwulf's clenched height—standing as rigid and immovable as the horned figure had stood beneath the ritual oak, but flaming with a violent anger. Joan, who had dragged herself somehow to her arms, saw the crouched black figure fling itself upward against the tall youth. All of his youth and anger within the two quick blows, and Hatto tumbled back upon the scented sward. One glare of warped black hate from his eyes, and he dragged his body away into the darkness.

"Come with me," said Cenwulf curtly, deigning no other words.

Meekly Joan followed him.

CHAPTER V

Spring Ploughing

WITH STEADY STEP HE THREADED HIS way through the woodland, and started climbing steeply. Joan did her best to keep up with him; but, so violent was his speed, that at the end her gasping breath was almost a sobbing in the night.

"Wh—where are we going?" she panted out, at last.

He turned, blackly, bleakly, above her, and spoke. "Toward the stars: away from the mire I found you in. I," it came forth brokenly, "I am sorry, at times, I am not still alone tonight."

She pondered this, as she trudged behind him. She said no word, until he had arrived at the place he sought —a bleak bald height, level stone clear to the unseen crags so high above the river lost in the darkness below them. She had been here before, and knew what day would show of forest and tumbling slope and scimitar river below: never before had she known the place blank, unrevealing, unresponsive.

He crouched down on the stone, back to her, facing the unseen vast valley below.

She crept quietly, timidly, beside him. "What did you mean, Cenwulf—you were sorry not to be still alone?"

There was a brooding sadness in his tone. "Not my fault, that I have been kept away, so long. There was a

journey back to England, there were stern studies under the old eagle, the abbot—and Mainz was not near, and they would not let me come. I—I left you, a clean white flower of soul and seeking, a lily, a white flame; I come back, and find you a monk's bitch, a bitch in heat, rutting for the clip of the first foul arms that will take you." His voice was vibrant in its bitterness.

And now she smiled softly to herself: here was a disputation worthy of her. "Yet you yourself said that you heard me say No to the man," she argued, in sweet self-control.

He flashed around at her. "Does any harlot do less? Think you I do not know that a loose woman's No is only a bellows to fan the flames until they lick the rafters? You and your No!" with curving scorn.

"I never said Yes to him," faintly doubtful.

"You told me, in the cathedral library, that you had promised this night to another. That was a Yes."

She shook her head, in the darkness. "I had not said Yes; I but said that to you because— Oh, I said it; that is enough. To him I had said nothing, though he had asked me. I— We just went, at the end: that was all. And it was to see what took place, Cenwulf—to study the misguided un-Christian rites of these poor half-Christians—"

"By miring yourself? By sliming yourself? Think you the holy father in Rome can make no canon against murder, until he has slain his dozen? Must I be a leper, to study it? Joan, Joan, where is the girl you once were!" Almost a groan it was.

She took him up more spiritedly, this time. "It is

you, Brother Cenwulf, who are judging now like a man pounding his own head against a stone wall. You do not know why I went; you do not know why I told you I had said I would go; you do not— Where is the girl I once was, the pert, cocksure little fool— Oh, I grant I had learned a few things, more than many perhaps; but you know, as I know, that one thing learned breeds a dozen new mysteries: and, the more I have learned, the less of the all I know. In a valley forest, one sees nothing but the trees ringing one; each step up the hill opens wider, more wondrous vistas of slope and peak, river and bay and ocean, sky and star. I seek the top still, Cenwulf—that I may shrivel in my littleness, knowing that I, high above the last of mankind, am still smaller than the feeblest mote that whirls out of dark into a sun ray, and then forever into the dark again!"

"I too seek the top—" he began, morosely.

She had the bit tight in her teeth now. "Where is the girl I once was, you query? Did you think that little fool was a fly prisoned in amber forever, lifeless, unbreathing, ungrowing? She is grown into the woman I now am!" There was a far tone as of trumpets blowing in her speech.

His wit rose to the challenge. "And there, I think, Joan, was my mistake. I, a youth, am grown into a man. As a youth, I sought learning, and the high peaks of the soul; as a man, I seek no less, and live no less. As a little girl, you sought the same—or so it seemed to me; and now," more confidently, and not admiringly, "you are a woman. A man may hold himself chaste forever, for the kingdom of heaven's sake; a woman hears a different tone singing in her veins—the rut when the sap rises in green

Spring, the itch for lips on her own, arms around her, the bare hot clench of love, the tug of little lips at her swollen dugs, the cares of children and kitchen and cramped house—instead of the starry peaks that lead to God."

"You have never heard," her icy tones sliced his rush of words, "of virgins chaste for life? Even the Vestal Virgins, among the pagans; the horned virgin goddess of the night; the eternally chaste spirit of wisdom, with her back to Hymettos and her face set toward Salamis . . . The history of the church is full of sainted women, who have held their flowers for their bridegroom Christ. Are these things all novel to you?"

"Joan, you are not such as they." There was a disturbing warmth in his rejoinder, which he strove to chill. "No Vestal Virgin ever stirred abroad, the night of the Saturnalia; Athena held her Olympos, when the Bacchantes rioted in the Attic groves; and the Christian virgins cloistered themselves from the gaze of men, much more from such torrents of lust as shake these groves tonight. 'Lead us not into temptation,'—" and he crossed himself reverently.

"I was not—" she began.

His lifted hand touched her shoulder, and stirred her into an uneasy silence. "No, Joan, a woman is a different vessel from a man, and, God says, a lesser one. Put it as you will—you were unwilling, and he was about to force you. But a woman may be forced, and a man may not,—at least, not with any such ease. That in itself shows woman's lesser nature."

"A man may be crushed, and a mountain may not.

Does that rank the stolid hill higher in God's eyes?" she fenced dangerously.

He sighed. "There is truth there."

"A woman is not less, but different. A man can not give birth to young—"

"That tonguey Brother Paul told of a man who had, in Sicily—a miracle, he said."

He was teasing her now, she was sure of it. "When you are pregnant, or one of these monks in Mainz, I will grant your point. A man can not give birth to young, as a woman can; and, without woman's role, there would be no souls to be saved."

His tone in rejoinder was acid. "And you are a woman—Ergo, your task is to give birth to young. Which is what I said, at first—what I said I had forgotten: that you were a woman, and not an unbodied and unsexed companion of my soul. Go ahead, then, and spawn when you will. But not by me," firmly.

Her face flushed hotly, her tone was vexed. "You reject what will never be offered you, my friend—a vast task, that! Yet hearken to me, Cenwulf. I grant you that the state of women among many races of men is low, abjectly low—though even Alexandria had her learned Hypatia, even a sodden Rome had her Cecilia. But among men of our blood—Saxons and Angles—"

"The women," he slashed swiftly, "are what are being tumbled in the woodland below us, now, this minute! Trulls to be trifled with by the first passerby—"

"No," in angry expostulation, "you know that is not just. Women are persons, and not chattels, among those of our blood. The law shields her, as it does a man. She

can hold and will property as a man can; she can stand alone in a court of justice, in mark assemblies, in the witenagemot as in the great meetings of the elders. Your mothers in the generations behind you were no less than their men, make no mistake in it!"

He nodded partial agreement. "This is all so; and, for every lax and lascive Hilda, there is a sottish, lecherous Wolfstan. But, my dear, let us put by general things, and come to our own parting." His words were like a solemn bell intoning the death of a beloved one. "What am I to be, and what are you to be? I am a Benedictine, a brother before God, and my goal is a life of high service to Him I serve. Learning is my path, wisdom in service my constant chore. You may, at best, be a nun, a sacred daughter of the church; but the paths of learning are closed to you, as to all women. At worst, you will be a wife, or a whore: and, in my eyes, there is small difference betwen the mare with one stallion, and the mare who roams loose, taking as her heat demands. You may comfort the distressed, minister to the sick, feed the hungry—"

"—And argue down a council of doctors, as I have done more than once!" Her fighting blood was up at last.

"It is not the custom."

"Did Hypatia bow to the custom? Did Aspasia?"

"They were pagans," stubbornly.

"I will be called pagan, before I forfeit the right to know and think and speak! There have been learned abbesses and queens, princesses and prioresses—"

"—Taught by men," acidly.

"—Who learned from their mothers," quite as

sharply. "—That you should be the one, Cenwulf, to vent this blast of stinking prejudice!"

"I meant nothing against your learning, Joan," he begged pardon humbly.

"You have no right to mean aught against it, for all the Hrabanus Mauruses in the world!"

"Yet this is a farewell," his tone was a knell again. "For I hold with the blessed Paul, and the apostolic fathers, that woman is the gate to hell—"

"Mary the mother of God, for example?" she jibed in her bitterness.

His hand rested lightly on her leg, and stayed there. He gave her no further answer to her interruption. "—And that the godly man's salvation lies in shunning her."

"As you shunned me, by seeking me all over Mainz."

"I did but seek you to bid farewell," he muttered, fleeing her stabbing humor.

"You lie in your gullet, and you know it," she swung back at him. "You sought me, as man seeks woman—I read that in your eyes, chit as I was, three years ago. That is what you seek now, for all of your pious prating. And I'll never take you—never—never—never!"

Suddenly she dashed her two hands to her eyes, uttered a choked sob, and, leaping lightly to her feet, flashed back into the darkness.

He was after her almost as swiftly, with great strides leaping to find her. Nothing . . . but this blank blackness . . . He paused suddenly, to listen for sounds of her movements. No sound, at first; and then, to the right, almost at his feet, a low racked sobbing, heart-breaking, heart-tearing.

"Joan!" He flung himself on the ground beside her, and cuddled her within his arms.

"Oh, I hate you, hate you, hate you! You with your . . ." gulping it out somehow, "—sneers, your jibes, your silly . . . prejudice—"

"Joan, I didn't mean any of it. Darling, darling, quiet yourself, for God's sweet sake, or you'll weep yourself into a megrim, or worse! Darling—"

"Go away," in tragic sobbed tones, as she cuddled herself more tightly into his arms. "I never w-want to s-see you again—"

Somehow she seemed to be fighting to keep him away from her face: and so perfectly she fought, that her head bent backward on his shoulder, her teared face uptilted to the soft stars above. "L-let me go—"

And his lips fell on hers, but not lightly, and clung there like a sinner to the rock of salvation.

Convulsively her arms were around his body, she was straining him against her lifting breasts. "Oh Cenwulf, Cenwulf, how could you—"

The taste of the brine on her eyes was sweet to his lips, and he lingered here, before foraging lower again.

"Oh, Cenwulf, Cenwulf, you mustn't—you mustn't—"

"Since the moment I saw you," his voice pulsed like the warm spring night, "I have wanted you, wanted you, you and naught else in the wide world. I have known—"

"No, no, no, no, no," she said it over and over again, sinking faintingly backward upon the rocky couch. So perfectly she fought him away, that his body soon lay upon hers, and all of him knew all of the sweetness of all of her.

She sat up penitently, after a long sweet hour had passed. "I am the weaker vessel, dear," she whispered, almost giggling. "I fear me you were right—"

"It was wicked, but gloriously sweet," he crooned reminiscently.

"Wicked?" A tearful little laugh. "Was Eve wicked, when she knew Paradise for the first time in Adam's arms? Was Elizabeth wicked, when she felt St. John stirring within her? Was the saintly mother of Christ wicked—"

"Joan, this is blasphemy!"

"Cenwulf, this is love."

He had no words against this golden certainty.

"What will we do now?" She shivered faintly, as the night chill fingered her unstrung nerves.

"Love forever, and ever, and ever," he murmured softly. "I seek naught more of life."

"Cenwulf my dear, you seek much more of life. You seek the high life, and wisdom, and truth, and the kingdom of God, as I do. We have found it together, this night— For surely this has been high, and wise, and true, and truly divine. We were an-hungered, and we fed each other; we thirsted, and we have drunk—"

Below them, in the forest darkness, they heard the crashing of branches. Beast, or man? A heavy noise as of pursuit, then laughter and gurgling throaty sounds, and then silence again, with the night breathing more audibly than before.

"We thirsted, and we have drunk," he repeated after her, as softly and surely as if it were a benediction.

"We thirst still," she said slowly. "For this, and for heights infinitely above this. No, Cenwulf, it is not so:

for heights as high as this—for there are none higher. But different heights, that must be climbed to more slowly, more painstakingly. There is ecstasy awaiting us there, as here—and a different, thinner ecstasy: this the gold, that the fine high silver. We thirst for the same things."

"It is so." He was humble, now, and willing to learn from her.

"And how, my dear, are we to find them together, in this world of Hildas and Hattos, of evil in high places more than in low, of ignorance and foul superstition and lechery? This is tonight: tomorrow comes."

"In two days, I return to Fulda," he said absently. "Two days . . . And—you?"

"And I?" She was willing to learn from him, now.

"I am not willing to leave you here, with Hatto and the foul rest."

"I live here."

"—So no longer." His words were definite.

"But, my dear, you are young, a student monk still—"

"You could be my wife," hopefully.

"No. It is a crime, in the eyes of the churchly law. True, it is a crime as universal as winter's murder of the green of summer: but we will find a way to avoid even a universal crime, Cenwulf."

"But I want you," mournfully.

She laughed softly. "—As I want you. We need each other. We will not starve in this, dear. You go back to Fulda, and soon—"

"No," more decidedly. "I can not leave you here."

"My father and mother—" she began, doubtfully.

"If they will aid you be what you wish to be, Joan, stay with them. They will not— In this one day, I have learned that much. I have no words to say against them—"

"It is not needful, dear. No, you are right. They are sterile, as far as my tomorrow is concerned. No. Nothing there."

"Then you come with me!" Jubilantly.

"But—how? I am a woman, dear; I can not marry you—you yourself do not wish that. I do not see—"

His arm drooped caressingly around her shoulder. "Look at that faint late moon rising far across the river, darling!" The arm draped itself lower. "Oh, how I have lived, looking forward to this night!"

CHAPTER VI

The Flight to Fulda

THE MOON WAS A SILVER SCAR UPON THE pale scarlet breast of morning, when they entered the hushed street that led to Joan's house. Hushed no longer, as they neared the house: their ears were saluted by a ribald hiccuping chorus, with Cythbert's cavernous bass leading the words—

"She hacked the hateful enemy, meditating hate,
With the naked red sword, till she had half nicked off his neck;
So that he lay in a swoon, weakened and mortally wounded.
He lay not dead, not entirely lifeless.
She struck then in earnest, the woman illustrious in strength—"

"Father is never so drunk, as when he remembers his Caedmon," Joan mused.

"Judith was a woman," he teased gently, waking her soft laughter.

Still the tones were roared forth:

"Again the heathen hound, till his head rolled over the floor.
He lay uncoffered; he cringed under the abyss,
And there was plunged below, with sulphur fastened;

For ever afterwards wounded by worms.

Who took my mug? It goes on," as they entered quietly,

"Held in torments, hard imprisoned, in hell he burns.

Down in his dungeon, with darkness overwhelmed,

He need not wish flight from that mansion of worms;

But there ever and ever, world without end,

Henceforth in that cavern, void of vaunts of hope.

Is not that a song for you?" A drunken roar. And then his eyes fell on the two who stood quietly in the shadows that still remained of the night inside the house. "But what've we here? Hatto, is this the young shaveling that violated my daughter?"

Joan took a quick step forward. "Father—"

A gutteral roar: "Away from me, fallen woman! I'll have hands for your, when I've settled with this adulterable!" He had difficulty with the word, but got it out somehow. "Young varlet, do you hear me?" His thickened speech crowded the room.

Cenwulf stepped palely forward. "My ears are good. It has been difficult to hear anything else, the last dozen houses we walked."

Cythbert staggered back against the wall. "He beards me to my face, Gilberte, he beards me to my face—this deflowerer of young womanhood, this monk in sheep's clothing! Answer me, sirrah—are you going to marry my daughter?"

"It's the very man," Hatto, still half sober, crowded forward. "I was walking with the maiden, discoursing of the fifth section of the Nicene creed, when he leaps

out with a cudgel, and whangs me over the head! While I lay unconscious, the drunken young wastrel stole away the girl—and the best I could do, when I recovered consciousness, was to set the hue and cry upon him, and come here and tell it to you, as I tell it now. Unfrocking is too good for him! He should be gelded, and have his tongue plucked out—"

"You picture your own sentence; liars have their tongues plucked out," said Cenwulf furiously. "If you believe that drunken lecher, instead of the sober words of truth—"

"I'll sober you, young monk!" Cythbert would not be denied his moment. "Are you going to wipe out your sin by the holy bonds of matrimony?" He almost achieved it, this time.

Gilberte, simpering beside Wolstan, rubbed fumbling hands down Joan's back. "Make him, daughter— Your father made a good woman out of me, don't forget it!"

Joan sickened of the whole drunken crew. "I am leaving today for Fulda, father. My marriage is my own affair."

"Oh, izzat so!" He teetered back and forth happily. "Daughter of fifteen belongs to her father, don't forget that. Don't forget that! You better not forget it. I'm through with you, you young rapscallion of hell! I'll have you hounded out of town, lashed to a donkey's tail, thass what I'll do. As for you, Miss Fifteen, I've more than a mind to sell you to the Saracens, or barter you to the Burgundians, or ship you back to Bristol with Wolfstan, for the Irish export trade. But I'll do better than that. I'll do better than that. Much better." He

crashed his fist at the table; it glanced off the edge, and the father barely saved himself from saluting the floor. When he had recovered his posture, he stared fishily at the flame-eyed girl. "There's others won't spurn what he's known, tonight. We'll have a little council on it, eh, Hatto? Eh, Wolfstan? Eh, brothers? We'll talk about forgiveness, then. Come to my arms, my daughter—" He lurched leeringly toward her.

"If you touch me, I'll kill you!" No doubt about her mind now.

Cenwulf stood tautly beside her, ready to be her instrument in whatever she willed.

"Go to your room, you disobedient trull," he roared. "I'll see you later, after our little council—"

She leant swiftly toward Cenwulf, and whispered one word,—"Window." He caught it, and nodded, eyes bright. Without another word, she turned and made for the rear room where she usually slept. Cenwulf, with one defiant glare at the drunken father, stalked out of the door, and closed it after him.

On quick catlike feet he circled the house, and stood beside the opened shutters of her window. She stood framed in the weathered casement, a glow of rapture in her eyes. "He's decided it for us, dear. Whatever I do, I'll never stay here another minute. I'll get my things together—"

A belated bird stroke into music above his head. It sang louder to him than the whole drunken chorus from the rest of the house.

Within five minutes, Joan had handed him a bulky bundle, and had sprung lightly through the window to

the green sward beside him.

"Well, off we are, my dear, to conquer the worlds together!" There was a hysteric undertone of anxiety in her voice, for all of her gay bravery.

"You can bide, this night, with me in the cloisters here. I have a whole cell—"

She shook a puzzled head. "Father is safe enough, now; but I know not what devilment his head will hatch before sunfall. Oh, Cenwulf, it's all so dark! A life devoted to learning—" with icy bitterness.

He nodded soberly. "I know. But he did give you a start, in languages, and all. Listen, my dear." He drew her aside against a stone bench, and seated himself. "You are sure you do not will to marry me?"

"—For both our sakes, dear!"

"Good. I accept your wiser judgment. You wish a life devoted to learning—"

"With all my soul!"

He spoke more slowly. "I pursue this life, as a student monk at Fulda."

Slowly it sank in. Wide-eyed, starry-eyed, she faced him. "You mean— I— But how *could* I?"

"Only men can," he hurried ahead. "There have been miracles before, of women that turned to men. A monk's robe—that lovely hair shorn of its glory—"

"You could get me in?"

"Why not? You can pass whatever inquisition they set before you, as to the learning of the church. And then—under the great Hrabanus Maurus—"

"A monk's robe—but where can you get one?"

"I might even get one from the abbey here. But

there's Frankfort next, and Gelnhausen after that. We are all unknown there— Will you chance it, my flower of women?"

"I will chance it, my flower of men. Look you, I'll wait for you at the abbey postern, while you secure your belongings; then off together, shoulder to shoulder, to climb to God!"

Within an hour, they were on the eastward road, their feet set toward Frankfort.

By nightfall, they had reached the Main, and had been transported over to the island where the main part of the city stood. The cowled ferryman smilingly spurned the coin Cenwulf tendered him. "The holy Charlemagne, when retreating from these same Saxons who are your kinsmen, as your speech indicates, was safely conducted across this river by a doe. I am a doe of God, giving my charity to men by devoting my life to this service."

"But you are surely no doe," Joan jested.

"Before God, doe and buck are alike: I am one of his deer, serving his name. Give your coin to more needy ones than I."

So it was that they arrived in the island city; and soon the comfort of a tavern took from their minds the memory of the long trudge through the forest.

Two days they spent here, admiring the city, the venerable churches, and especially the new palace which the emperor had built here for his own residence. On the fourth morning, they set out for the long trudge to Gelnhausen, reaching it about nightfall. One day they inspected the ancient place and the sunny sloping vineyards about it, and then left the next daybreak for the

third stage of the trip. This night they lodged with a holy man beyond Schluentern, and, on the night of the seventh day, they saw the lights of Fulda, and then the walls of the famous abbey.

Cenwulf looked much as he had looked, when they started out; but it would have taken more than a keen eye to identify the companion who bore a pack beside him. In Frankfort, the maiden had had her hair prepared by a sympathetic brother, until it matched a monk's; and here she had secured a hardly worn monk's robe, which straightened out the budding curves of her young body, until she seemed Cenwulf's brother rather than his sister or his leman. She had slept as a youth beside him in an abbey in Gelnhausen, and in the holy man's hut; the incredible had come to pass, and Joan the maid was now English John the monk.

To all but to each other, that is; for the still sweet night hours, when the world could be shut away at last, were theirs, to learn more deeply the lore that they had first discovered together, on the bald crag high above Mainz. Love, to those who truly love, gains depth and ardor with each new encounter; and where the lovers are twain bent on conning the last faint high heartbeat of passion, and studying it as they would a palimpsest by Clemens Romanus, there is never surfeit of the sweet study.

Yet the day was for other matters—for brisk striding over the crackling mast and leaves of last year's harvest, for fording shallow bickering waters and dabbling one's weary sandal-scored feet in icy mountain streams, for sharing bread and cheese and a skin of wine in some

gemmed glade that wooed and won their fancy. Too soon by far for berry, haw, or hip, there were still bark and simples that could be gathered and munched, to ease the way. And always there was high discourse, such as two wandering angels might have envied.

It was in this wise that they arrived, on the seventh sunfall, at Fulda. Each next stage from here on had been rehearsed again and again by the two shrewd young wits; and without hesitation they made for the postern of the dormitories, where Cenwulf knew old Brother Ratgar would be assigned. A few words of explanation, and the student monk and the newer neophyte were on their way to twin cells in the western wing of the dormitories.

Joan's voice had always been unusually deep and bell-like for a girl; her face already had the slim ascetic zeal of a fanatic stamped upon it; the ample robe made her no other than the rest of the monks. At their first meal, in the vast noisy refectory, she had no difficulty in being Brother John.

Then came the summons to appear before the urbane abbot, the learned Hrabanus, whom Alcuin's self had surnamed Maurus, after that saintly Maur who had been the chief disciple of the great Benedict. The abbot did not rise from his seat; a humor in one leg, contracted on his pilgrimage to Palestine a score of years before, still troubled him at times, and added a testy note to a voice elsewise soft as a dove's coo.

"God's benison on you, young Brother Cenwulf. So this is the English newcomer you wish to add to our abbey! Greetings. . . . I had a missive from that uncle

of yours in Winchelcombe, brother, in which he besought word of your progress in the study of Holy Writ. Brother Walafrid tells me that my answer should hold nothing but praise," shrewdly watching the face of the young monk before him.

Cenwulf smiled slowly. "I have too much respect for great Walafrid's learning to offer even faint dispute to what he says," he answered the abbot.

Hrabanus smiled. "Well put. I shall essay to do as well in my answer. John Anglicus, is it?" with a querying look toward Joan, "I should turn you over to Walafrid for testing; but he is in retreat at St. Peter's cloisters nearby, and, lest your youth waste a few golden days in waiting, I myself will question you."

Joan murmured low thanks.

The abbot's small eyes closed reminiscently, his fingers tapped thoughtfully together. "I shall look for no error, from a candidate our young brother brings. Imprimis, how did the saintly Benedict define his monastery?"

Joan's deep bell tones came promptly. "As a school of the service of the Lord."

"What bodily austerities did his Rule ordain?"

Again as swiftly, "Naught but abstinence from flesh meat, and an unbroken fast until noon, and in specified cases until three hours beyond; such cases being—"

"Good. Enough. Who were four of your race, belonging to our order, who bore Christ's word to heathen Friesland and the low countries?"

"Wilfrid, Willibrord, Swithbert, and Willehad," dutifully.

"Again good. And now," he leaned forward, and a harsher look came over his face, "can you word for me the chief doctrinal error of Godescalus of Mainz?"

Joan pondered, and then spoke. "He has substituted, for the preterition of St. Augustine, the error of predestination to damnation. St. Augustine wrote—"

Hrabanus Maurus twitched backward in satisfaction. "You need not remind me of the golden words; I say them in my sleep. Your answers are considered. and weighty, and excellent. Fulda will look for great things from you. There will be no further questioning."

Wide-eyed with delight, the two youngsters left the august presence, and, after notifying the monk in charge of the tables of the abbot's words, joined the others in the refectory for the nightly possets of the good red Rhenish.

When they were alone together, Cenwulf was unbounded of his praise of Joan's erudition. "That last question would have floored me completely, dear,—for all that we hear little but the errors of Godescalus, when any tricky scholard desires to postpone any knotty doctrinal point, to vouchsafe more time for study. For that is the abbot's eternal conflict, to extirpate the last trace of the teachings of the rebel of Mainz. Where could you learn so amply and so well?"

She shrugged wearily. "I am a girl, in a world of men. I am English, in a world of Franconians. I am young, in a world of the aged. I am penniless, in a world of the wealthy. I am pure, in a world of impurity. For I hold we are the purer, Cenwulf, for living as God made us to live, and loving as God made us to love."

"—And learned, in a world of the ignorant."

She shook her head doubtfully. "There have been ignorant ages before us; Cenwulf; but in this modern age learning is becoming as general as acorns. My father could have been one of the learned, if there had been less mead and ale in the world."

He smiled. "If there had been a Joan, instead of a Gilberte, beside him."

She took up the point seriously. "Salvation is an inward flower, dear: Augustine in a sty would be Augustine still, and a hog in St. Peter's a hog still. I think we shall reach it severally, and not as one; though there will be more joy in seeing the twin fields come to harvest, than if alone we strove upward for the city of pearl."

"As ever, you are right, Joan. And now the hour grows late, and there's the night office two hours after midnight. We sleep tonight in Fulda, dear."

Smilingly she let the great robe fall to the floor, and stood like breathing ivory in the dull glimmer of the flare in its bracket. "We will converse of sleep later, dearest. There are other things to be thought of first. . . ."

CHAPTER VII

The Rule of Benedict

THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT WAS GENTLE, and Joan took to it like swine to mast. Four hours of the day for religious duties, and twice four for sleep. As many more were allotted to work; and the humbler brothers did this in the fields, or in the workshops of all of the crafts attached to the abbey. Joan was supposed to have only four hours for reading; but, since, as a scholar, the task assigned her was that of copying, she had almost half of each day to pore over the word of God and of the church fathers, as well as over more recent writings of the learned modern fathers of the church.

Her hand was so shapely and legible, that she was set soon to transcribing the commentaries of the great abbot himself upon Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel; and, this ended, was given the task of making a fair copy of the great De Institutione Clericorum, to be inscribed by the abbot with his own hand to the cathedral library of Mainz.

Of all the brothers, next to Cenwulf she liked the aged Ratgar best. No longer keen and hot in his zest for learning, he had humbly asked for the post of doorman, that he could keep a close eye upon the comings and goings of the younger monks. At gatherings of the

monks, he was usually quiet until called upon; but even bishops looked to him for the solution of any knotty point of church history which had been before their time, or out of their ken. It was he who took her through the glowing new Michaelskirche, built in imitation of the Holy Sepulchre itself, and showed her point by point what his eyes had seen, in his visit to the holy home of our Lord so long ago.

Fulda was the richest abbey in Germany, thanks to constant donations of land and chattels by the emperors. Its renown was so great, as a center of missionary activity and of learning, that day and night it was like to be sheltering some journeying prelate or palmer, deacon or monk, from almost any end of the Christian world. Joan revelled in the discussions and disputations that accompanied these visits, and never failed to distil more out of the words she heard than most who heard them.

In the bright heat of these discussions, in Fulda and Monte Cassino, St. Gall and northerly Corvey, Tours and distant Iona, and in far further spots of learning, the Christian's duty to God was being slowly hammered out. Strangely variant ideas met and clashed, with a bruit like the clang of the swords of Michael's force meeting the battleaxes of Apollyon. And old Ratgar was often the arbiter of these disputes, the final balm upon the irked waters.

There was the keen conflict the night that Hilarion of Mt. Athos was at the abbey. It all grew out of that learned monk's exposition of the godly life of the desert eremites of the East, which kept the Frankish monks

wide-eyed with interest. When Joan and Cenwulf entered the room, Hilarion was hot in the midst of his subject. "Perhaps you think that your scholards, your Alcuins, are as godly as the great St. James. He drank no wine, no fermented liquor, he ate no flesh. A razor, to him, was the work of the devil—as it is to me," stroking his long silky beard challengingly, with flashing eyes. "He was too pious to anoint his body with oil; and a bath, he knew, was a temptation of the evil one. He was on his knees so constantly, that they grew as hard as the knees of a camel. And he never read a book," challengingly. "There is godliness for you!"

"Good St. Boniface shaved his face," the venerable Ratgar interrupted softly.

"It may be forgiven him; though, if I were the good God, I would hold it against him. I myself knew a monk of Arabia who never cut his hair, never washed his clothes, much less his body, wore his garments till they dropped in rags off his frame, and who starved himself till his skin grew like pumice stone, in God's honor. Our St. Macarius slept naked in a marsh six full months, letting venomous flies and ants sting him, to the greater glory of God. He never went forth without carrying eighty pounds of iron, as a penance; and St. Eusebius, his disciple, carried a hundred and fifty, and lived for three years at the bottom of a deserted well. For fifteen years St. Pachomius never lay down when he slept; for forty years St. Besarion did the same. Have you saints in your empire like these?"

Belligerently a young deacon, named Otgar, took him up. "What say you of holy Anscher, who converted a

northerly tribe by turning a river into wine, in honor of our Lord's miracle at Cana?"

"That is the sort of saint I would like to be," a visiting Saxon whispered, in the hush that followed.

"But godliness precedes the power to work miracles; and shaving and bathing are clearly opposed to godliness. We have hermits who wear no tire at all, and crawl about like wild beasts, covered only by the unshorn hair God gives them. We have in Syria and the land between the two rivers that saintly sect called the Grazers, who have never known a roof, whose mouths have never touched flesh or bread, and who live on the slopes of the mountains, eating the grass God furnishes them, like the cattle of the field. If your Holy Anscher polluted his soul by cleaning his body, he served the devil and not God!"

There was a sudden outcry of protest at this; but Hilarion held up a stern hand, and continued. "I had rather have my body one whole mass of clotted filth, than endanger my eternal soul by laving it in water! Think of the holy St. Mary of Egypt, who wandered the desert naked for forty-seven years, expiating her sins, until her flowing white hair was alive with vermin, and her body black as a blackamoor's from mire and exposure. And think of the godly St. Simeon Stylites—"

"To my mind, he would be no pleasant bedfellow," said a visiting monk from the Scots stoutly.

"Hell holds its cells for scoffers. He mortified his flesh by binding a rope girdle so tightly around him, that it festered within his flesh, and bred maggots. There was a stench as he moved, which the unbelievers held

vile, but which true Christians knew was the odor of utter sanctity. The worms fell from his body, as he moved, and filled his bed with crawling holiness. During the year that he stood unmoving on one leg, he ordered his helper to pick up one by one the worms that fell from his sores, and replace them, while the good saint ordered them, 'Eat what God has given you.' All Christendom offers no such model of godliness as this shining light!"

"We of the West," said old Ratgar softly, "hold that the godly man's highest duty is not to save his own soul, but to save the souls of others. 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every living creature.' "

"There was a monk in Spain," Cenwulf ventured, "who cured a donkey possessed of an evil spirit."

"I have known a saintly monk of Sicily, who raised from the dead a man buried a hundred years, that he might be baptized and die in holiness. His troubled soul had appeared nightly for three nights beside the monk's pallet, begging that this service be done. There is God's work, as we know it—the saving of souls."

"It is well known," Joan observed with conviction, "that, when the relics of St. Fingar were being transported to their new crypt, a stag and the pursuing hounds stopped in the full frenzy of the chase, and knelt down to venerate the holy relic. How then can you hold that we of the West are less saintly than your hermits of the desert?"

"Wild boars came from the forest, to subject themselves voluntarily to the rule of the good St. Bridget,

who tended swine," a Frankish deacon added with unctuous pride.

"Or take St. Colman," added old Ratgar quietly. "Who went always accompanied by a cock, a mouse, and a fly. The cock woke him at the hour for his devotions; the mouse bit his ear, until he arose; and, if wandering thoughts came to him, or a sudden call of distress that needed his succor, the fly lighted on the line he was reading, and held the place until he returned. When even the humblest creatures attest the sanctity of our holy men—"

"To you, religion is miracles; to us, it is the befouling of the body, that the soul may be cleansed," Hilarion drew the distinction bitterly.

Joan faced him straightly. "To us, religion is loving our neighbor as ourselves, and serving him as we would serve ourselves."

A hubbub arose immediately; few sided with the young student; but, to her, these few were of more weight than those who cried aloud their differing doctrines.

It was in discussions like these that Joan spent the next four years. She learned the great heresies of the church, and the steps taken to root them out; she learned the doings of the various councils, the decrees of the popes, the lives, miracles, and martyrdoms of the countless saints, the disputations of the doctors.

On one occasion, the visitor of note was the grizzled Cenfrith, from Saxony, whose name Joan vaguely remembered having heard her father mention, as having started from Sherborne abbey at the same time that

Cythbert quit England. To Cenfrith, the sin of the world was carnal copulation among Christians: the married state, in his eyes, and unmarried mating being alike the cardinal sin, hardly to be expiated by endless tortures in Purgatory.

"Woman is the chief snare of the evil one, to lure the souls of men to damnation," he announced positively. "The godly man will hold only that communication with the wicked sex which is absolutely necessary; and the most godly will hold no communication at all."

A prior, who was known to have a house full of concubines, shook his head decidedly. "I have a shrewd guess that this sex you call wicked have shown no inclination to communicate with you; and that this has seeded the bitterness in your heart, brother."

Cenfrith flushed. "St. Basil would only speak to a woman under the last necessity. For forty-eight years, St. John of Lycopolis never looked upon a woman; and, when a woman in distress sought him, the most good saint would do was to appear to her in a dream. Do these things hold no word for our own souls?"

"Yet St. Pelagia," Joan interrupted sweetly, "attired herself as a man, entered the monastery on the Mount of Olives, and lived until her death there—only then her sex being discovered. Did the sight of her alter the godliness of the other monks?"

"I have seen too much of what women can do to men," Cenfrith argued darkly.

"And think of the sainted women in the church. Surely we would not hail them as saints, if they were not dear to God's heart!" More and more English John,

as Joan was called, was being looked to to vanquish opinions which the monks of Fulda did not subscribe to.

"This modern age is an age of wickedness and sinful sentimentality," the grizzled visitor continued. "There was a time when a man would sooner think of pledging his soul to the devil, than of loving wife or child, mother or father, once he had become a true follower of Christ. St. Pior would not speak to his sister, but with his eyes closed; St. Poemen and his six brothers would not let their mother see them, except by promising to visit her after all had died; the great St. Simeon Stylites would not stir from his cell as his mother lay dying outside his door, and only came out when she had breathed her last. Much worse is love of man for woman or woman for man."

"Yet, without that love, you would not be here," objected Joan.

"I would that my mother had been as the sainted Asella, who from the age of twelve vowed never to look upon the face of a man, and whose knees, from constant prayer, became at last like the knees of a camel. If all women were like that—"

"And all men were as you," Cenwulf threw in, "there would be no souls to save."

Cenfrith clicked his teeth dangerously. "We know from St. Gregory's words that a young monk, who did not tear the love of his parents from his heart, but visited them secretly one night, was struck by the hand of God to his death that very day—and that the earth would not receive his sinful body, but vomited it forth each time it was interred. Not until St. Benedict, found-

er of our order, laid the sacrament upon the body, would the earth receive it."

"'Honor thy father and thy mother'—" old Ratgar quoted softly.

"But honor does not mean love," triumphantly. "It is the love of parents or mate that is so wicked."

"Did you ever have parents?" a burly monk put it directly.

"They died before I knew them," defiantly.

"Did you ever have a mate?" Cenwulf threw at him.

"Get thee behind me, Satan," with a fearful look, and the sign of the cross. The monks of Fulda jeered at this; and that very night Cenfrith sallied forth, convinced that Fulda was the home of the evil one.

"It is strange," Cenwulf observed to Joan, as they walked that night out past the lofty castle that dominated the place, "how unnatural a thing a warped mind can make of the gentle teachings of Christ, Joan. Surely God planted love of father and mother in our hearts—"

Joan sighed. "I had it once. And still sometimes, I long for a sight of Cythbert's reddened face, for the sound of his bull roar as some ancient saga bursts forth. Gilberte I think less of."

"But you were less lucky than most, dear, in your parents. Mine were kind to me always; and only the murder of both of them sent me into the order. As for love of mate—"

"'Multiply, and be fruitful, and replenish the earth,'" she quoted softly. "There is no direct word of love there—"

"Yet it is planted deeper in the heart than any other

human hunger, but the hunger for truth and light. We have a strange kinship with the creatures of forest and field, Joan. They share our need for food, our need for loving; only our hunger for truth parts us from them."

"As the sap rises in the trees, dear, and stirs in the buck and doe, the mating birds, the very blossomless herbs of the forest, so does love rise in woman's heart for man,—"

"And in man's heart for woman."

"I know. God puts this love in our hearts, dear Cenwulf, and I have a shrewd guess we should reverence it as much as the pagans do, and thereby come closer to God—in spite of all the maunderings of all of the ill-natured Cenfriths in the world."

And now Cenwulf was troubled. "Cenfrith, and those like him, have on their side weighty voices—what are we two, to pit ourselves against them? The learned Tertullian called woman the gate of hell; Hieronymus said marriage was always a vice; Origen called it impure and unholy—"

"The Church has ceased to honor the words of eunuchs," Joan suggested.

"Yet he is one of her glowing names. Eusebius disclosed that 'Be fruitful and multiply' was unsuitable to Christians—"

"Touching that Eusebius," said Joan smilingly, "I have a query for you. You hold in full with the teachings of the four holy apostles as to the life of Christ, and his death on the cross, and his resurrection after the third day to ascent into heaven, and sit at the right hand of God, do you not, dear Cenwulf?"

"But surely. If this were untrue, then our whole religion is a lie."

"True. Yet it is this same Eusebius who tells us most of the holy bishop Irenaeus of Lyons, one of the greatest minds of the early church. And it was Irenaeus who first mentions the gospels of the four holy apostles—"

Cenwulf flushed. "I know what you are about to say—"

Joan nodded triumphantly. "—Yet says of them that they err most egregiously in representing Jesus as having been put to death, and rising from the dead; since, according to Irenaeus, all knew that Jesus lived to a ripe old age, and died in his bed. Now if Irenaeus erred thus, and in spite of it the church still hugs him to her bosom, high among her teachers, is it not possible that all those who have spoken so ill of woman have erred as well?"

"Well argued, Joan. There are things still hidden—"

"We live in the modern age, Cenwulf dear, not in the backward centuries when these great men lived and labored, and taught as well as they might. God may have had His purpose in having this false teaching spread among his sheep, to hold them from certain mad excesses that the world of the Caesars had fallen into—the abominations of Sodom and Lesbos, the evil ways of Messalina and Faustina, of Caligula and Caracalla. But that dark past is ended, and it is time a voice is raised, leading Christendom back into a sane adoration of that love of man for maid and maid for man that

God himself plants in the breasts of each of us."

He sat, fascinated by the sweep of her eloquence. "Your voice, Joan—"

She heeded him not. "Look you, shall I prostrate myself to kiss the mummied toe of St. Vitus, or the thighbone of St. Gervasius, when I have your toe to kiss, your thigh to reverence?" She flung herself on the sward before him, and pressed her face against his knees. "You are my living saint, Cenwulf; and I choose to worship you, in thought and service, rather than all the dead saints in the calendar."

He lifted her quietly to her feet, and knelt before her. "You are my saint, Joan, and your words have won my heart. Thus I adore you," and, unloosing her sandal, he planted his lips upon the warm rose little foot. "Your voice will teach Christendom a new word—"

"The oldest of all words," her tongue crooned in the singing dark, as her star eyes stared down at the glimmering city below them. "For God is love, and we are of God, in serving love. But come—it is not many hours before the night office, and there are things yet to be thought of between you and me. Moreover, on the morrow I am to be queried by Hrabanus himself as to several martyrs whose names have been as yet unhaloed by the church, to our erudite abbot's great horror. He is sending a memorial of the lapses to Gregory, which I am preparing."

"Think you that the pope has time to ferret out new saints, when he is so taken up with his quarrels with the emperor Louis?"

Joan laughed sadly. "And with more than that—

with his own enshrinement, in this city of Gregoriopolis he has built at Ostia, to mure off the marauding Saracens. But there will be time for all of that, before the birds begin their matins. Come, Saint Cenwulf." Laughingly she handed him to his feet, and together they set off for the abbey world so far below them.

CHAPTER VIII

Into Green England

THE BELLIGERENT ABBOT WAS IN A CHUCKling mood, when Joan came to him on the morrow. He had just returned from a visit to the Frankish capital, and Joan had feared that she might be raked over the embers for dilatoriness in transcribing his Martyrologium, which he intended as a gift to Louis the Pious himself. But there was naught but good humor in his face and his heart, when he greeted her.

"Your hand betters, Brother John Anglicus; I have not seen so fair a line, since Ratgar was young, and my scribe. Tut, tut, I know you have not ended the job; take your time, take your time—Louis the Debonnaire has other things to think of. My lad," he eased his troubling leg over the arm of his chair, and subsided back into his memories, "thank God that you are not an emperor; they have their burdens, more than we simple folk cloistered with God dream of. Have you heard of the latest doings in the imperial court?"

"But vaguely, my lord." It was not seemly to admit how much she knew, when it was plain the teacher longed to tell all.

Old Hrabanus chuckled slowly. "The sovereign pontiff, as you know, has his detractors and his calumniators. On the reports to some of these to Louis the Pious, that the

astute Gregory had not only bludgeoned his way into St. Peter's chair, but had indeed seen to it that his predecessor, Pope Valentine, died at the end of his brief five weeks' rule, to make way for the newcomer—on such reports to the emperor, Louis wrote a peppery missive to the pontiff, and told him roundly he might expect to be booted off of the chair, if he did not step like a seraph thereafter."

"Your highness told me somewhat of this, once," Joan contributed respectfully.

"Well. That started Gregory off with a bitter spleen against the most Christian emperor, which has rankled within his heart until I fear that it is as bloated as a drowned man's belly. Now during the sojourn of certain envoys of the emperor in Rome, a missive arrived from Louis, borne by Father Ingoalde, abbot of Farsa, which dug deep into old and buried matters—to wit, certain complaints against Popes Adrian and Leo, and tedious postponements of these complaints during the papacies of Stephen, Pascal, and Eugenius—all relating to alleged acts of the two former popes, in seizing five great domains belonging to the abbey of St. Mary. Presto, the envoys called upon the pontiff to answer the complaint. He sent a young archpriest, named Hog's Snout—" The abbot leaned back, laughing again.

"I have heard of him; he was an acolyte under Leo, a subdeacon under Stephen—"

"My lad, if there is aught you have not heard of, I have not heard of it either. Well, this Os Porci, this Hog's Snout, did his best: he spoke much of the papal dignity, and denied flatly in Gregory's name that the lands

in question had ever belonged to St. Mary's. Ho! Up jumps Abbot Ingoalde, and shoves a double charge of Liar! Liar! down the pope's throat, and the gullet of this godly Hog's Snout. And out from his pouch comes the original donations of the lands to the convent by King Didier, and the confirmation by Charlemagne.

"The envoys, without more ado, ordered the pope to surrender the lands. Gregory, in a pet, thundered out a refusal to accept the decree, and announced he would hie himself into France, and in person have the emperor upset the mandate of the envoys. Smiling sweetly, the emperor sent word that the decree should be put into effect immediately; the lands were turned over to Ingoalde; and the deed of confirmation was solemnly deposited in the archives of Farsa. You can imagine how all this fanned up the pope's anger against emperors and abbots," a sly twinkle at the end.

"So far, it has been the burdens of popes I have discoursed on. Now for the emperor. Gregory first set to work, and turned Lothaire and the other children of Louis against that pious prince. When this had been engendered into an open revolt, the pope himself came into France, to throw the mantle of the church over the rebellious sons. Up springs the abbot of St. Denis, and politely thunders that the demons of hell are dwelling in the emperor's children; and that Satan himself has come, in the person of the bishop of Rome, to excommunicate the emperor and the bishops who set themselves against the foul plans of these unnatural children. Confounded by the opposition, the pope was about to quit France, when two monks, creatures of Lothaire, pointed out to him passages from

the fathers of the church, and canons of certain Italian councils, naming the pontiff supreme judge over Christendom. With this, he had himself conveyed into the emperor's camp, oozing words of concord, and at the same time—I have sure word of it—buying off the emperor's bodyguard, to desert in a body to Lothaire. Things grew so heated, that I cut short my visit, and am back with you. Finish the Martyrologium, my son; but leave off the inscription, for no one can tell, week by week, who is the emperor, and who the rebel; who the ruler, and who the prisoner. Now, as to those martyrs I had Ratgar send you word about—"

The two heads, the young golden haired one and the nodding old white-haired one, were bent together over the old scripts for another hour, before Joan was dismissed. With great glee she repeated to Cenwulf what she had learned; and soon word of it spread among all the monks, who indeed had small love for the intriguing troublemaker who sat in Peter's chair.

Word slowly filtered in of further doings in the empire: of the emperor's surrender to his sons, in the plain between Basle and Strasburg; of the sending of the empress-mother Judith to be a ward of Louis, king of Bavaria; and of the dethronement of the emperor. A pleasant picture it was for Christendom to contemplate, of the venerable emperor stripped of his imperial robes, clothed as a public penitent, and made to confess in public hideous crimes he had never committed! There he was, confined in the monastery of St. Medard at Soissons; there was Lothaire, signing himself sole emperor in all his decretals; there was Gregory, cackling harshly in the

papal palace in Rome.

And then wilder news—of a revolt in favor of the old emperor, that spread and spread until it put him again on the throne; of the holy Anscairus, metropolitan of Hamburg, sent to Rome with a concourse of prelates and nobles to beard Gregory to his face. Hrabanus shook his head solemnly, as he told much of this to Joan. "There is small joy, my son, in being pope or emperor, in these troublous days. Yet my cordial thanks for the completion of the splendid copy of my humble treatise on the martyrs. For this, my son, and for your long and arduous studentship here, I am of a mind to let you name your own reward."

Joan's heart leapt with happiness, at this unexpected offer. Without hesitation, she opened up to the learned abbot what had been growing in her mind for some weeks. "Father, I have perhaps mastered some of the vast storehouse of learning in our great library; and I long to see and study these lands I have learned of, that my own eyes can scan what is being done in them for the spreading of God's word. If you would give me leave to spend a year or two in travel—"

The old man sighed. "I shall hate to see you go, Brother John. Who will I get to aid me in my next answer to Godescalus? But there is no justice in prisoning a young heart, eager to see the world, to please the vanity of an old man who has seen it. You may go. Only, for safety's sake, I counsel you to pick out one of the sturdier older monks here to guard you somewhat against the perils by sea and land that, God's pity, ravage this fair world."

This too Joan had counted upon. "I think that

Brother Cenwulf would be of great aid, father."

Hrabanus shook his head slowly. "I had thought you would rather choose Brother Otgar, who broke the back of that Thuringian outlaw last year, or some other muscled giant of a guardian. Yet Cenwulf is studious, like yourself, and of your own distant homeland, and I see every reason to approve your choice. So be it. You will see that a comfortable wallet is filled for you by the treasurer of the abbey; I will send missives by you to several abbots, who will afford you special facilities for study; and God's blessing hover over you, all of your journey."

After decorous thanks and a proper farewell, Joan went to find Cenwulf, and break the word to him. Her feet could hardly hold themselves from dancing all the way; her heart danced unceasingly. To see the world, with Cenwulf—what lovelier guerdon could life offer her, than this!

Cenwulf was all heart for the plan, at once. "What we will not see, where we will not go! The whole world. . . . Where shall we go first, Joan?"

"Well, the empire is rather troubled; but there is Italy we have never seen, and the lands to the East—"

His eyes glowed. "All in good time. But first, my dear, let us traverse that England which gave us both birth, or, at least, mothered us both. I have a heart to see Mercia once more, before venturing to further lands."

She was at once in accord with this, and preparations were made for their departure. Joan was half of a mind to stop at Mainz and pay one final visit to old Cythbert and her mother; but caution prevailed. After

all, Joan the maid was forgotten; John Anglicus had taken her place forever; there was no gain in chancing any upset to the smooth life they were carving out for themselves. And so, with a cynical twist of her lips, she determined to have a hogshead of Rhenish sent him when they passed through Mainz, with no mention of the donor. This, she was sure, he would cherish more than a dozen daughters.

Soon enough they set out—riding in state on two steeds belonging to the abbey, this time, back over the same way they had come four short years before. Schluentern, Gelnhausen, Frankfort, and then Mainz, and the mighty Rhine rolling out forever toward that sullen sea that split the joined world from the isolated island that was England. Brother John and Brother Cenwulf were assigned adjoining cells in the abbey; but, that night, as so often, only one pallet was used.

There was a trader's small boat headed down the Rhine; and, the next morning, after starting the horses back to Fulda, and after Joan had paid for the hogshead of wine for her father, they went on board, and set out for the overseas island.

At Utrecht, or Old Ford, they left the trading ship, to wait for a ship whose sails would be set for England. They wandered for two days about the fascinating place, visiting St. Willibrord's cathedral, the ramparts, the bustling market, and standing at the spot where the Crooked Rhine divided into the Old Rhine and the Vecht. And then they went on board the two-sailed craft, and within the week had landed at the port of Dover.

Before they had left for London, they had learned

great news. Egbert, king of the West Saxons, king of the men of Kent and Surrey, of the East Saxons and the South Saxons, of the English, victor of the wild moorland battle of Hengeston above the Tamar against the black pagans, the Danes, had just died; and Ethelwulf, his eldest son by his queen, had taken over Wessex, while the rest of his domains had passed to the bastard prince Athelstan, ruling as sub-king to Ethelwulf. He had two counsellors, one a warrior, one a man of peace: Ealhstan bishop of Sherborne, that abbot who, Joan remembered, had sent Cythbert forth, as the voice of the warlike Jehovah; and the saintly Swithin, of Winton or Winchester, as the softer voice.

The two young travellers crossed Kent, took ship at the mouth of the Thames, and set sail for London. And now Cenwulf swelled with pride: for this was Mercia they were in, he proudly told Joan. Under Oswio and his successors all England had bowed to the Mercian ruler; under the later Offa, one by one the rival dynasties of Kent, the South Saxons, and the Hwicce had been exterminated, and Mercia again had been overlord. Then the evil days had come, and the West Saxons had loomed over the land. Boernwulf, king of Mercia, had been vanquished by that same Egbert who had just died, and had fallen in battle with the East Anglians the same year. Two years later Ludeca, his successor, had been slain with five of his earls. Then Egbert had driven Wiglaf, the next ruler, out of the land for a year's exile, before he could return; and Wiglaf, in turn, had died this six months gone, and now Berthwulf reigned over the Mercians.

"This England of ours seems to be a troubled place," Joan commented, when Cenwulf had ended his account of Mercian doings. "And of all her rulers, that Egbert of Wessex, who lies in state waiting interment, seems to have given others the most trouble. The man who could overwhelm Ludeca of Mercia, Baldred of Kent, Eanred of Northumbria, Merfyn Crych of North Wales, and even the awful army of the black pagans, was surely a man. No wonder he was hailed Bretwalda—overlord of all the Britons,—the eighth overlord that the island has known. Do not forget, dear Cenwulf, that my father was one of these men of Wessex; let Cythbert's daughter's heart swell in joy at their warlike prowess, as well as at the prowess of Mercia."

"Brother John," he said to Joan, eyes twinkling, "your life has been the life of Swithin; but your voice is the voice of warlike Ealhstan. Have you come to green England to enlist under one of these squabbling and bludgeoning kings, and perhaps forge your way upward to be a new Bretwalda—or to see and know this moist green corner of the earth, and learn its lore, before voyaging further in search of more learning? If it is for battle—"

"Nay, Cenwulf, cease your laughing at me. Swithin is a godly man; but he is sprung from savages who rioted and ravaged their way across the cheeks of earth. Lothaire and the others in the empire at home are hardly more than savages now; Rome itself has its yearly harvest of violence, and was surely seeded in berserk warfare; learned Greece and ancient Palestine, that bred our Lord, grew wise out of a childhood of battle—and

Jehovah himself is ever called a god of battle. It is no wonder that my nostrils widen at these savage stories of wars and battles; my long dead fathers stir in my blood, and waken it with an old chant for blood. But that was of yesterday."

"The black Danes harass all the coasts of England today—"

"—As the Saracens threaten holy Italy. True. How shall I say it? We, you and I, are modern—of today. And today is an age increasingly devoted to the white arts of peace, instead of the red craft of war. There are relics of yesterday left among us—"

"Like the bellicose Egbert who died only yesterday; and the belligerent Ealhstan of Sherborne, who stiffens the soul of king Ethelwulf against all his foes."

"—Like a thousand more," Joan sighed mournfully. "But these are of yesterday. War is waste; and waste is death. I listen each day for the holy pontiff in Rome, the vicar on earth of the prince of peace, to call us all to a holy war to end war forever. There can be no war, when Christ's kingdom covers the square earth."

"Whose coming God speed," he appended piously. "But is it not glorious—this green England that is our mother?" His nostrils lifted, and sniffed the savor of the marshy air from Thames banks. "How surely those sluggish swart waves make to the sea! Here is never drought, as in those parlous deserts Hilarion spoke of—"

Joan stood at the ships prow beside him, her hand over his. "Look how the ebon stream has oozed over its banks, into eternally stagnant waste of marsh and swamp on both sides of us."

"It is green summer; and yet, since we left the great sea-girdle and set sail up Thames, the mist has squired us. Yet those splendid oaks above, with the riding sun splintering his lances against the emerald brilliance of the upper leaves—"

She nodded: "Those gaunt and gloomy swineherds that eye us from this bank, muscled, fierce, ferocious. If I did not know that London lay before us, and Sherborne and Winchelcombe, I would dub it a land of rude barbarians. Can it be that these red-eyed boar-gelders and sow-tenders have ever heard breath of the lowly carpenter of Galilee? They seem more like beasts than men. I spoke of relics of yesterday—" Decisively, ultimately, her slim fingers gestured toward the natives who stared glumly at their upstream progress.

"Murder is their trade, and their joy," Cenwulf added sorrowfully. "So it was with their fathers; so, I doubt not, it is with them. Battle or single slaughter, the crashing onset of the chase, the gaping up of vast draughts of ale, of vaster meals of bloody unspiced food—"

"Butchers," and Joan shivered with disgust.

"And then, to the tune of the plucked harp, their red sagas of redder killings; their sour unending drinking; their ribald capering, as Cythbert and Wolfstan were wont to do—"

Joan stood silently behind him. There were tears in her eyes when she turned to him again—tears that she was back in the land of her fathers, tears that it was something grimmer than she had held, that she held something grimmer in her than she had realized. "It sings in me still, Cenwulf—" Head thrown back, her

voice broke into a rude chanting, in which the young Mercian could hear ringing the voice of old Cythbert—

"The army goes forth, hungry for slaughter.
The war birds sing, the cricket chirps,
The war-weapons sound, the lance clangs against the shield.
Now shines the moon, wandering under the sky.
Now arise deeds of woe, which the enmity of this people prepares to do. . . .
Out of the court comes the tumult of war-carnage—"

She laughed, shaken. "Well for both of us that London comes soon, Cenwulf: or the meek clerk beside you throws off cassock and hood, and hurtles forth to battle. a berserk warrior among the rest of them." She smiled defiantly at him.

"And there," he said, "if I mistake not, are the first signs of London against the misty skyline. We will resume this new saga of Mercia and Wessex at a fitter hour. My dear, England is ours!"

CHAPTER IX

The Black Pagans

IN SPITE OF THE TROUBLED STATE OF ENGLAND, Cenwulf and Joan found here, in widely scattered places, a respect for learning, an achievement in it, that compared favorably with the rigorous rule of learned Hrabanus Maurus at Fulda. The abbey of St. Peter, at Westminster, on what had been Thorney islet, was the first Benedictine monastery they visited; and the travellers reverenced no less the spot where the holy St. Peter had stood, when hallowing the church in person, than the rich store of books and manuscripts which the library afforded.

Not that there were minds here as learned as Bede and Alcuin of a former day, or Hrabanus back in Fulda. In disputations on church doctrine, Joan shone unequalled, with Cenwulf but little behind her. It was she who successfully defended the thesis that Jesus could have achieved the salvation of man no matter the form he assumed, whether in human form or as a humble pea. At the end of her final disquisition, the abbot himself said that a new Chrysostom was in the church.

Abbey after abbey they visited, honored guests, thanks to the letters Hrabanus had provided; they pored over the compilations of the lives of the abbots and saints the island had produced, as well as over more recondite dis-

quisitions upon the manifold aspects of the word of God and the words of the fathers. At Lincoln, Joan somewhat scandalized the clergy by calling Gregory the converter of Britain, rather than Augustine, dubbing that venerated monk cowardly, ignorant, bumptious, and infinitely tactless.

"The learned Augustine—" a counter-expostulation would commence.

"—Did not even know whether two brothers might licitly marry two sisters; or whether a pregant woman might be baptized. His very queries to Gregory raise many points as elementary as these two."

"At Augustine's Oak he fronted the Christians among the Britons by a veritable miracle sent from God—" in pious reproof.

"And at Bangor-on-Dee," cuttingly, "he remained seated, and kept the church split for useless years. It took Whitby to cure this."

There was no answering her logic.

"Barring your Bede and your Alcuin, and the saintly missionaries to the icy North, your women have loomed larger in the church than most of your men. Think but of Bertha of Kent, of Ethelberg and learned Eanfled of Northumbria, of saintly Ebba and iron-souled Hild, the abbess of Whitby: what other Christian land can peer these? Woman in England has become the gate of heaven, rather than the gate of hell," she proceeded, with inner laughter.

This they would not grant, but in part; yet, in the disputation which followed, Joan was again victorious.

In Winchelcombe, they were given audience by

Berhtwulf the king, as well as by the abbot. But there was an aloof air in the way that Cenwulf was greeted; for, as a relative of a former ruler, he was not looked on with friendly eyes. Neither he nor Joan minded this, and were somewhat relieved when they down the Severn and up the Avon to Bristol.

A year had passed, and all England rang with word of their learning and piety. Word of their coming to Sherborne preceded them; yet, when they arrived, the abbot, Bishop Ealhstan, was not there to greet them. The father in charge, who welcomed them, had a great sword swung down his thigh; the courtyard of the abbey was thronged with armed men, many of them with new wounds bound up; monks had set up a target beside the cloisters, and were sternly addressing themselves to sending the plumed arrow hurtling to its mark in the target's heart.

"Southampton is not far," Father Herebert, who was in charge, told them grimly. "Wulfheard the ealdorman of good king Ethelwulf died only last Sunday, for all that he lashed back the fleet of the Danes at that port. There are reports from Exeter, from Iona, that new armaments have been sighted. Verily, it seems that hell itself has spewed out this plague of black pagans, to harry us to our deaths."

"It is a pity," Cenwulf said slowly, "that the word can not be given them, instead of the sword."

"I would that I had a sword to rip open the belly of the last of them, in the name of God," the father crossed himself piously. "Then, as they died, I would deem it a fit moment to speak to them of salvation. I had

a sister dwelling at Charmouth." His voice grew hushed.

After a silence, Joan spoke. "And the Danes came?"

A grim nod. "You have heard. Within the week, I was there, where the ruins of the charred buildings still smoked to heaven for vengeance. I found the home I was born in. My mother and father had died, and so were spared what so many met. There, in the ruins, lay my sister. She was not dead yet: she died in my arms. Her two babes lay with slit throats beside her; her body had been ploughed and ravaged by these fiends of hell, and she lay bruised and dying for four days with neither food nor drink, with a great gaping sword-thrust through the right breast. She died, never knowing me; she may have been happier so. There is no torment in hell fit for such godless demons!"

Joan nodded soberly. "You have near reason for your ire. You say the good bishop returns within the week?"

Father Herebert shrugged doubtfully. "Who knows? He has gone toward Wareham, at rumors of more black sails sullying the horizon sky. He has not gone alone," grimly. "The king is not with him; but he has joined Ealdorman Ethelhelm and the men of Dorset, and I have no fear but that, should trouble come, the great bishop will harry the heathen back across the beaten sea. He will be sorry to have missed you," vaguely. "I will hold the letter of the abbot of Fulda for him. You. . . ." he brought his mind back to their visit. "—If it is the library you wish to consult, I will send one of the brothers with you to unlock it. They are all under arms, at the moment, at Ealhstan's orders. No," more slowly.

"There is a learned monk from Saxony studying within its north wing, I am sure of it—one who left Sherborne, to convert the heathen, and has done much work in God's vineyard there."

Joan's face was pricked with interest. "What is his name?"

"He is Bishop Cenfrith, a brother of our order once, and now with his own see in Saxony. No doubt you two and he could hold fruitful discourse together—"

Cenwulf and Joan looked at each other, with no outer laughter,—recalling the pious celibate's last visit to Fulda, and his dry doctrines of universal continence. Cenwulf nodded, and Joan spoke. "No, Father, it is not needful. After all, it was the bishop we came most to see; we have pursued our studies elsewhere with great advantage, and desire to talk over certain matters with your head. We have met this godly Cenfrith before, and will not disorder his researches. Could we—could we, as we journey on, perchance encounter the bishop, at Wareham, say?'

Father Herebert excused himself, to answer a troubled query from a stocky deacon who was in charge of the archery drill. Then he returned, absent of mind, to the two visitors. "You were asking—was the bishop at Wareham? You could go there—I will furnish you a guard for the journey; and there will surely be word of him there."

And so they journeyed on to Wareham, between the Frome and the Piddle. There was no word here of Bishop Ealhstan at the priory of Saints Mary, Peter, and Ethelwold; but at the castle they learned that he

had journeyed secretly at night on to that place called Weymouth, less than a score of miles away. They spent the night at the priory, and set out at dawn for the little settlement on the Wey, which they reached as the sun bent swiftly toward the horizon.

It was an emptied town that they came upon, but for a few outworn old men, and a sprinkling of hot-eyed women. The wives and children had been sent to inland towns; the men were down in the peninsula called the Isle of Portland, where the forces of Dorset were drawn up along Verne Hill. The Danes had landed at Portland Bill, after losing several ships off the Shambles, in the turbulent current called the Race of Portland.

"It is no place for man of God to visit," wheezed an old grandfather. "Bide here for the night, or seek haven up the river. Hell has come to us at last, and no wise man sticks his head into its mouth without good reason."

"You mean—they are fighting now?"

"Since last sundown, when the Danes landed. And a time they had of it!" he cackled wheezingly. "Our force was above Weymouth when they landed; and naught but a man with his arm hacked off, slowly bleeding to death, who staggered into this town after dark, lives of those who were on the isle. Ah, a great time those Danes have of it!" He cackled again. "Every house burned, every man and child put to the sword, every girl and woman used as man uses woman, and then strangled in her own hair, or throat-slit— Ah, a great time they must be having, though I'm too old to do aught but wait here for word of the killing of them, and the

final end of it all. My house is empty; my two sons are off fighting under Ethelhelm, my daughters and grandchildren are fled up Dorchester way. Will ye leave now, or bide with me this night?"

"We would like to see the bishop—" Joan wondered aloud.

"He's dead," the old man shook a dolorous head. "With my own eyes, from a height near Verne Hill, I saw the fighting this morning. They're all dead, all the leaders, I'm sure of it. I saw Ethelhelm hacked down, and all around him and the leaders of the Danes all hacked down. I saw a girl," he giggled with absent stare, "who lived in a fishing shack this side the harbor, and what they'd done to her! It was a sight!" He hunched his shoulders up, his eys rolled oddly.

"Dead, you mean?" Cenwulf shot at him.

"Good as dead," with a sly leer. "Not a stitch to cover her nakedness, young brothers, as sure as I'm ninety-two! Stark she lay on a grassy sward, and there was blood all over her! They'd pounded in one eye—she talked to me, she told me. That was when she tried to bite the arm of one man holding her. Pounded in her eye, they did—I never seen such a sight! Her mouth—all jagged it was, teeth broken. . . . And blood all over her body! They'd tore the living clothes off her, and a whole dozen, she said, took her, before they passed on, leaving her for dead. She was good as dead; but she was a rare sight," reminiscently.

Joan shivered, closed her eyes in sudden faintness. "We will go back," she said. "Unless—" a sudden afterthought, "we could aid that girl you saw—"

"She died," he grinned inanely. "Talking to me she was, when suddenly she just fainted, and couldn't say any more."

"We will go back," Joan said.

They learned later that, while Ethelhelm the ealdorman had been killed, the bishop had escaped without a wound, drawing back from the bloodied peninsula with most of the forces of Dorset. They were back in London at this time, and reports were coming in of the ravaging of Lindsey, East Anglia, and Kent by the hordes of the black pagans, with massacre and rapine and burning leaving a trail of reddened char behind them. They never saw the stout bishop; and, in good sooth, they saw much more frantic desolation in England thereafter than of the ways of peace.

This determined them to make for Dover again, and set sail for the empire. "No matter the disorder there," Cenwulf said, "it can not be as dreadful as this ravishment of our island. How can God, in his infinite mercy, permit such dreadful things to fall on men?"

"Perhaps for their wickedness," Joan wondered doubtfully. "We can not know what is in the hearts of those who have been slain. . . ."

"But the babies, the girls, the young boys, the nuns in the nunneries. . . ."

"True. No, it is hard to see the why. It is easy for casual minds to blink back dazzled before the inscrutability of the divine will; to prate of God's mysterious ways with men. Cenwulf dear, God must move more simply than that. He gives each of us a soul, to work out each his own salvation. His Son, needing no salva-

tion, died for the salvation of others; but we have need of salvation, all of us; and I have a shrewd guess that salvation is broader than life after death, and includes this life as well."

"If you would amplify that, Joan—"

She smiled assent. "The early martyrs were joyful, even in their martyrdoms. The good man, the good woman, serves God with joy, no matter what service is demanded of them. There is no punishment in service. As for this life, our prayer is, 'Thy kingdom come on earth, as it is in heaven.' God's kingdom is not a kingdom of murder and burning, of torture and rape. There is reason in all these befalling the wicked, in this earth; but what of the good? If the kingdom of heaven is within us—then, being within the good, they should scape scatheless from such devisals of the evil one. So it seems to me."

He shook his head sadly. "It all sounds just, Joan; yet I fear there are those who would name it heresy."

"The way is long, and the road dark. But we have each other for ever, and that is much. We have escaped these things; which, if I am right, is some proof that we dwell wholly among the good."

"As who can doubt! At least, the fame of your learning is high in this land as that of Alcuin was in Charlemagne's hour. And, now, for Charlemagne's land!"

CHAPTER X

The Learning of France

WHEN JOAN AND CENWULF ARRIVED AT length at Paris, they found that another wholesale upset had taken place, among the bickering sons and grandsons of Charlemagne. Louis was dead at last, and his huge frame rested in a crypt at the church of St. Arnulf at Metz. Since Pippin had been dead a year and a half, this left Lothair and Louis, sons by the first wife Irmengarde, and Charles the Bald, son by the adulterous Judith, to squabble over the orts of the empire, which Dane and Saracen nibbled at so constantly. Of these sons, Louis sulked as king of Bavaria, Lothair rejoiced in his father's dying gift of the imperial insignia to him, and Charles the Bald had joined with his half-brother to upset the father's will, and take by force what of the empire they could get from Lothair. Lump them all together, and you could not get a man of half the stature of Charlemagne. So all held; and meanwhile all trembled as to where allegiance should be given, since any morning might see a new emperor, and a new opposition to the new emperor.

In spite of this, the two travelling monks were glad to be rid of Dane-ridden England, and to expand in the calmer atmosphere of the little island city in the Seine. Long ago, it had been the capital of Clovis; since Charle-

magne's time, it had been merely a minor mid city of the empire; it was clearly declining in importance, as so many cities of yesterday had done. But there was a quaint charm about it, and learned men thronged to its abbey of St. Genevieve, on the hill above the old Roman baths, or St. Germain-des-Pres in the valley below, or St. Germain l'Auxerrois on the right bank of the river, or the two clerical foundations on the island itself, the cathedral of St. Etienne and the Basilica to Our Lady; as well as countless other monasteries on both sides of the river, all built to the greater glory of God.

For God's work went on in the city, though the empire had shifted its seat far to the East. After the turmoil of England, the brisker air of Paris was a vast relief. There was a sparkle to the Gallic eye that the hot-eyed men and maids of Britain had lacked; there was a sparkle to the Gallic wit as well, which sauced and seasoned the discussions far more to Joan's liking, than the ponderous disputations of the soberer English monks and prelates.

For more than a year, the two lovers lived in St. Genevieve, and made the most of the libraries in the neighborhood. They were woefully wanting in manuscripts, as were many of the English establishments; thanks to the general warfare of the times, and the more general ignorance, a scholar was getting hard put to it to find wherewithal to cram his brain. But Cenwulf and Joan, breathing a vast sigh of relief at emerging from the carnage-laden air, subsided into each other, and took without complaint what Paris had to offer.

What if Charles the Bald and Louis of Bavaria were

in the field against Lothair; what if his defeat at Fontenoy sent the emperor in flight to his capital at Aix, to embark anew upon a war of plunder upon the two pretenders to the imperial throne? What if Gregory withered at Rome from the assaults of the Saracens, and the Danes fell on London and Canterbury and Rochester, and slew and burned in the great cathedral cities, until Ethelwulf himself had to take his stand beside Bishop Ealhstan against them? Here, in Paris, were peace, and quiet, and studious repose, learned disquisitions and scholarly disputes, and a chance to let the evil world slide by on its own evil way. Love was sweet, on the scented banks of the Seine; there was a sparkle to the wine here that the wine of the rest of the world lacked, and for a space Cenwulf and Joan sought to make the world forget them.

But it was not to be. One by one the distinguished and the noble drifted in, and sought out the renowned Brother John, in retreat in St. Genevieve, to match their wits against him. And no one emerged victor from this high and parlous field.

There was Anschar, from Corbie, already noted as a miracle-worker among the Scandinavians, who was sent hither by the head of the Benedictines, to learn doctrine of the young English successor to Alcuin.

"We have heard of you indeed, Father Anschar. Was it not you who converted a whole tribe, by turning a river into wine, in honor of the miracle of Our Lord at the marriage feast of Cana?" Joan thought it well to put him at his ease, thus early in the meeting. And all the monks of St. Genevieve listened with smiling lips to the encounter.

"If Our Lord did no more at Cana than I did among the northern heathens, there was much water, and naught else, drunk that day. It was a monk of Narbonne, a man dedicated to God from his youth, who achieved that miracle—and an annual miracle it is, whereby all the water of a fountain in Elne, once a year, becomes wine, in honor of Our Blessed Lord," the missionary said fervently.

"I come from Septimania," a brother volunteered. "We have heard of the miracle there; but it was a father from St. Athos who performed it, and none of our brotherhood."

"I am from Greece," a bearded prelate said. "We too know the miracle, and know well that it took place in Antioch, more than a century agone."

Joan nodded soberly. "Thus marvels wander fatherless from place to place, until it is no wonder that the nations rage, and the Christians as well as the heathens imagine a vain thing." There was a chuckle of appreciation at this. "Now, as touching this error of the brothers in Spain, that you speak of—" And she was off at last—a very Chrysostom, as golden-tongued as he, with an eloquence that swung even the holy Anschar in the end to her side.

There was Bertram the monk, with his insistence that the saints should be loved, and not venerated. "For what are the saints, but the Christians? And has not Our Lord himself commanded us to love all Christians, and the blessed St. Paul commanded us to salute all of them with a holy kiss? And how can we venerate those who may be, perchance, younger in the faith than we—since veneration goes to those older than we, in years or godliness?"

But Joan shook her head positively. "It is not so, in the accepted teachings of the church. Not for nothing did I copy out a fair copy of the martyrology of the learned Hrabanus Maurus of Fulda, and collate it with the martyrology of Wandelbert of Prum, as well as with the calendars of Florus, Bede, and so back to the Roman Depositio Martyrum of five centuries agone. A saint is a martyr, one whose day of birthdom or martyrdom is celebrated in the church of his land, or in all the churches of Christianity. It is enough to love our neighbors, and living Christians who have not as yet been hailed as martyrs; but the beatified dead are different, and deserve our veneration."

This discussion ranged the length and breadth of Christendom, and took in every saint that the Church venerated; but, in the end, there were no supporters for Bertram, and an army behind the young English monk.

And there was the celebrated Duchess of Septimania, who journeyed all the way from Languedoc to present herself to the inspired young doctor, and dispute with him certain matters of doctrine that troubled her. It was she who sought to have the church forbid the eating of fish and of lamb, since it was well known that the fish stood for Our Lord himself, and no less well known that he had been hailed as the Lamb of God since the beginnings of the church.

"It is well known that the fish is Our Lord Jesus Christ—" the pious middle-aged lady had commenced.

"Yet the reason for this is not so well known. Why would you say that the fish stands for Our Lord Jesus Christ?" Joan spoke less to the Duchess than to the

whole assembly of learned Christians.

"All know that the fish is born of a virgin mother," a pious bishop suggested.

"It need not travel on land at all, any more than Our Lord Jesus walked on land, but when he willed, but could fly through the air or walk the waters, as well as any fish," Bertram, firm converted to Joan's teaching, contributed.

"Yet a fish may not walk on land at all," objected the Duchess.

Joan shook a forbidding head. "Even the pagan Pliny taught that there are fish which walk at ease on land, and even climb trees, and fly, through the air, without legs or wings, beyond the use of most fish. Yet there is a deeper reason. In the beginning was the word, which was Jesus; and the word 'fish' is a word, as Jesus is; which is proof conclusive that Jesus should be represented under the form of a fish."

"In which case, the fish should never be eaten by Christians, especially not upon a holy day, such as Friday, commemorated to the death upon the cross of Our Lord," the Duchess insisted.

"Ah," and Joan was infinite kindliness in her correction, "but there are fish and fish—fish that walk, fish that fly, fish that climb, fish that swim, fish that may be eaten, and fish that may not be eaten. The tunny may be eaten, and the sardine, and these clearly do not represent Our Lord. So may the eight-footed fish be eaten, as the Greeks and Romans were wont to do; and these do not represent Our Lord. But there are fish whose flesh causes a phrenzie and a fatal retching, which does

not terminate until death; and it is such a fish that is the symbol of Our Lord."

The infinite learning of the young doctor was applauded to the very rafters.

But Joan had not heard the last of the pious Duchess. That night, just as she was about to retire to Cenwulf's room, a brother announced that the Duchess, one or two doubts still lingering in her mind, craved private audience with Brother John. Sighing a little wearily, for her very fatigue, she rerobed herself, and presented herself in the empty audience chamber of the abbot. She would not receive the Duchess, she insisted, in her own cell, due to a vow she had made.

There were none with them when the audience took place; and only to Cenwulf did Joan disclose what doubts still lingered in the mind of the pious Duchess.

"I give you my word for it, dear, the estimable Duchess was in a hot rut. She kissed my foot, she lipped my hand, she buried her head in my robes like a very Magdalene prostrate before the Lord himself; and, if I had been very man, I could hardly have resisted the importunity of her clutching white arms."

Cenwulf laughed quietly. "A female Dane upon a virginal brother, was it?"

"Something of that kind. She had come wearing a heavy penitential outer robe; but, when it fell, it revealed a shift very like that garb of woven air that we are told Cleopatra wore, when she won her suit with the first Caesar and his successor, the luxurious Antony. Ho! Down fell her outer robe, and she squirmed on the floor before me, giving me a view of such splendors as many

think the New Jerusalem will hold. Now her back, and now, rolling over on the floor, and protesting her utter devotion to learning, she lay on her back, and gave a front vista of the two columns of the temple, and of the rather grizzled shrine above. Well, you can imagine how much this intrigued me—"

"Priests have had their minions," he jested.

She laughed, with a roguish moue of her lips. "But not for me. There was my task, to restore some order to the rutting beldame. I got her to her feet, talked a flood of bad logic as I sat her upon a bench, and then held forth learnedly for an hour upon the high efforts of the Saxon Benedictines among the people of Sclavonia. In the end, she was nigh to falling asleep—I had walked up and down, never looking at her, as far as she knew, all the time—and suddenly I was out of the abbot's study, and plucking the inquisitive brother who had his nose at the door by the ear, ordering him to squire the good Duchess back to the hostelry where she is staying. By now, I imagine, her doubts are at rest. At least, this is the last time I seek to salve them."

They laughed heartily at this. And so it went—visitor after visitor, who went away to chant the praises of the young doctor, and spread his name and fame further throughout Christ's world.

And so the seasons passed by, in their retreat above the Seine. Lothair met with Louis and Charles on an island in the Saone, and out of this grew the negotiations that led to the treaty of Verdun, which gave Italy and the imperial title to Lothair, together with other lands, and gave the rebels the rest of the empire. Word

came from Rome that the Holy Father was ailing, and like to die at any minute. And still, deep in their studies and their love, and having for training in logic, and at times for recreation, the disputations of the doctors who thronged to encounter the English monk, the two lovers stayed in Paris.

Just before they decided at last to leave, a foeman of a different metal met Joan. This was the celebrated abbot of Ferrieres, Servatus Lupus, hot on his defense of Godescalus, who had just been driven from Italy by the onslaughts of Hrabanus Maurus of Fulda. Abbot Loup was a pupil of Hrabanus, as Joan was; and she knew, when his coming was announced, that this would be no child's battle of wit.

There was no word of a desire to see Joan, in his announcement of his desire to meet the brothers of St. Germain-des-Pres—for it was here that he stayed. Nor had he met her, before he rose to his feet, to plead for a memorial addressed to the pope, in defense of Godescalus.

"I have here a signed missive, with the names of Bishop Prudentius of Troyes, Wenilo of Sens, Ratramnus of Corbie, Florus of Lyons, and many more, already attached, in opposition to the puerile views of Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, who seeks to have our learned Godescalus of Mainz condemned for heresy. I ask that the names of your abbot and the other brothers be affixed to this."

The abbot had lost his hearing ten years before, and shook his head, not in denial, but in perplexity. This was the signal for other monks of St. Germain to rise in opposition to the proposal; for, since the deafness had

come, none of the monks of St. Germain had ever favored anything submitted to the abbot, holding that by special revelation he had become opposed to everything. One of these monks insisted that Abbot Loup make clear the alleged error against Godescalus.

"It is merely his teaching that God is omnipotent and omniscient; and surely you do not differ from that."

"In what respects is this alleged error related to the omniscience of God?" the questioner persisted.

"It is well known," the fighting abbot of Ferrieres said, "that the saintly Augustine pointed out first that God has foreordained, from the beginning of the world, that his saints are predestined to salvation."

The deaf old abbot shook his head, in further perplexity. Whereupon the questioner announced, "We do not so hold."

Joan, lifting a hand, stepped quietly into the discussion. "It may be, as the holy Augustine taught, that the good are predestined to salvation. But Augustine never taught that the evil were predestined to damnation. Else were our efforts to bring them to Our Lord all in vain, and we might cease all activity as a church."

Lupus Servatus flushed a mottled red. "Our efforts relate primarily to our salvation, not to the salvation of those we speak to."

"—And our salvation," Joan said quietly, "has already been predestined, or not—according to Augustine; so that, if it is a preordained thing, we need not trouble to secure it, by missionary efforts to others. Which is contrary to the expressed words of Our Lord, ordering us to preach the gospel to every living creature."

"But our evangelical work is also preordained," the Abbot ventured, not quite so surely.

"In that case, we can not avoid it; so why seek to achieve it?" said Joan sweetly. "But good works cease to be good works, if they are necessary works, which can not be avoided; there is no reward for something which can not be avoided. Nor did the saintly Augustine preach that there was predestination to damnation. He went no further than in saying that God had passed over the ones not foreordained to salvation—so that they might themselves work out their own salvation. And I, for one," spiritedly, "will never rely upon any holding that I am predestined to heaven: I will spend my life seeking to earn it, as one whom God passed over, leaving me to win my own way to his holy city, by my efforts in his behalf."

"Godescalus is a learned man, a pious Christian, son of a count, trained by Hrabanus himself—" the abbot of Ferrieres continued, in troubled exasperation.

"A carpenter counts as high as a count, in our faith," said Joan quietly. "If Hrabanus trained him, we must look to the teacher for a certificate of the pupil's excellence, or low standing, in his studies. What does the learned Hrabanus, who has also taught you and me, Lupus Servatus, say of this pupil?"

There was no answer to be made to such logic. The abbot clicked his teeth dangerously together. "I appeal from this young upstart to the sober wisdom of St. Germain-des-Pres." There was much argument this and that way; but at the end, noting that the abbot, who had heard no word of the disputation, was shaking his head vio-

lently, all of the devout of the monastery peremptorily announced that they would not sign the memorial; and so it was that Joan routed her most dangerous opponent.

CHAPTER XI

Wigs and Pelicans

IT WAS A CLOYING THING, THIS NAME FOR too great wisdom; Joan and Cenwulf found their slow journey southward to the sea to be a long procession of triumph for the brilliant scholar called John Anglicus, or English John. All held Cenwulf to be merely the secretary of Joan, and her bemuscled attendant, and ignored him in their disputations: thus a bright star, too close to the sun, is seen but as a blur of black, that else might light a whole sky.

But Joan knew different. Her sole disputes that called on her for all of her skill were those against Cenwulf, who, in spite of his utter devotion for her, had a mind of his own and a will of his own second to few in Christendom. More and more she realized that her words spoke for the sweet ancient ways of the pagans, and his for the rigid orthodox ways of the church. Yet this gave her no regret, but a slow and constant joy that she was able, by her very eloquence, so often to seduce him from his stiff code into an admission of the rightness of her views.

France fell prostrate at her feet; and a strange world it was, a depressed relic of the recent empire of dead Charlemagne, making up for its political sterility by the strangest doctrines that she had yet encountered.

For all that all western France had been given to Charles the Bald, by the treaty of Verdun, it was generally held that the empire had moved to the east, and France could never be an armed power in world matters again. The Norse pirates recognized this, and devoted themselves to the wide river estuaries of the land, lined with rich monasteries. Rouen still groaned from its sacking two years before; lesser towns had been laid waste, and all trembled. The Bretons were in revolt, Aquitaine was seething: and poor Charles, sword in hand, did not know to whom to turn for aid.

It was while they bided a time at Lyons that a Burgundian abbot made it all clear to Joan. " 'There be those that have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake,' " the abbot quoted piously. "Charles the Hairless has made himself a eunuch, for the kingdom of France's sake. For what is the power of man, but his power as a man? And what is the power of a king, but his power as a king—his great war leaders and their forces, his rich bankers and their following? These Charles had, and has no longer. This is the modern way, in France. No one rebelled against the weakling; all simply ceased to give him service; and, when none gave him service, he could in turn give no service to the people —the service of protection, that ancient folk looked to the king to give. Each duke, count, viscount, has his horde of armed retainers, who give him service, and receive protection in return. The king has nothing. It is the modern spirit moving over Europe—an end to kings and emperors, learned brother."

"Which the holy Catholic Church greets with joy;

for an end to earthly rulers means the beginning of heavenly rulers, to wit, of abbot, bishop, archbishop, and other princes of the church, clear up to the pope himself," said Joan shrewdly.

"Whose service may God augment," the abbot piously added. "The past was static, stolid, lethargic; but there is an unrest and a ferment in the earth, a sour dough working that will leaven the whole lump toward God. When kings become eunuchs, popes and abbots can be men." And he licked his thick lips truculently.

Joan glanced around to the wife of the abbot, who smiled quietly at all her lord said. "And there is no doubt of that, madame, in your husband's case?"

The wife blushed prettily; but the Burgundian prelate was highly pleased at the compliment.

It was also in Lyons that Joan and Cenwulf were assailed, at a gathering in the little chapel of Notre-Dame de Fourviere, newly built on the site of the old forum that gave it its name, by a violent reformer, one Brother Martin, formerly attached to St. Martin d'Ainay's, but now a wandering monk. "I have listened silently, Brother John Anglicus, to all your words; but I have not as yet heard you say aught of the one pressing vice that weighs down groaning Christendom—the wearing of false hair." He paused indignantly for answer.

Joan considered him, not yet aware how earnest he would become on this theme. "I know well the words of the sainted Clement of Alexandria upon that matter—" she began.

He brushed her words aside lightly. "Not to speak of the augmented denunciations of Tertullian, St. Ambrose,

St. Jerome, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and unnumbered more. How can you utter aught, without letting this text your thesis?"

Joan laughed, faintly troubled at the man's zeal. "Surely it is not a godly habit; but there are other habits that troubled the good fathers—and even the pagan moralists. Was it not Juvenal who held the worst offense his eyes had encountered was a noble daring to drive with his own hand his chariot along the public road—even though the man had skulked to this criminality at night, rather than shock the face of day with it? Was it not Seneca—"

"I spoke of hair—" began Brother Martin aggressively.

"Be silent, till he reaches your theme," Cenwulf ordered even more belligerently. "Either consider the rules of disputation, or expect to receive such a lam across your pate as will open a galaxy of new constellations to your wondering sight. Be silent!"

Joan laughed her gratitude, and continued. "Seneca held man's worst vice was cooling his beverages by mixing them with snow; Pliny said that man's most monstrous criminal was the man who first devised the iniquitous custom of wearing golden rings. When Apuleius praised tooth-powder, you remember," turning sweetly to Cenwulf, "how he had to defend himself against praising immorality?"

Cenwulf nodded. "He cited the example of the crocodile of the Nile, which left the waters of the Nile at certain seasons to lie upon the bank with jaws gaping, while a certain bird proceeded with its beak to clean the

teeth of the monster—obviously of God's planning."

The monk Martin looked scorn at both of them. "Yet what are these minor matters, to the infinite iniquity of wearing false hair, or dyeing natural hair? Look you, if I am called upon to bless a man who wears false hair, what am I blessing?"

"Why, the man with the wig," Joan's answer came promptly.

"I bless what my hand is upon, do I not?"

"Inevitably."

"My hand is upon what—the man beneath, or the false hair above?" in savage triumphant.

"Both," said Joan sweetly. "For if a prince wear an outer robe, and a shift beneath, the outer robe is worn by the prince, and not by the shift."

"Away with such hair-splitting! The fathers taught otherwise, English John. They held there was no worse offense than for a holy man of God to pronounce blessing upon false hair which might have come from some soul now sizzling in hell— And, as for dyeing the hair, it is the word of God itself that says that a man may not make one hair of his head white or black!"

"It does not mention golden; and gilt dye is the most popular in this land," said Cenwulf, beginning to be amused by the man's fiery insistence.

"Away with you, trifler! I hold that God will forgive incest, unnatural love, murder, and even blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, before he will grant even eternity in Purgatory to the wearer of false hair! I call upon you to lay aside all other preachments, and devote yourself—"

The priest in charge of the little chapel snapped him up prettily: "—to these new beakers of wine that Brother Jean is handing around. What would you have to talk about, Brother Martin, if all men and women were as our overgentle sovereign, Charles the Bald?"

He could not be mollified by this, and stalked away without touching the wine. At Avignon, the visitors were entertained by a learned discourse upon the habits of animals, by a venerable whitehaired brother who had devoted his life to their study. "For man's highest lessons in devotion to God are furnished by God's children, the beasts of field and forest, whose learning has been uncontaminated by the errors emanating from St. Peter's chair!"

The brother beside them gave Joan a nudge "Do not answer him yet, Brother John; this is but his vestibule to his discourse, which he never omits. He desired to be made a cardinal deacon, for his lore upon animals; and that animal now intriguing for the papacy, Hog's Snout, turned him down derisively—which he will never forgive."

Joan smiled, and listened.

The aged monk was placidly continuing, as if naught had been said: "—so that, in the forests of Mauretania, these same elephants worship god in the form of the sun and moon; and, with every new moon, all gather at a certain river, to perform their worships. I myself have seen this. The healing art we have learned from the hippopotamus, who was in turn taught by God himself, as all the ancients affirm. For, when the hippopotamus is afflicted by an overfulness of blood, he himself cures this plethory by bleeding himself with a thorn, and after

sealing the wound with river slime."

He paused expectantly. A brother promptly prompted, "And what of the pelicans, holy brother?"

The old monk nodded. "From them we learn the duties of parents to children. For it is well known that, when its young hunger, the pelican commits suicide, that they may feed on it. Now suicide is forbidden to Christians, but in two cases; yet the care that the pelican takes of its young is the model for parental care throughout all Christendom." Before he had finished, there was little left unsaid of any members of the animal kingdom—bees, eagles, bats, dogs, asses, dolphins, flies, serpents, basilisks, salamanders, the noted phoenix, that proof of Christ's resurrection, and so on throughout the whole catalogue.

"The holy church knows these things well," Joan commended the discourse. "I have no doubt but that you are about to proceed to tell us of St. Theon, and the wild beasts who walked abroad with him, and were let to drink of his sacred well; of the saint who fed a lion with the fruit of his palm-tree from his own hand; of the lion who shielded St. Poemen from the winter's snow; of the lions who buried the bodies of St. Paul the hermit and the charitable St. Mary of Egypt."

"Not to forget the lion who ate the ass of Brother Zosimas, and then bore the saint's burden to the city gates," Cenwulf piously added. "Is it not well known that crocodiles carried St. Pachomius and many others across the Nile flood; and that a sea monster bore St. Scuthinus clear over the raging Irish Channel?"

"Christ himself converted many hunters in the form

of a wounded stag," added one of the local monks. "There was never ox who passed by the shrine of St. Erasmus, without kneeling down reverently before his shrine. And did not St. Macarius of Alexandria restore sight to the blind cub of a hyena, at its mother's request; and, when the saint later berated the beast for seeking to reward the godly man with the fleece of a sheep it had murdered, did not the hyena forswear murder of the innocent thereafter? I myself have seen this very fleece, on a shrine of St. Melania, to whom St. Macarius had given it."

The aged monk who had begun the discourse had lapsed into sleep; but the talk continued—of the dead bird brought back to life by the prayers of St. Cuthbert, of the hawk-slaughtered bird resurrected by St. Kieranus, of the laments of the birds at a mishap that befell St. Aengussius, of lowly grasshoppers that taught saints to sing praises to God. There was no dissent from any of this; it edified all who heard it, and was attested by all of the fathers of the church.

It was other with a monk of Marseilles, who met them as they were about to enter the city, and sought to convert them to his new doctrine that the souls of men passed into flies, and that the church should endeavor to convert all flies into the worship of the true God, his very Son, his virgin Mother, and the Holy Spirit that was at once father, son, and itself. "For is it not clear that, when a man dies, the flies gather upon his body, and for what other purpose would they gather, than to share the soul of the departed man?"

Joan, startled by this novel doctrine, had trouble in confuting it. Cenwulf was quicker: "And, since kites

and other carrion birds gather at such a moment, no doubt the church should seek to convert them too," he observed quietly. "Not to speak of the hordes of maggots that hold council over a corpse," as an afterthought.

But Joan took the doctrine more seriously. "There has been as yet no pronouncement of any church council upon this matter," she began, after searching the tablets of her memory, and finding them oddly blank upon the theme. "But it is nowhere stated in the words of God that the souls of men do pass into flies; and may it not be, brother, that these flies merely convey the souls of the dead to God; or, at least, to the angels waiting nearby to transport them to God?"

The monk shook an unconvinced head.

Joan's hands spread, as her mind raced ahead. "They might even be imps of the evil one, seeking to secure the soul which else the angels would gather. No, holy brother, this is a matter that must be looked into more deeply, before I could accept it as a revelation from God."

This attitude he could not shake. And now at last they were in sight of the sea: behind them an amphitheatre of hills shut off the rest of the world, and before them the racing white manes of the sea-horse beckoned. They lay in St. Victor's abbey two nights, and on the third morning took sail in a boat bent for Athens, which they had determined to visit, before proceeding on Constantinople and the farther East.

CHAPTER XII

And so to Athens

ALL DAY THE BOAT LAZED, WITH SAILS ready to be raised, for the wind to shift; and, as the heat beat down more and more insistently upon the decks from the sun overhead, Joan and Cenwulf waded back to the beach, and set out down the narrow Rue Cannebiere, the street of hemp, so named from the walks of hempen rope that had once stretched along it. They had stumbled drowsily down this same street early at dawn, with eyes for nothing but the unseen ship ahead; now their eyes were opened, and they saw a Marseilles they had not dreamed of.

To left and right of them, as they elbowed their way down the crammed thoroughfare, bent off warped little streets, so narrow that two laden asses could not walk abreast down them—much less these mad beasts, called ships of the desert,—these camels that lurched with such ungainly awkwardness along, burdened as no four horses would be. Never before had the northern monks seen such mad beasts: all that they had read and seen pic-

tured of the desert burden-bearers was naught, compared to this rubbing shoulders with their flea-bitten hides. The place seemed alive with fleas; the monks scratched themselves constantly, longing for some miracle such as St. James performed with the annoying bugs upon his bed, to rid them of the pests. They decided, at last, that God's purpose in creating fleas had been to keep the ungodly in torment, and the godly awake to their duties to God; but they mourned together that the fleas had not been instructed more specifically to avoid plaguing Christians who felt no notion to drowse.

But it was more than camels and fleas that they saw to astound them. Here were strange colored birds, with raucous screaming voices, leg-tied to perches upon odd tiny stores set into the houses; here were veritable monkeys of the jungle, gibbering, chattering, and whistling at them, with faces like strange demons out of hell. There was one that set them off to laughing, so like old Brother Wolfstan it looked. Here were vast bearded mariners from all the seas of the world, and little blackamoor ape-like men from over the sea; tall white-robed Saracens from the desert, more gaily garbed ones from Cordova, and fantastically robed Moslems from Bagdad's empery. Each street opening disgorged more and more strange faces and forms: queer trance-eyed men with slaved snakes crawling along their arms and around their necks, squatting magicians toying with small fowl and swords and fire that they breathed in and out of their nostrils, men with crescent eyes and vast crescent swords swung to their sides, slit-eyed little yellow men from Ind or some farther wilder land.

There were women, too—crowding hundreds of them, from wrinkled old hags, munching strange roots with their jagged teeth and worn lips, down to naked tots sprawling in the gutters. Not of strange races, most of them; but they were all seeking-eyed, and the arms of Joan and Cenwulf tired of their plucking down into dark side streets, always with luring slanted glance, and strange murmured invitations to strange pleasures. There were even men who murmured their invitations: they clustered around the two northern monks like flies on a flayed boar's carcass. From time to time, they came upon a slave-vendor with his squatting slaves, some white like themselves, some strangely hued and more strangely marked of face and hair, as if some devil had moulded them in his rage against men.

Twice the two travellers returned to the ship, and twice left it, since the wind would not shift. But, just about sunfall, the wind altered, as their cooling faces attested, and they went back from the world of wonders to the beach, and waded back to the ship. The sails were hoisted, the huge pole brought into play—she caught the wind at last, and they were off on their eastward journeying.

A smooth sapphire sea it was, now, with the golden ball of the sun sinking over the gulf toward the unseen Spanish Marches, and a pale moon hovering crescent wise above its horizon grave. The stars glanced out palely, and deepened their glitter as the moon glimmered redly after the sun, and dropped at last beyond the unending dark blue waters. The wind had freshened a trifle, and the waters sang an old song all night, swishing their

eternal harmony against the sides of the ship, like the sighs of the beatified on the fields of asphodel.

There could be no love making on the ship, for they lay too publicly to run the risk of revealing what Joan had hidden so long and so well, from all but Cenwulf. But, as the others drowsed or snored, they could at least creep into each other's arms, under the eternal stars, and lie thus happily on the breast of the mothering waters, as the steady wind bore them toward the far white marble hill that had once been the peak of the world's wisdom.

On the third day out, they sighted the rocky crags of Sardinia; and, three days later, they dropped anchor at Neapolis, now called Napoli, where the captain of the ship had bundles to deliver. All the way into the harbor they had marvelled at the vast cone of the burning hill above them, which had wrought such damage in ancient days to those not of the true faith. They lay a night in a tavern here, and melted rapturously in each other's arms, a rapture which the sea voyage had banned almost a week now. In the morning, they had time to visit the underground chapel of St. Januarius, and the ancient church of St. Restituta, more than two centuries old; and then they went on board again, and the ship dropped down the lovely harbor, and out toward the fearful pass between Sicily and the mainland.

There was danger of the racing waters here, and more dangers of the Saracens; but they made the passage successfully, and at midnight saw the red glare of Etna hot against the sky, eternally spewing its red wrath at the usurping gods above, as the old tale had it. A monk

from Lombardy had joined them, while they wandered about Naples, and they discoursed much with him concerning the latest news from Rome.

"The Jews will have less love than ever for us now," this Brother Sebastian had begun, "since we have elevated a snout of the detested animal above all the world."

Joan caught his meaning at once. "You can not mean that Gregory is at last dead!"

"Dead he is, and Os Porci sits in his chair."

"But he was detested by all, this Hog's Snout! A subservient sycophant of Gregory's—"

Brother Sebastian nodded. "You say less than is true. But there are four bodies who join in electing a pope—the people, the clergy, the nobles, and the distant emperor. Gregory died, and all rejoiced; but deacon John, subdeacons Leo and Benedict, Father Anastasius, and many more, all intrigued for the vacant seat so violently, that their parties could come to no agreement, and there was naught but riot in the assembly of people, priests and nobles. No one wished the Hog's Snout, or any close to Gregory, to receive the preferment. But in Rome there was the brother of the Hog's Snout, a man named Benedict, a layman. He paid well to gather a party for his purpose, and sent them whispering among the gathering, 'The Hog's Snout is God's chosen candidate for the seat of Peter.' All laughed at these at first; but, so persistently did they buzz the name of the archpriest, that in the end the wearied voters roared aloud the name of Os Porci, and the thing was done."

"And so the Hog's Snout is head of us all!" mused Cenwulf aloud.

"The story is not ended yet. And, if you will, his name has been shifted to Sergius, as more befitting the tiara; though I, for one, would dub him Hog's Tail on all his decrees, to speed the hour of his successor. But this deacon John, that I spoke of, was not pleased at the midnight upset to his plans. He gathered soldiers, and stormed the gates of the papal palace, to force a new election. Benedict quickly assembled prelates and people, who dragged the ambitious deacon from a church to whose altar he was clinging, celled him, and scattered his following. Wild doings—I have it on the word of a priest who saw all."

"But all is quiet now?"

"Oh, they went to St. Martin's church, where the Hog's Snout was styed, led him to the Lateran, and the next day—without word from Lothair, note—made him pope. There are rumors already that the emperor will be as friendly to the man as the icy mantle of snow that covered all Rome, during the night of tumult. But it is so that God works his will; and I can only pray that the emperor be ired enough to boot this bootlicker so far from Rome, that the stench of his sycophancy can never reach it."

In this and other discourse they passed the next five days, pausing to rejoice when the Ionian Sea had been passed at last, and Sapienza and then Cape Gallo loomed out of the blue mists of an icy morning. Soon after noon, Matapan was visible. By nightfall, they had left Cerigo behind, and were beating up the coast of ancient Lacedemon. From then on, every promontory that they passed was full of remembered deeds. But there was no thrill

like that when Aegina had finally faded into the distance, and Salamis lay off to the left, and the Peiraeus was really before them.

They were objects of curiosity to all on the beach, especially Cenwulf and Sebastian, for their lack of beards. For all but the youths that they saw here were heavily bearded, like very rabbis of the ghettos. Joan recalled that that Hilarion who had visited Fulda had worn a beard; but she had not dreamed how universal a custom it was.

They were content to lie in a tavern beside the Peiraeus this night, and leave Athens for the morrow. A morning's walk brought them at last to the marble city. Far to their left rose the height of Parnes, or Cithaeron; on the horizon behind the city loomed Pentelicus, with Marathon hidden behind it; to their right rose honeyed Hymettus. Yet they had eyes for none of these, but only for the lesser pyramid of Hagios Georgios, once Lycabettus, in front of them; and the gleaming white-capped hills of the city below it.

"Of all cities on earth," Joan said quietly, "I think it is this I most long to visit. Rome has her wonders, a Hog's Snout on Peter's throne not the least of them; there is much to be seen in Constantine's great capital, in Bagdad to the East, in Cairo with its starred pyramids, in that holy Jerusalem that the Saracens hold. For many things all these are memorable: but was there ever a spot on earth like to this home of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle; of Pericles and Aspasia, of the singing poets and the brilliant statesmen, of Phidias and Praxiteles, and too many for my weak brain to remember them all?"

Cenwulf looked troubled. "Much as I think of the

pagan learning, Joan—"

She dazzled him with a smile bright as the blue of the Attic sky above them. "That only I deem worthy in the learned Abbot Lupus Servatus,—that he holds the pagan writings high enough, to spend much of his life collecting and collating them. He told me much of this Athens, and gave me a hunger to know it that only this day will began to satisfy. Look, Cenwulf, yonder white-cowled hill is the Acropolis!"

"I know it well—" a bit disconcerted by her fervor.

"The Parthenon is there, and the Erectheum, the Propylea and the temple of the unwinged Victory—"

"Yet a godly chapel—"

"My dear, they are *all* chapels now, and have been for years! I do not know," dreamily, "how the virgin one regards this usurpation of her chosen seat—"

He nodded, after a moment's pause. "You mean not the virgin mother of Our Lord, but this virgin pagan—"

"Goddess of wisdom," Joan amended softly, "whom we both serve with all our breath. And those lower hills—one must be the Areopagus, and one the Pnyx, one the Hill of the Nymphs, and that higher one the Museum hill. . . . It thrills me to my marrow to be drinking all these in with my very eyes, Cenwulf my dearest love!"

"If they were only all Christian places—" with a troubled look.

There was a song of triumph in her voice. "God made these hills; God made the men who dwelt upon them, and in their blindness worshipped him under these many strange pagan names. God made the marble out of which the temples were hewn, the statues chipped; and

God made the dream within the hearts of those who hewed and chipped, until they harvested a marble flower lovelier than anything on God's square earth. It is God's work in all these that you and I worship so, Cenwulf; and, my dear,—" and her voice choked momently, "I am like to fall on my knees with reverence, so bursting is my heart to overflowing with joy at this sight!"

They entered by the ruins of the old Itonian gate, and bent to the left first for the vast bare columns that marked where the temple of Zeus Olympius had stood, and pondered for a long space the majesty of these unroofed columns, that framed the olive-covered slopes of the hills like gold about a saint's likeness. Through the Roman arch, curving slowly around to the Diogeneion and the quaint Tower of the Winds, passing the Stoas where the old Agora had been, by the ruins of the lesser theatre and the vast theatre of Dionysos, and then winding closer around the acropolis until they were before its face again, and so up into the Propylea—it was one long pilgrimage of wonder and awe.

As Joan reached the last step, she fell on her knees in thanksgiving, and prayed aloud: "O gods that dwell here and dwelt here, gods Christian and pagan alike, whose shrines on earth are these marble haunts that home beauty, make me as fair of soul and body as you are. Amen."

A brown-garbed monk stared oddly at her, walked over, and spoke slowly. "You speak Greek?"

Joan, kissing her fingers before she brushed the grime of the sacred spot off the knees of her robe, answered him with a smile. "That, and many tongues, brother."

"You are of the West, no doubt; your face, your garb, show it, though your speech is as mine. It is God's word that prayer to him be uttered while standing, here in the East. Your way here will be smoother, if you learn God's insistent commandments before you err too often."

Joan laughed in delight. "We're in Athens at last, Cenwulf! I am even taught the posture of praying. You are connected with one of these churches?" Her hand vaguely gestured toward the marble wonders that they had not yet entered.

And now at last his face lit. "First I was an acolyte in the lower church, which you must have passed just before you came to the Hill of the Nymphs—that church housed in the building which those of old called the Theseum. But now," with infinite pride, "I am a father connected with this marble temple, which they of old called the Parthenon."

"It is still devoted to a virgin, I take it—the virgin mother of God?"

He bowed proudly. "It has ever been devoted to a virgin, from the hour when it grew first in the mind of Phidias, through the slow building under the superintendency of Ictinus and Callicrates, down to the hour when it became the Church of the Virgin Mother of God."

"It stands now, as it stood so long ago," Joan whispered, most to herself.

The beard of the Greek priest waved in agitation, as his fingers clawed it. "But no indeed! To make it fit for the service of the mother of the veritable God, the inner columns had to be taken down, and the roof as well, and an apse had to be placed at the east end, and a

door cut between the cella and the chamber behind it. Moreover, the walls have been hollowed out, that the faces of noble Christians might be painted thereon."

"Of the saints, you mean?" briskly from Cenwulf.

But Joan smiled slowly. "We have left the land of saints, Cenwulf; holy Hilarion taught me that." She turned to the Greek priest abruptly. "I speak of Brother Hilarion of Mt. Athos, who visited us once. Have you a St. Augustine or a St. Jerome in your calendar?"

And now he stared with troubled eyes at her. "Calendar? I know the word, but do not know how you use it. We have an Augustine, a pious Christian of blessed memory; as, indeed, was this Jerome you speak of. But why do you name them saints?"

She turned with a gentle laugh to Cenwulf. "Still God's earth, Cenwulf; but God's saints have been demoted, here. May we—" She spoke to the stranger again. "May we set foot within the church, holy father?"

"But it is open to all of the true faith. I myself will show you—"

He led the way. With pulsing hearts, the two travellers followed him. Joan almost swooned, as she set foot first on the marbled floor. And then, heart lifted, she entered.

CHAPTER XIII

In the Temple of the Virgin

FATHER SOTER, THE PRIEST IN CHARGE OF the church, gravely greeted them, and took them personally throughout the building. "We are grown kinder now, we of the church," he said quietly, "and throw our mantle over all the erring children of God. There was an hour when it would have been different."

Joan felt faintly startled. "*Erring* children," she repeated, in some wonder.

"For that we are sure that no heresy endures," said the priest gravely.

"But, good father, I do not follow you. We are not heretics—"

Father Soter lifted his eyebrows slowly. "Do you not follow the bishop of Rome, the chief heretic of these later days? Once Arius taught his heresy, and it spread like purslane throughout the faith. Now that is ended. Later came the western heretic, and still later the Moslem. But in God's good time all will see the error of their ways, and return to the arms of the true church."

Then Joan saw all. "You even call the mad prophet of Mecca a heretic from the faith!" she marvelled.

"What else can he be, but an apostate from the true faith? Surely you have heard of the Syrian monk Bahari, who taught much to Mahomet on his first journey

with the camel-drivers; and who, after hailing the coming greatness of the fitful Arab, became his closest intimate in his first troubled years. Heretic and apostate Bahari surely was; but no one can doubt how he led Mahound first to the fountain, and then away from it. Mahomet knew too those gospels which the holy church regards as apocryphal, but which were once widely hailed in the early church; these inspired the account of the Lord Jesus, in that Devil's Bible, the Koran."

"The Koran I have studied," Joan filled in the pause.

The priest nodded. "It is not the Christ of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John that Mahound knew; but the Christ of the gospel of Nicodemus, of the gospel of the Infancy. There are errant teachings—as, in the third Sura, 'The Family of Imran,' the heresy that the holy virgin, the mother of Jesus, was born immaculate from her mother's womb, lacking that sin that all men since Adam have had, till only Jesus was born, who was both God and man."

"There are lovely things in the Koran," said Joan slowly, "yet this is not of them. Surely Christendom will never accept such teachings!"

"May God forbid!" said the priest fervently. "Yet you speak of lovely things—"

"What else," said Joan, resting her arm against a magnificent Doric column dusky from the dim light that filtered into the church, "would you say of the story of El Khudr, the Green One, that youth who wanders immortally young, righting the wrongs of the world, and solving its dark problems? There is a deep and Christian moral to that story," firmly.

The priest nodded. "I grant you El Khudr. Yet,

since the work is clearly the compilation of the Evil One, this must be merely a bait he has set for Christian fishes. For myself, I find it more convenient to condemn the whole, than search for one grain of wheat in a Pelion of chaff."

Joan smiled at this stiff zeal, and passed on to ask the priest more of the history of the ancient building in which they stood. On this he was more than glib, he was honey-tongued: the theme of the ancient glories of Greece flowed to his tongue from his heart, and the sun had begun to set before he ended his description of the planning and building of the great temple to the virgin, and the ancient miracles that went with it. "For know that God, in his infinite wisdom, designed this temple already as a home at last for the virgin mother, as yet centuries unborn; and attested this will in divers astonishing ways."

Only a yawn from Cenwulf woke him at last to the passage of time. "But, my dear guests, you are famished, and I have forgot the chief duties of a host. Will you not deign to sleep this night, and as many more as God puts it in your heart to do so, with me, in the little house behind these churches, looking northward to Hagios Georgios?" And so it was determined.

The meal was not a frugal one, what with the rich foods amply cooked in the oil of the olive trees that thronged the hillsides, the fish from the waters so near at hand, and an ort from the quarter of a stag that had been sent to the father the day before. It was washed down with deep draughts of a palatable local wine; and Joan and Cenwulf were amazed at the vast quantities of

this that the priest and his wife consumed, as the night wore on in pleasant discourse of the doings in Rome and the other sunset lands. For the priest forgot courteously, for this night, the glories of Greece, and sought politely to broaden his knowledge of things in the west. He was hard put to it to acknowledge that Spain was not a seaport hard by Rome, and insisted stoutly to the end that the Rhine flowed into the Mediterranean, and Saxony, Franconia and Britain were lands a day's journey to the north—had he not learned these things from a learned monk, who had himself visited all of these places? In the end, he admitted that some evil spirit must possess his visitors, to beguile them upon these matters. And, with this, he served up a fresh supply of the heady wine.

The hour grew late; the priest's wife discreetly yawned at intervals, to let her lord and husband know that there was, after all, a morrow, with the next year's vintage more than a half year away; and, just before midnight, the priest showed them to their ample cell, to the front of the house, facing the moon-washed majesty of the Parthenon. One room they must share, he told them sorrowfully,—little guessing how well this fitted in with their fancies. And so courteously he bade them good night, and pleasant dreams from God till cock-crow.

Tired with the day's trudge and the marvels that had come after, Joan cast off her heavy robe, and sat coiled up in the dimness, staring out at the moonpour on the marble columns. For a while Cenwulf busied himself setting the contents of their packs in order. Then, for the night had mellowed and warmed, he too cast off

his robe, and stood quietly watching the still figure of breathing ivory that sat just below the great window, and caught the pour of the moon on uplifted face and russet-nippled breast below.

"Joan—" All the longing in his soul spoke in the slow golden whisper.

She stirred herself happily, her flesh rippling downward like cloth of silver shaken. Without turning to him, her little hand stole out into the dark, and found his. He felt the soothing warm touch of her fingers, and heard the soothing warm gold of her voice. "I am happy, dear," she said. "All happiness. All ecstasy. All delight. I am all delight." Her tones lingered on the words.

He felt a tug on his hand, from the rousing warm little fingers—not as if they sought to escape, but as if they sought to lift him. And in the silver dimness Joan, bare as a nymph in a bowered brake, was stooping forward through the window, drawing him after her. He saw her slim ivory leg plant itself on the holy ground. In sudden panic he caught up his robe, and hers, from the ground, as he followed.

Already she had almost traversed the silver space to the first of the huge marble columns flowering upward. Before he had caught up with her, she had melted into the shadows of the Parthenon porch. But he found her without trouble; for her body glowed whiter than the marble, as with slow, serene, unhurrying pace she made her way down the magic colonnade. And she seemed taller, to Cenwulf, than any of the columns; and there seemed a ring of light around her head. So he told her, later.

Now hand in hand they had reached the front of the temple of the virgin, had crossed to the eastern edge of the porch, and were walking, or rather floating, barefooted to the wall, and so toward the narrowing entrance, where the tiniest temple of them all stood. He read her mind, before her body spoke its will. Together they slipped between the fluted Ionic columns of Pentelic marble, passed down the tiny chamber of that victory that yielded its wings to stay forever on this holy hill, and stopped only before the final marble balustrade.

Almost, Cenwulf thought, they had become one with the marble victories that knelt on the farther side of the balustrade, worshipping the forever inviolate goddess of wisdom. The cool of the stone balmed the flush in their legs and bodies. Together, shoulder to shoulder, thigh against thigh, they stood rigid and eternal as the tiny temple itself.

Before them, in the silver moonpour, the rolling lands toward the distant tiny harbor and the sea, where the three walls had once extended their futile guard. Invisible in the distance before them lay Salamis and the Saronic Sea, ancient Argolis, Arcady, and then the waters that rested not until they foamed into silent rest upon the far shores of Africa.

And now her hand held his tight, as if she would not let it go for all eternity. He let the robes drip to the marble floor; he shivered once. "Your robe—if you are chill—"

"You would robe beauty? You would robe truth? You would robe wisdom? You would robe man and woman on their night of love, dear northern heart?"

As if altered to no more than an echo by the triumphant certainty in her tone, he responded softly, "Who would robe these, but those who serve evil?"

"God made beauty without a robe. Man's blindness, not God's greatness, cast a blurring robe of error over truth, over wisdom. Callow shame robes the loves of men and women. The birds of the air, the beasts of the forest, do not so. Love needs no robe; man, woman, need no robe, but in an hour of snow."

"We need no robe; for the spring has already possessed this height," he murmured softly.

"Our love—the love in your heart for me, Cenwulf, in my heart for you—is it of God, or of the evil one?"

"Our love is of God. For this he made us, shaped us in his own image, gave us those hungers of the body that irk and plague till they are fed,—"

"Such hungers as the gods themselves felt on Olympos, and in all right spots their wings bore them to—"

Cenwulf's tone was bolder now: "—Such hunger as God himself felt, when his tones fell like golden rain in the ears of the virgin of Nazareth, the espoused of the holy St. Joseph, and woke to throbbing life in her virgin womb a son of God himself." His bolder hand was around her slim waist, in its own hunger fingering that panting field he had known so often, and could never tire of.

"There are two gods above us," Joan's words were like a litany. "There is the virgin goddess of wisdom; and there is a goddess who is no virgin, but a mother—the goddess of love and beauty, whom all men have worshipped, but in these blind modern days: she who was

worshipped as Isis among the Egyptians, as Ashtoreth among the dwellers between the two rivers and on the green plains of Tyre, as the Unnamed One from Beersheba to Dan, as Astarte on those brisk shores far to our left, as Aphrodite in Hellas, Venus in Rome, and I know not by what stranger names in stranger lands. We serve both of them."

Cenwulf's tone was humble: "We serve them both."

"Virgin in our search of truth, and Oh how far above virgin in our service to love! These gods are women, Cenwulf dear. Man's first god was a woman, whether he named her the great all-knowing mother, the earth mother, Demeter, or by some more ancient name. Sons of this first goddess have usurped her throne, in darker days, Cenwulf—Osiris, Ra-Ammon, Aten, Bel, Jehovah, Chronos, Zeus, Jupiter: but today man turns back to the earliest worship, which will be the latest as well."

"I have turned forward to her," he responded softly. "And you," more softly, "are her."

"For you, my heart's dear," after a silence she spoke, "I let down my girdle of chastity, I unbound my maiden hair, I was tinder to your fire, field for your ploughing."

"I did but as man must, in the service of beauty, of love—as all men must, but those whose vision has been blinded by evil words of self-slaying aged ones," he said slowly. "And if I took you, you took me as well. We climbed together the holy mount, I pressed my lips to the burning bush at the moment that you knelt to kiss it—"

She faced him now, her lifting breasts waking his

own to wilder disquiet. "Too long men have lived on lies, Cenwulf my heart's dear. Love is of god, and there is no higher god than love. For," a sudden gasp of comprehension, "after the flower has melted in the cauldron of desire, and love no more a virgin has fed upon the highest beauty we know, we become as little children again, virginal, in our quest of truth and wisdom. We are virgins then; but none can be this final virgin until the mount of love has been climbed and possessed."

"And ever and ever again," he supplemented, "we climb this mount, as a prelude to the bleaker upward virginal flight toward the truth of God."

"It is so," softly. And now something moved in her blood, and she sank triumphantly upon the marble. "This is the hill of victory, heart's love; take then that victory, which will be mine as well, shining for both of us . . . for both of us . . ."

There was a long unworded space upon the moonrich height. What sounds came from the breathing of two enraptured bodies, from the benison of the comforting breeze, from the spirits of deities so long exiled, and this night brought back to the marbled peak by the invocations of these two.

"There is no god but love," she echoed softly, when all was ended.

For a space he could not speak; and then words came out, faintly gasped: "There is no god but love."

"Truth and wisdom come but from love of all things," she added dreamily.

"And love, in the end, grows out of man's highest wisdom, as well as out of his rudest rut."

"Cenwulf, we must not be silent upon these things. For what but the truth were we given eyes to pierce the modern dark, lips plumed to speed their arrows of conviction into the hearts of the world? We will say this word together, to all men, to all women, to every living creature."

"And when we say it," his humble tone was like a chant of victory, "we speak it to hearts whose own beats echo back our words, and who take its truth without cavil, for that it is their own truth too."

They lay wrapped in each other's arms, on the marble pallet, until the dawn was rose in the east. Then, discreetly robed, they stole back to the gaping window, in the little house behind the marble marvel.

Father Soter was already stirring, as they approached the house. He smiled greeting to them. "You of the West go to your matins early," he said. "Yet I doubt not but that you found God as near here, in this Attic sky, as over the Rhine or the Seine or the Thames, on the perilous rim of the world."

"We found God very near," Joan answered him.

"And I am glad to note," Cenwulf's nostrils lifted slowly, at a sweet odor from the rear of the house, "that breakfast is near also."

They laughed gently, and returned into the small refectory. And this was their first night on the Acropolis.

CHAPTER XIV

The House Divided Against Itself

YET IT WAS NOT FOR LOVE ALONE THAT they had come to Athens; for love was wherever they were. It was rather as a vestibule to the learning of this ancient land and of the holy places further east. And so gladly they acceded to the suggestion of Father Soter, that they accompany him to a gathering at the academy that morning. "If I mistake not, it is Brother Theophilus from one of the monasteries of Athos who is to hold a discourse; and his theme will be the ones who have left the true church."

Subject more pleasing to Joan and Cenwulf could not have been chosen, than this; it would at the start introduce them to the teachings of the parent church upon the divisions that now rocked and shook Christ's kingdom upon earth.

The room was packed with keen intelligent faces, many of them pale from over study, and all but a few of the youngest bearded like goats. Brother Theophilus, who started to speak soon after they found a vacant bench and squeezed upon it beside the Greek priest, was a tall man, with a white mane of hair and a flowing silky white beard that depended below his cord girdle. His face was wrinkled like old parchment, and his hands were almost claws: but there was a serene kindliness in

his aspect that warmed them toward him from the start.

"It grieves my heart," he began slowly and mellowly, "to speak today of that which is the badge of shame to Christendom throughout the world—the heresies, sects, and schisms that have made the one body of Christ a dismembered, hardly living thing. Yet only by seeing the ill can the cure be found; so sorrow must be borne like a cross, and I must speak."

They listened to all he said, and breathlessly to some of what he said. After he had traced briefly the growth of the united church, which still survived in the great patriarchate of Constantinople, one by one he took up the chief separatist sects.

Of the Chaldean Christians he spoke first, called the Nestorians—those who separated from the united church after the council of Ephesus. For all of the zeal of the great Nestorius of Antioch, then patriarch of Constantinople, in putting down the heresies of the Arians, the Novatians, and the Quartodecimans, he himself erred most egregiously, Theophilus pointed out, in denying that Mary was the mother of God, and holding she was at most the mother of Christ, or mother of Emmanuel. Nestorius could not bring himself to speak of God as being two months old, or three months old: only Christ, he held, could thus have human age. And so, after this false teaching was condemned, his numerous followers withdrew themselves into the remote fastenesses of Kurdistan; from their capital, Edessa, wherein it is told Abraham was born, their head, calling himself patriarch of Babylon, still ruled an immense horde of these early separatists.

He spoke of the Armenian Christians, living around Ararat, who still consecrate their patriarchs with a touch of the dead hand of Gregory the Illuminator, who converted them. From their sacred city of Etchmiazin, he said, they still sent out decrees differing only in small wise from the holdings of the true church—differences so slight, as he explained them, that Joan could in no wise perceive them. Theophilus spoke next of the ancient Jacobite church of Syria; of the Maronites who guard the cedars of Lebanon; of the Coptic Christians of Egypt, who reject all the councils after the first three, and hold all but themselves to be heretics.

"We cannot hold it Christ's will, as they do, that children shall be made deacons; that worshippers must come turbanned and unshod into the services of the church; or in the godliness of the kiss exchanged among all the members of the congregation," sternly the old monk adjudged. "But what shall we say of the Christians of Abyssiania, who carry the ark of Zion into the heart of their worship; who hold that circumcision is as needful as baptism; who observe the Sabbath of the Jews, as well as the Sunday of the true believers? Yet the dances that are a part of their worship, the taking of many wives, and the wild shriek that breaks the air at their funerals, may still be acceptable to God, if he can forgive their many errors of doctrine. Nor are they united in doctrine; there are, among them, seventy differing views as to the twofold nature of Christ, and blood is still spilled in disputes on these views. Can you tell me on what day the entire Abyssinian community is annually baptized?" suddenly he queried, to wake the few among

his hearers who were nodding.

Father Soter suddenly roused himself. "On the feast of Epiphany, learned brother."

"It is even so. And they reverence one saint that no other Christian sect reverences. Can any name him?"

There was a silence. Joan plucked up courage, looked inquiringly at the priest who was their host, and rose slowly. "I have collated the calendars of the churches of the West, and studied those of the East," she said slowly. "Is not this saint that Pilate who condemned Jesus in the words, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just man?' as he washed his hands?"

The aged monk nodded proudly. "It is even so, young brother from the West. And it grieves me to speak next of the see of Rome, which broke off from the true faith so recently. But this must needs be done." He went over the details of the famous controversy, dealing fairly, Joan adjudged, in most that he said. He spoke of the followers of the false prophet of Mecca, who led his Arab hordes into countless errors; and of farther and stranger sects scattered throughout the world.

"There can be no doubt," he said at length, "that the orthodox church is the one church of the living God. Even our heretical brothers admit this. For the words of Jesus were spoken and written in Greek; the apostolic fathers wrote no other language; the very words the heretics still use, such as pope, hermit, monk, anchoret, monastery, cenobite, ascetic, abbot, abbey, are Greek, and by no means Latin. The earliest church in Rome was but a colony of Greek Christians, or converted Jews speaking Greek. The Byzantine church is the mother,

the Roman church the daughter: does the word of God read, 'Honor they daughter,' or does it not rather read, 'Honor thy mother?'" He paused solemnly.

Joan was thrilled by the inexorable logic of his claims. Nor had he ended.

"Our chief city was the first Christian city built, and a city built in honor of Christ by the first Christian emperor. Before St. Peter's church was heard of, St. Sophia, dedicated to the wisdom of God, dominated Stamboul and the Golden Horn. The men of note in the early united church all come from the East; its learning was unrivalled; and today," and he leaned forward belligerently, eyes intent on the two young visitors, "when Rome has locked its mind against God's wisdom as revealed to the more pious of the old pagans, and as set forth in their inspired writings, we still honor the old wisdom, as in the early days of the church. They of the West," the old monk continued sorrowfully, "waste time on trifles, while we of the East still bare our souls before the mystery of the godhead. The first decree of a bishop of Rome forbade the marriage of the clergy—" There was a smile at this, as all thought of their own wives, and of the tales that came from Rome of wives and worse than wives in each priest's train. But Theophilus was stern still: "the first decree of an Eastern council determined the relations of the godhead.

"Today," he continued slowly, "the West still persists in its errors. God ordained baptism by immersion, for all Christians; he did not exempt those who live in icy regions. Yet the Western church has set by this ancient ordinance, and parodies the baptism that is need-

ful to enter the kingdom of heaven by a few drops of water grudgingly dribbled upon the unbending heads of the converts. Yet, by a strange contradiction, those of the West have forsaken the ways of the holy hermits of the desert, who held that filth on the body spoke purity of the soul; their monks actually lave, as well as shave their faces—" he looked sternly at the visitors, "in spite of the direct prohibition of the Almighty.

"We are the original church; and we have maintained its original ordinances: We do not kneel, or bow, or lie prostrate, when speaking to God; we stand erect, as our fathers did. We still have the threefold plunge of baptism into the rushing rivers or the ample baptistries, not a mere sprinkling of a few drops of water. We confirm into church membership at the moment of baptism, as it was ordained; the West separates these twin rites by years. We have no belief in a nonexistent purgatory, as those of the West do. We are not presumptuous enough to absolve sinners of their sins; we plead to God to do this. We require marriage of the clergy, as the revered Paul ordained; we are not blasphemous enough to forbid this, which God clearly designed and ordained through the words of his great teacher. We do not add to the godhead," his quavering old voice crackled with thunder now, "the pious Christians of blessed memory as subordinate gods, dubbing them saints, as the West does. And we call upon the heresiarchs of Rome to abjure these heinous errors, and return to the faith of their fathers."

He was exhausted by the effort; and for a space there was no word uttered aloud, only a hum of respectful comment from the thronged benches.

Father Soter rose at last. "We have visiting with us two monks of the order of Benedict, from far off Fulda. It may be that there are minor matters in the teaching of the holy Theophilus that they are still unsure about, and wish to question about."

Joan rose slowly, face whitened, heart beating. She had been moved so profoundly by much that had been said, that she hesitated to break the spell; and yet, if she was to know all the wisdom of the church, overmodesty would be unseemly. "You commended filth of the body, good brother. Yet Jesus himself washed the feet of his disciples, on the night of the last supper. Certain of your hermits refused to wash even their feet." She paused, expectantly.

Theophilus stared out at the sunshine filtering between the pillars of the converted temple. "The point is just. Yet He did not do this two times, or more than once. Would you not say, then, that by implication Jesus commanded us to have our feet washed once, and once only, during our lives?"

All smiled at this wilting answer. Yet Joan stood bright and unwithered. "Is it not the rather possible, good brother, that, since at this same last supper Jesus gave the bread of his body and the wine of his blood once, and once only, to the disciples to eat and drink; yet did not mean they should eat and drink but once in their lifetime,—but rather used this one supper as a symbol for all the meals a man has, from the day of his birth to the day of his death; is it not the rather possible, that he washed the feet of his disciples once, as a lesson to them to wash them whenever need arose?"

An awed silence greeted this. The old monk was troubled.

"Brother Theophilus, as Christian to Christian, I wish to ask you whether not you yourself lave your body when need arises? And the same query to all who hear me."

And now they hung their heads; for, but for the desert saints, laving the body was not forbidden among them.

"Much that you have said, good brother, I accord with utterly. Yet one more doubt I will mention. What is the mother of your own church, if not the church of the ancient Jews?" She paused, to wait till the gasp of horror died away. "Who was it said, 'I came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to uphold them?' Was not Jesus, as god-in-man, a Jew, born of a Jewish mother, whose line stretched back to David, yea, and to Abraham and Adam before him, both veritable Jews? Were not all of the disciples and first converts Jews, taking part in all the ceremonials of the Jews? What if, as a daughter faith, the teachings of Jesus were that circumcision was not needful, nor sacrifices of blood, nor many other rites of the Jews; yet did not our religion stem out of their, as a daughter out of a mother?"

Soter and a few others looked thunder; but the old Theophilus nodded faintly. "There is somewhat in what you say, young brother. Truly God sent his first revelation to the ancient Jews; yet he sent his second and greater revelation to Jesus Christ our Lord."

"Which is as I said, holy brother; only you have worded it much more goldenly," Joan flattered tactfully.

"If, then, the church of the Jews is the mother, and the living church of Christ the daughter, who has corrected the errors in her mother's teaching—" A long slow pause, for this to sink in, "then is it not possible that the daughter church of the West might conceivably correct errors in the taughtings of its mother church of the East?"

"That were possible," said Theophilus briskly, "if God had ever permitted error to creep into our teaching. But he has taken great pains that no error creep into our teachings; and so no correction is conceivable."

Which all held to be a perfect answer to Joan. But she and Cenwulf were of a different mind, which they kept to themselves.

The academy gathering broke up soon, that all might have the noon meal; and Joan noted again with amazement the amount of wine that the priests were wont to drink with each meal. She and Cenwulf, she knew, would have collapsed under the table at even half of what most of them took without even faintly staggering.

Yet, vanquished as most of them held Joan had been in this first session, it was different when the matters discussed dealt with things other than the differences between the two chief branches of the church. At times she attended sessions of the various academies where philosophy, or science, or history, or literature, were discussed; and soon all recognized the potency of her logic, the charm of her presentation, the depth of her learning.

During all of this, she and Cenwulf held themselves properly to be students, and not teachers. In the West they could teach; here in the East, there was much for

them still to learn. Joan was fascinated by the melancholy story of the emperors of the last four hundred years, who had ruled since Romulus Augustus the Little had been dethroned by Odovaker almost four centuries before.

Dark, sad stories, these. . . . of shrewd Justinian infatuated, in his age, by a harlot of the stage and the street, who had taken all Constantinople into her dishevelled couch, and who was best remembered by her lament that nature had not granted her a fourth altar, on which she might pour libations to the god of love. . . . of the outrages of the blues and the greens of the city, which did not stop short of outrages on noble matrons by their servants, of wives ravished before the horrified eyes of their husbands. . . . of the hateful reign of the second Justinian, with his two favorites, a eunuch and the monk: the former scourging the emperor's mother, the latter suspending certain debtors of the emperor, head downward, over a slow and smoky fire.

It was something that this Justinian had been dethroned, after being mutilated; when his successor in turn had been dethroned and mutilated, Justinian came back for a bloodier six years, in which death and torture were his constant favorites. After the long rule of Leo the Isaurian, his vicious son Constantine the Fifth took the throne. He had received his surname from the fact that, as a child, he had fouled the holy water, while being baptized in it; during his life, he fouled everything he touched. His reign was one long butchery, with the insatiate emperor presiding in person at the bloody and tormenting executions. He knew no differences of sex,

in the favorites that shared the royal couch with him: he was by turns heretic Christian, Jew, Moslem, pagan, atheist: but most he gave his worship to the dark mysteries of a maddened Venus. His son was a feebler Constantine; his wife, that iron-souled Irene who had her son the emperor blinded, that she might rule alone.

When this woman was exiled, and her treasurer Nicopherus took the purple, the people found they had exchanged one evil for another. And so one weakling had succeeded another, until the rash caliph Theophilus took the throne. For he was more caliph than emperor: he exulted in whimsical acts of over-justice, that displeased while they astounded. Thus when a poor woman complained to Theophilus that his wife's brother had raised a palace wall so high that it shut off sun and air from her humble home, the emperor had turned over to her the palace, and had had the patrician stripped and scourged in the public square of Constantinople. For minor offenses, a guilty minister, prefect, questor, or captain of the guard, would be banished, or mutilated, scalded with boiling pitch or burnt alive in the hippodrome.

A mad, whimsical, capricious monarch. . . . To choose his wife, he had all the lovely virgin daughters of the chief nobles brought to his palace, and, a golden apple in his hand, he walked between the lines of contending beauties. The charms of Icasia attracted his attention; and, somewhat sourly, he said, "Ah, women have been the cause of much evil in the world."

With gentle dignity the girl replied, "And surely, sir, they have also been the cause of much good."

Presto! The emperor turned aside in disgust; Icasia hid her shame in a convent; and the utter silence of Theodora was rewarded with the golden apple. A difficult time she had of it; yet she stuck it out, and on the emperor's death, two years before Joan and Cenwulf had arrived at Athens, she was left as guardian of the young emperor, Michael, now seven years old. A mad child, all said, who had promised to make his court fool the patriarch, once he reached his maturity. . . . So things went in Constantinople.

"If the orthodox Greek church is the tree, and the Eastern empire the fruit, then surely such bad fruit can come from no good tree."

"If you had been that Icasia, I doubt not but that you would have given the emperor a bang upon the mazzard, and relegated him to a monastery, instead of ennunning yourself."

She blushed prettily. "The young emperor is seven now, a trifle young for a wife; but that is a role I might think of. . . . There are worse things than being an empress, Cenwulf."

"Such as being my own heart's dear?" he reproached her.

She held him passionately against her heart. "That is more than being empress of all Christendom. No, God grant me no change from this role I now blossom in!"

CHAPTER XV

Word Out of Rome

FOR TWO YEARS JOAN AND CENWULF DWELT peaceably in Athens, part of the time in the house of Father Soter on the Acropolis, and part of the time in an abbey near the old market-place. They who had come mainly to learn remained to teach. For Joan especially, well grounded in all of the old philosophy and logic that the libraries of northern Europe contained, did not take long to master what further writings were available here; and, once she mastered them, her brilliance of disputation gave her a large following among the teachers at the academy, until her own discourses were as well attended as any.

There were murmurs against her, due largely to her youthful appearance and her beardless face. For the lack of a beard was held a serious lack, in Greek eyes; and Cenwulf, for his part, both to shield Joan, and because it had always been his custom, did not let his own beard grow. "Let this English John grow up into manhood, and then we will harken to his words," those routed by Joan in disputation were wont to say; and this bit into the esteem with which she was regarded, in some small wise. But, after all, if she could hold her own against the best of them, there was small need for her to be irked by this small dispraise.

When they had been more than a year and a half in the ancient capital of the Greeks, an envoy of the pope's, bound for the court of the patriarch of Constantinople, put into the Peiraeus, and Joan and Cenwulf had the thrill of touch again with those from their own branch of the church of God. There was one brother especially among them, a brother from Avignon named Jean, who chose the first chance to walk with them out toward vineyarded Hymettus, in order that he could tell them in private certain things that had occurred in the West, on which he felt strongly.

"I can not hold, Brother John," the young Burgundian began somberly, "that the things which take place in Rome and Aix are done of God. When was it that you left the empire?"

"We left Marseilles at such a time, that when we reached Napoli were told of the election of the archpriest, Os Porci, as pope."

"Then you know that Sergius sits on the chair of St. Peter. Did you hear of the disorders of the deacon John—your own name brother—who sought to take the papacy by force?"

"Something of it," said Cenwulf; "and that all obscurely."

"Well, his effort failed; and he was closely imprisoned. Query, what to be done with him? The magistrates who sat over his case sought to send him away to exile. The clergy of Rome, who drink bloodshed as these Greek priests drink wine, insisted that his tongue be torn out, and he be blinded. The pope, no doubt on the advice of the shrewd Benedict, his brother,

set the man at liberty, and restored him his diaconate. So far, you follow me?

"But, in the disorder, Sergius had been enthroned and consecrated, without the consent of the emperor Lothair; and these turbulent offspring of Charlemagne can be counted upon to overturn a bee's hive, once they see it. So Lothair acted with the speed of a summer storm. He had his eldest son Louis named king of Italy, and sent him off posthaste to Rome, accompanied by the kingling's uncle, Bishop Drogon of Metz, to blast the holy see with imperial disapproval, and make sure that no future pope be consecrated without the emperor's authority."

"I have sometimes wondered," said Joan slowly, "if emperors should have any word in the choice of the head of Christendom. If St. Peter had waited for word from the Roman emperor then, the world might still be pagan."

"I have wondered," said Brother Jean more savagely, "whether pope or emperor is worthy, except to foment discord and bloodshed. Well, picture young Louis and his uncle the bishop on the way to Rome; picture wily Sergius having him met by all the magistrates of the city, the school children, the companies of militia with their leaders, all roaring forth songs of welcome to the young prince, and bearing at their head enough crosses and banners to greet a covey of emperors. And so Louis traversed Rome with this roaring escort, clear to the portico of the church of St. Peter, where the Hog's Snout stood, all decked in ornaments of gold and precious stones, like a jewel-merchant displaying his wares."

"You have small love for this pope," said Cenwulf shrewdly.

"None have love for him; as, indeed, what fathers of the church do deserve our love, in this modern age? The king climbed the steps of the church. The pope stepped down one step. They hugged, as if they were two brothers greeting one another. Then the Hog's Snout achieved a miracle, by an unseen wafture of his rear hand. As the twain stood in the court of honor, the massive inner gates of silver swung closed, no man touching them. Sergious turned then to the astounded prince, and said, 'My Lord, if you come here to augment the safety of church and state, I will bid those sacred gates open; if not, your foot shall never touch the courtyard of the temple of God's apostles.'"

"That was statescraft," said Joan bitterly.

"You like it little as I. Nor would you have liked the roar of 'A miracle!' which the pope's brother Benedict stirred up on every hand. Well, the young Louis gave one word to the pope, and was allowed to enter. He had a second word for his troops, who were bidden to ravage the country at their will, to lesson the pope against the sin of consecration without Carolingian approval. He had a third word for the ecclesiastics of the empire; and down to Rome they came flocking, like vultures over a bull's corpse—twenty three bishops of them, and countless abbots and lords; these set up their own council, if you will, to try the pope, to see if his election had been in good order, or so disordered that the Hog's Snout should be removed from the holy chair."

Joan shook her head. "How can men respect the head of Christendom, if kings and emperors do not respect him?"

"He earns no man's respect," said the young Burgundian hotly. "Nor did they condemn him wholly; though Angilbert, metropolitan of Milan, loudly cried that the godless ambition of the pontiff had caused all the disturbances that desolated the holy city, and he, for his part, thereafter would separate himself from the communion of the pope. To make matters darker, the Saracens came sailing into the territories of the church, slaughtered Christians left and right, sacked and burned villages and castles, until no man knew what the next minute would bring.

"Yet the Hog's Snout kept cooing all the while into the easy ear of the young prince; so that he spurned his own counsellors, and agreed to ratify the election of Sergius, if only the citizens of Rome would reassert their allegiance to prince and the emperor his father. In St. Peter's this was, too, with lords, clergy, people, and the tricky pontiff himself swearing, by the body of St. Peter, entire submission to the emperor; and with the pope himself, in the end, crowning this young Louis as king of the Lombards. Those who aided the pontiff in this did not go unrewarded," with more bitterness. "The young king's uncle, Bishop Drogon of Metz, went home with much of the papal treasury in his wallet, and with the title of apostolic vicar, with full authority of every metropolitan beyond the Alps, and even the right to assemble general councils!"

"A fairly complete victory for Sergius," said Cenwulf, troubled.

"How can I tell all that followed? Lothair had a daughter, a lovely virgin princess named Ermengarde.

Charles the Bald of France, set on, some say, by this same Sergius, strengthened one of his vassals, named Sisalbert, to abduct the girl. She was stolen, and hardly used. The wrath of the emperor was terrible; he breathed fiery vengeance upon Charles the Bald and Louis the German, as having caused this awful indignity to his dignity, this violation of the lovely maiden. Louis the German blandly took oath that he was soul-free; Charles notified his brother that the accusation was not even to be noticed; and so Lothair turned all his wrath against the king of Franconia.

"First Lothair used all of his machinery to have the unworthy prelate, Ebbon, restored to the bishopric of Reims; having failed in this, he egged on Nomenoe, duke of the Bretons, to revolt from Charles, and set himself up as king of Brittany. This had no force, until Lothair persuaded Sergius to name this duke as a king; and then all fell prostrate before the anointed king, and another of the provinces of Charles the Bald had passed from him.

"So it has gone, with the rest of the world; and, even now, the Saracens are hovering along the coasts of Italy, throughout whose length and breadth these grasping greedy priests are robbing the people of what little has been left them. It is a sight to sicken the bowels of God!"

Joan, sick at heart, turned to Cenwulf. "What think you of all this, Brother Cenwulf?"

Shaking his head, the Mercian spoke: "I think we are wise, as we had planned, to turn our backs for a long space upon the troubled see of Rome and the unholy

empire, and go to the serener lands to the East. For this was our plan, Brother Jean."

"Italy, Neustria, the empire, Germany, are excellent places in which to be throat-slit or mutilated," said the Burgundian sourly. "I intend to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre myself, once I have ended this mission of Sergius to the patriarch at Constantinople. No will of mine will take me back to Rome, while that animal sullies Peter's seat!"

Joan's eyes sparkled. "The city of Constantine, and then the Holy Land . . . Nazareth, Bethlehem, holy Jerusalem, and then perchance Damascus and far Bagdad. Or, if the Moslems are too unfriendly, to the East, we might be welcomed in ancient Egypt. Would you not like to stand below the eternal sphinx and the pyramids with me, Cenwulf, and ponder over what changes not, nor alters, no matter what petty tempests shake the younger lands to the north? Yes, thus lies our way."

The envoys moved on at last, and Joan went back to her sessions at the academy. But her heart was saddened by what she had heard of Rome; and the heart of Cenwulf was sickened, at this petty impotence seated on the highest seat in all the world. Of the two of them, Joan fared best. For she could lose herself in silver discourse of the teachings of Plato and his master Socrates, of lordly Aristotle and the later Philo, and of those who had commented upon these; but Cenwulf had less of a taste for philosophy, and often wandered restlessly out of her assemblies, to stare frozenly at the squalid life of the decrepit town until her symposium was over.

"Are you not happy here, Cenwulf?" she would query, when she rejoined him, shaking off the admiring groups that would have held her for a few last searching questions.

"I liked Fulda better," he said morosely. "To me, religion is good deeds, not endless, useless speculations. What if Hrabanus Maurus has naught to think of, but the words of Godescalus; what if he holds that men can never correct their errors nor their habits of sins, since God has himself condemned them in advance of their birth? These are pointless things; but, at least, Godescalus has time to write poems, in praise of God and godly things; and the learned abbot has time to write on every subject under the sun. And there is rude laughter there, and the best Rhenish in the world, and. . . . Oh, I weary of this thin-souled land, Joan! You speak so much of pagan philosophy and the pagan gods, that at times I fear you are become very pagan yourself."

"These are all Christians that I talk with, Cenwulf."

"An evil land," he said bitterly. "Among our people, a woman is held high, as God knows she should be. Here, it is now offered to forbid any female or even female animal from entering the monk-sty they call holy Athos."

Joan nodded soberly. "I too have heard that. It has not been enacted yet."

"Look at these women here," said Cenwulf stolidly, "and you will see why it must be enacted. They are as much like you or that Aspasia you speak so much of, Joan, as I am like a boar penned for sow-service. Brood-mares, brood jennies. . . . Well, perhaps the East will be better. . . ."

One night, a few weeks later, she attended a disputation upon the orthodox viewpoint of the procession of the holy spirit, in which the western heresy, as they termed it—the addition of the *filioque*—would be violently assailed, as Joan well knew, by a vehement abbot from Constantinople himself. She wished to learn the orthodox attitude; and, more, she knew that she would be expected to be on hand, to answer the attack, if answer seemed needful. Cenwulf went with her; but he said, before he started, that he had no will to go.

It was a chill night inside the converted church, and the disputation seemed interminable. Cenwulf, midway of the meeting, muttered an excuse, and slipped outside the door. Hours later, Joan left, having used much tact in explaining, if not justifying, the Spanish addition. As pure theology, she had said, the Greeks were in the right; yet she held that exigencies in the contest against the doctrines of Arius, in Spain, had forced the addition upon the Western church, which somewhat grudgingly the vistor had admitted.

And there was no Cenwulf here.

There were so many hands plucking at her robe, so many arguments plucking at her attention, that it was more than an hour still before she reached the cells where she and Cenwulf stayed. He had not returned.

Troubled, she wandered back to the converted temple. All was dark and silent now, and chill. Faintly she called him, and only succeeded in arousing several vagrant dogs, who began to gather to add volume to her call. With troubled heart she wandered back, and still he had not come.

It was almost dawn when he arrived. He was sick of soul, he said, at all this aimless talk that led nowhere. Could they not leave, on the morrow it might be, either for the West, or, if her mind was so bent on the East, for as speedy a visit there as might be? He coughed harshly, as he spoke, and his cheeks were flushed, and there was an unnatural glitter in his eyes.

Joan, still troubled, promised him to do what he wished. Her mind misgave her that she had overpunished the one she loved, by consulting her own wishes more than his. She went to sleep, condemning herself for her selfishness.

In the morning, she went brightly to Cenwulf, and told him she was ready to fall in with any plans he might have. He lay listless on his pallet, and still fevered. After a little he arose, and woke to some interest in the planning. But the cough continued, and the fever; and Joan began to realize that he must have contracted some humor on the chest, the night before, when, as he explained, he had walked almost all night out toward Hymettus, and then back, to try to walk off his sorry mood.

The days passed, and Cenwulf dragged himself even more listlessly about the abbey. It was clear, now, that all was not well with him. There were several brothers in the abbey who were learned in all the simples and healing methods of the time. These all took turns with Cenwulf; and when, after a week had passed, he showed no improvement, but, if anything, walked about more listlessly than ever, Brother Ambrose himself, the most learned monk in healing in the city, was sent for, and took charge of the cure.

Cure it would be, without question, he assured both Joan and Cenwulf. He had cured three monks of the same distemper only the year before; unless some evil spirit had entered into the body of the English brother, his recovery would be rapid. Bleeding, to begin with; an ample purge; a dose of mummy and ground sow dung in red wine—the distemper would surely yield to this. Learnedly the procedure was gone through with; and, in the end, the learned monk uttered several prayers, including one in an unknown tongue, and touched the chest of the patient with a bone from the body of a noted hermit from Arabia Felix, which had wrought more cures than any relic in Greece.

For three days this continued; and, when the patient grew worse, bleeding twice a day was resorted too, with the addition of a mixture of a score of simples administered in the patient's own urine, to drive forth the demon that must be causing the continuance of the distemper. At the end of a week, Cenwulf could hardly raise his head from his pallet. Stranger remedies were invoked, and a messenger was dispatched to Athos to borrow a fragment of the true cross, which could not fail to work a cure, no matter what demons inhabited the racked and emaciated body.

Up to this time Joan, encouraged by the insistent cheerfulness of the learned old monk, had not taken the illness too seriously, except in her annoyance that it had come upon one she loved. Others grew ill, and recovered; it was a mere matter of days, and Cenwulf would be beside her again. But now she grew troubled at last, and questioned Ambrose more closely as to his other cases,

and this one in especial. This time the learned monk was more troubled; there were more cases of demonic possession in Greece, he admitted, than he had led her to believe; and, to be quite truthful, he had asked that night that the elders of the church come in, and anoint the body of Cenwulf with oil, and pray over him, as was the custom.

"But we do that only when a man is dying!" Joan murmured, in horror.

"It is not so among us," Ambrose comforted her. "Although, of course, many men do die, and no man can know the will of God. But I will do what I can, never fear."

Just before the elders called, he had a heavy purge given, and a double bleeding. Joan, face distracted, hands clenched, stood watching the solemn visitation of the body of priests, and their unction of the hardly breathing man.

Within two hours, Cenwulf was dead.

Joan stood quietly within the room, as he died. The moment before, she had believed that he was bettering at last; for he opened his eyes, and almost smiled, and said "Joan" quietly once. But that was all.

And there was no expression on her face as he died, except such an expression as might be seen on a death mask. And one by one, as they saw what was on her face, they withdrew from the cell; and she was left at last with the dead man's body.

CHAPTER XVI

A Farewell in Athens

THERE WERE THREE TALL TALLOW CANDLES in the room, two set in sconces in the wall at either side of the head of the pallet, and one, the greatest of all, driven into a spike upon a candlestick of hard wood that stood on the little table beside the head of the pallet. Joan stared at these first of all, seeking to hold her mind away from what lay covered on the pallet.

There were three of these. There must be three, and only three: were there not three, and three only, in the sacred trinity; God the father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit? Were there not three Graces, and three, and three only, Fates that ruled men's lives? Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos. . . . and a thread had been snipped. . . . Her eyes closed, she grew faint, she forced her mind to dwell further on the number three. . . .

There were three ages of man—youth, maturity, and old age: if that were so, she thought wildly, there would be only two candles in this room, and not three. . . . There were three who were transfigured on the Mount of Olives, and three who hung on dead trees at the Place of the Skull, Golgotha. . . . There were three seasons in the life of the corn—the hour of sowing, the hour of tending, the hour of harvest: and three and three only Joans there had been, Joan the girl, Joan the lover, and

Joan the bereaved lover. . . . And again her eyes grew faint, and she sat dizzily at the foot of the pallet, and stared at the larger of the candles until it swelled into a vast sun, with the face of Cenwulf smiling at her out of it.

The face smiled at her, and her eyes followed the direction of its smile. . . . The blank wall brightened to a crowded room, with a keen-faced brother from Rome preaching—the refectory of the abbey of Mainz, it was, and the monk's name was Paul. . . . Staring at her was a tall handsome flaxen-haired monk, who she knew somehow was named Cenwulf. . . . And here he was again, staring sea-eyed at her across the library of Mainz cathedral. . . . Then a withering hurly-burly in a writhing oaken forest, and a vast black demon seeking to prison her against the ground, and a voice, "What devil's business is this? I have heard her say no. . . ."

Swifter and swifter the pictures came—of two above Mainz on a bald night height, with the sky opening down upon them to rain golden joy; of trudges through the forest, nights locked in each other's arms, joyous nights at Fulda; of a ship that rode the sea way to green England, and much that befell there; of the quaint island town in the Seine, and the strange creatures of Marseilles; of silver moonlight on the Parthenon, and two who lay in each other's arms in the temple of the unwinged victory. As she saw these, she was no more herself, and even sorrow had somehow forsaken her.

And, in all of these, the tall handsome flaxen-haired Cenwulf by her side. Now he was no more by her side, but trudged alone up a high hill, as the night paled

toward morning. His hair was silver at first, as the moon washed it; it paled and goldened, as the sun woke the East, until in the end it was a halo around his head. Before him was a great gate of pearl, which swung wide as he neared it: and now his robe was no longer brown, but spotless white, like a cherry flower. And there were many to greet him, kindly ones, and the haloes on their heads were brighter than any sun. The air was sweet with song, and there was the flash of wings there, great wings sweeping, and a sound of laughter.

As he entered the gate, he turned and smiled at her with those seablue eyes, and lifted a hand and gently beckoned her. She rose in the dim room, face transfigured, to leap to his call: and on a sudden there was no gate, and no bright figures, not even Cenwulf's, and no hill, and no hand to beckon her up it: only three dreadful candles that blinded her eyes like the glare from hell pit, and the dark stone walls of this cell, and a long cloth covering a still form at her side.

She threw herself on her breasts beside the figure, and clenched it with both hands, and great rasping sobs shook her and shook her, until she thought she would die of the agony. Over and over something within her was crying, "Cenwulf, my love, my love, my only love," but no word could come from the mouth racked wide with torment, nothing but these great rasping sobs that made her less living than dead.

There came an end to the sobbing, and, for a space, eyes closed, she lay as one dead. When she rose from the floor, her eyes were veined with red, but they were as dry as the world of comfort: and her face was still like

marble, and the smile on it was not such a smile as a man would care to go near. She turned her back on the still body, and stared at the blank wall behind her. And then she came back quietly to the body, and lifted the long cloth from the head and the upper torso of the body that lay there.

Her breast did not lift now, nor her face alter. The seablue eyes were closed, the hands folded softly across the breast, and there was a faint rosy smile upon the still lips. Like marble flushed with rose he lay, like ivory flushed with rose, and so would lie forever, with that faint smile on his lips. They would never straighten to unhappiness again, or smile more amply, or open to greet her ever again. There would be no more walking hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder, upon any hill of the world, or down any green woodland; there would be no more smiling together at the stars, no more nights in those one arms in all the world that it was good to lie in. That was gone, gone for good, and she was alone, here in this candle-lit stone cell, with only a still body of marble where her lover had lain so often.

She smiled sadly now; tears were done with. If only she were sure that he would be waiting for her, when she lay as he lay now, and her soul swirled upward to clasp his, as her body had done so often! If only she knew. . . . Then her face smiled again, very sadly: this was what the vision had said, that he had climbed first to the gates of pearl, and waited there for her, beckoning.

There was no parting like the parting of death, she said quietly to herself. This that lay here so still and unstirring, so infinitely remote from her, was not her

lover: what had been him had winged upward. It would have been good if she could have had just one more night with him, or just one more hour in his arms, or just one more final embrace, or just one more word: but this was past now, and she was alone, until her hour came, when she would join him. Softly she prayed God that that hour would come soon, even if it came this night.

Life, men would call it—what was left, after he had gone. She would go to her meals thrice daily, she would lie down to sleep alone and wake alone, she would walk alone to meetings of the academy or services to God, alone without Cenwulf, no matter what multitude was there. This was death. He would have been a friend, if he had summoned the two of them together. But she was alone, and she must bid farewell to what had been most of worth to her on earth for so long.

There were no words in her farewelling. There were no ears to hear words: only her silence spoke to his silence, and she knew that he would not fail to hear her. Death had come, to torture her: but it could not part her from him, since he shone so bright in her heart forever. And so her last communion of thoughts with him was locked within her own heart, and what his heart heard of it.

At the end, as if she had been stroking the pale petals of the first flower of spring in the Mainz woodlands, she laid the long robe gently back over the still folded hands and the breast, and then, after a slow long kiss on the chill lips, she covered the face as well.

This night, she could sit beside his body. Always she could at least remember this.

She sat quietly at the foot of the pallet again. And then, far off in the dim recesses of the abbey, she heard a sound of chanting, and of marching feet. They came in unto her at last, marching two by two: and those in front bore wax candles, which they placed where the tallow candles had been, as was their custom. And then they marched away two by two for the night office. But she stayed alone.

She sat silent, and her wearied mind drowsed a little, letting her wander wildly through red cleaving scenes of parting from him again. She roused, at a solitary footstep approaching the cell. Brother Anteros came in, a brother whom she and Cenwulf knew well, a trifle older even than Cenwulf. His face was humble, his eyes searched her face oddly.

"My heart grieves for you, Brother John. This soul whom God has called tonight, he was very dear to you, that I know."

"There was none dearer," Joan answered him quietly. "There will never be one dearer."

"I felt that you loved him so, and that he loved you as much. It is one of God's chief blessings, the love of man for man," he spoke as if to console her.

"We always found it so." She fell silent, sorry that she was not still alone with her thoughts and her dead.

"I would not have you mourn too much, Brother John. For my heart loves you too. You remember that holy David wept and tore his garments unceasingly, while his child sickened toward death; but, the moment that death had come, he dried his eyes, and wept no more thereafter, since the hour for weeping had ended."

"My eyes are dry." Again a silence.

"You will not mourn too much, will you, dear Brother John? For over-mourning opens the gates of the soul for demons to enter in, and it might be that they would possess you to your death, if you let them once gain entrance."

"I will not mourn," as quietly.

He stared at her diffidently. "You are lonely now, Brother John; and I have been lonely, since a year ago young Brother Celestin died, who was as dear to me as this Brother Cenwulf was to you. We comforted each other, often," he licked his lips to dampen them. "As, I know, you and Cenwulf comforted each other."

Such a deal of talking, Joan sighed within herself. But she must iron her soul to courtesy for ever now, since there was little else left to possess it. "He was infinite comfort to me always, Brother."

Brother Anteros sat beside her, and laid a gentle hand on her shoulder. "There is naught in life like the love of man for man, is there, Brother John? It answers every need of man—companionship for the soul, and even release from those uneases of the body that at hours shake all men." His arm slipped lower about her shoulder.

And now all at once she knew his meaning, and her heart went icy within her. She answered him quietly: "I was never Cenwulf's lover, in the way you mean."

He laughed, a bit coarsely. "You need not seek to press the wool against my eyes, Brother John. All within the abbey knew of your love for each other. Why," with a roughened little laugh, "I myself have seen you two lying together, as no two friends ever lay. No—one

moment. I am not blaming you for this; the happiest hours of my life were spent in the arms of the lad Celestin. But he is dead," plausibly, persuadingly, "and Cenwulf is dead, and you and I are left alive. Come, mount above your grief! We can comfort each other. As long as you bide here, happy in each other's arms; and, when the will moves you to move on to wider fields, I will go with you, as Cenwulf did, to face the dangers of the world together. Dear Brother John—" And he made as if to kiss her.

Joan's heart was icier than ever, but her voice was smooth. She slipped softly to her feet, and walked away from him. "I am sorry those here believe that of us; it was not so, my soul on it. Yet, it matters not, what you believe. Life here has been sweet and godly, with Brother Cenwulf at my side. Now that he is gone, I—I leave today," a faint far shiver of hysteria in her voice. "They will bury him," heart sickened, "and then I leave."

"For the East, as you and he planned?" still avidly seeking to make her plans include him.

Her heart stirred suddenly: Cenwulf alone had been irked at thought of going East, he alone had yearned for a return to the homeland they had left. There was no voice, now, to protest the trip to Constantinople, to Jerusalem, to more distant lands. . . . And then her head lifted proudly, as into her heart something entered. "I go West," she said suddenly. He had wished it; she could at least do this little, in memory of him. "Back to the land I journeyed from."

"By way of Rome?" his queries nuzzled closer and closer to her planning, hoping thus to worm his way into her counsels, and her better liking.

For a moment she knew again how utterly and eternally alone she was. Something she must have, to

take her mind off this icy separation from the beloved dead. Rome, with its turbulence, its ills that needed remedy, its red riots and swift stabbing death so often—she could forget there, then tumultuously another thought clouded over this, she might meet a sudden stab in the dark, and her lonely mourning ended for ever, her soul swirling upward to the clasp that was so all to her.

She spoke with utter courtesy, "By way of Rome, yes."

As if he could take the repellent citadel by force, he flung himself at her feet, his hands clawed up her robe against her shrinking body. "John, John, if you will only let me love you—"

Like an emperor she moved quietly out of his clutch. "I will let you love me, as I will let all Christendom love me, with pure heart and high devotion to God. In no other way, you or any. My heart is God's," and then with almost a faint break in the silver tone, "and with the dead."

This time he knew that there was no victory here for him. He sat quietly beside her, talking of that and this, until the dawn spoke through the window of the cell, and those came to plan the burial of the dead young monk.

Later in the day, she followed first behind the four brawny brothers who bore the wound corpse above their shoulders to the old cemetery on the side of the hill. When the last clod had been smoothed down, and the chant for the return commenced, she walked as quietly and serenely back to her own cell, not entering the one beside it where Cenwulf had dwelt. On the morrow, she walked unaccompanied to the Peiraeus, and made her bargain to sail the next day on a ship bound for Rome.

CHAPTER XVII

The Sack of St. Peter's

EIGHT DAYS ON BOARD THE SHIP, AND Joan's face had become composed into that pallid marble that it stayed for so long. On the morning of the ninth day, they dropped anchor in the harbor of Naples, and had a day to stretch their legs. Mechanically Joan revisited the places she and Cenwulf had revelled in: they seemed chill and icy now, and her heart took no joy in them.

There was a frightened stir among the people, but she paid no heed to it. Only when she was on shipboard again did she grasp, from words of the captain of the ship, what was so stirring the people. The Saracens had returned, no doubt of it, a vast fleet of them; they had sailed past Capri, past Ischia, they had been reported off Terracina two days ago, sailing north. Almost the captain decided to wait in Naples harbor for more reassuring word; but, in the end, he raised sails and beat timorously up the coast, his eyes tense for the first sight of hostile sail.

Just before they reached Ostia, he saw on the horizon what he dreaded—a small fleet of five ships, making their slow way northward. Shaking his head, he turned the ship, and let off those who desired to land in an inlet near Ardea. Joan was among these. There was one

who dwelt at Frascati, in the Alban hills, and he guided the others until they reached the Appian Way, and then pushed on alone, leaving them to enter the city from the South. When they came to the walls, they found them crowded with soldiery and others of the populace, all armed; they could hardly persuade these to let the little band enter, so fearful were they that this was some device of the Saracens.

"But what is occurring? Where are the Saracens?" Joan and the others asked.

There were as many answers as there were answerers. They had entered the mouth of the river at Ostia and beached their ships near there, and had marched up to the gates of Rome; thus far all agreed. But from here on the stories differed. Some said they had marched back to the sea, some that they had turned north, some, south; there were wilder rumors, that they had pierced the gate beyond the Capitoline Hill, and were even now ravaging the market places there.

With saddened hearts Joan and the rest scattered, each to his own tavern or abbey. There was only one surety, that the godless pagans would never harm the tombs and churches of St. Peter and St. Paul, on the Ostian Way and in the Vatican suburb. Not Goth, nor Vandal, nor Lombard, had dared lay impious hands on this most sacred coign of God's world. God would strike dead, all said, such sacrilege.

Joan had strayed back to the southerly walls, when a new thrill of excitement sent her climbing the ramparts, to see what was occurring outside. Everyone was running in this direction and screaming hoarsely. When

she reached a place on the walls at last, she saw the marching Saracens passing below the very walls, set for that southerly Appian Way that she had herself followed only this day.

They made no motion to attack the city, however; and, eyes at last wearied, Joan climbed down again, and wandered north toward the Quirinal. Here was a wilder crowd, full of madder rumors. The pope had been slain by the infidels, he had converted them and started them marching back to Africa, he had fled north to the empire, he had gone south to Napoli and the Saracens were pursuing him. And then, the streets rudely cleared by soldiers, and a body of richly clad prelates hurrying up the hill. . . .

"The pope! The pope!" They fell on their knees, on both sides of the way, breathing thankfulness that the man of God was unscathed and with them.

With narrowed gaze he strode briskly between the bowed ranks, hand raised in blessing. For the first time, Joan saw one of the sole chiefs of the church near at hand. She could see now why he had named himself the Hog's Snout, for there was something greedy and porcine in his face that chilled all adoration in her heart.

He passed on, with his retainers, and the crowd turned in and surged after him, for more news of what was happening. Joan by chance ran into an English brother—she could tell him by his uncouth speech—and found that he had been in the thick of it all.

"God alone knows what horrors the fiends out of hell have not performed! They have plundered through

St. Paul's, through St. Peter's, even stripping the altar of rich silver from Peter's own church. There is nothing of value left in them. We fled to the safety of the walls: and no one of us knows why God did not strike them all dead, for this day's deeds!"

Wild rumors, for days and days: Rome moved as in a nightmare, with nothing clear, nothing sure. Then slowly the wheat of truth was sifted from the chaff of flying rumor. The pagans had marched southward and girdled the little hamlet of Fondi. One mad African rush, and they had put the men to the sword, and the torch to the buildings, and had herded the women and sent them under escort to the coast, to be sold as slaves in Africa. The pope had cried aloud, in his agony, for aid from the emperor. Lothair had sent troops, who encountered the Saracens encamped in the little free state of Gayeta. The French had been lashed northward; there was no help here.

Twice again Joan saw the pope and his retinue passing—a haggard old man, worn out with this sick twilight of his rule, wasting away with worry and some gnawing disease. She learned that the pontiff was seeking alliance with the eastern empire, since the western had failed him. And then dreadful news from the south again. The Saracens, heartened by their repulse of the troops of Lothair, had aimed for holy Monte Cassino, that opulent monastery which the sainted Benedict himself had founded. The terrified monk who brought news of this to Rome wept all night outside the papal lodgings, for immediate succor: the Moors were encamped by a ford on a little stream, and the next morrow would

mean the destruction of this shrine of Christendom, if aid were not sent.

But the pope had no aid to send; and for two days there was no word from the south. Then came wild accounts of a miracle that God himself had performed—and the abbey was saved! The venerable abbot, seeing help from man was vain, had led all of the monks with bare feet and heads besprinkled with ashes to the church of the saint, to spend the night crying aloud appeals to the founder to intercede for them with God, and save their beloved abbey from spoilation. God had heard the prayers; as their chants lifted the loudest, the heavens had opened and sent down so abundant a rain, that the little stream had become an impassable torrent, and the discomfited pagans had retired baffled before this intervention of the deity.

Word filtered in later that was not so heartening. Enraged at the escape of the rich abbey, the hordes of the African emir had turned on the surrounding farm country, burned the farm houses, slain the men, driven off the cattle, and not one woman had escaped violation from their lust. All monks who had been caught wandering in the land they controlled had been tortured to their death.

And then suddenly, on the night of the 27th of January, a bare three years after his accession to the papal chair, Sergius sickened and died, and was interred promptly in St. Peter's.

Amid wild excitement, nobles, clergy, and populace, Joan among them, thronged at once to proceed to the election of a new pope. None knew at what hour the

Saracens would return; a leaderless city would be a lost city. Joan had not been in Rome long enough to have adjudged the merits of the leading clerics. But a strong party, as soon as word of the death of the Hog's Snout had spread, had begun to chant aloud the name of a priest of the order of the Four Crowns, named Leo. Fourth Gregory had taken him from St. Martin's monastery and made him a sub-deacon, attached to the pontiff's person; the Hog's Snout, Gregory's successor, had loaded him with preferments and riches,—this much Joan remembered, and little else of him.

When the crowd assembled, his name was proclaimed, and there were no dissenting voices. Attended by an immense train, he took himself to the papal palace, and presented his feet to be kissed by the clergy, the nobles, and the chiefs among the citizens. Word was sent to Lothair at once; no one dared consecrate a pape, now, without the express approval of the emperor. There was a delay in the answer, and for two months the Holy See was vacant, though Leo directed its matters as if he had been consecrated.

Then word came that the Saracens were again approaching; and, waiting no longer, the council of the city authorized the consecration, which was done by three bishops. Then came the purification of the relics, the prayers, the processions, the solemn offices of the church, which warmed the failing hearts of the populace. The pope, who had taken the name of Leo Fourth, made his first effort to repair the walls of the city, to build or renew the towers along the walls, and to stretch a vast iron chain across the Tiber, to prevent the approach of a hostile navy.

At the same time, the holy father set to work having the church of St. Peter repaired. He adorned it with a cross of gold, with chalices and chandeliers of silver, and divers curtains and tapestries of precious stuffs. Before the confessional, the tomb of the patron saint of the church, the pontiff placed tables of gold, inset with precious stones and paintings in enamel, tactfully representing the portrait of Lothair as well as of the pontiff. Large frames of silver were erected around the holy sepulchre, and over this an immense tabernacle of silver was constructed, whose weight was a full sixteen hundred pounds. And there were vast revenues devoted to the priestly retinue—the outlay for all totalling near four thousand pounds of silver and more than two hundred pounds of gold.

A monk of Toulouse wandered up and down the streets, complaining bitterly against the wasteful prodigality of this pontiff. "Two years ago," he raged, "at the council in my home city, the toll levied for the bishop upon each priest was three bushels of wheat, three bushels of barley, a measure of wine, and a lamb—or the value of two pennies for all. And this pope flings abroad his hundreds and thousands of pounds, while Christendom starves!"

This set the people murmuring against the pope.

"And in the same year," the indignant monk continued, "all that King Charles the Bald could afford to spend from his coffers, for the coinage and commerce of his entire realm, was fifty pounds of silver. Is the perfume box of one church in Rome of more worth than the coinage of an entire land?"

News of this talk troubled the pontiff; though he well knew that there had been groanings before, and would doubtless be again, before Christ's kingdom came at last. And then came news to cause wild rejoicing—the pope had achieved a miracle!

Dozens, soon hundreds, of his clergy spread the tale among all. A cockatrice had been hatched out, by a vast serpent setting upon the egg of a cock, near the church of St. Lucius. He had grown, unknown to all, until he had become a formidable dragon, with the head, legs, and feet of a cock, vast scaled dragon's wings, and a serpent's body, with serrate ridge upon it, more than thirty feet in length, and two and a half feet in thickness the most of its length. The breath of the monster caused death to several, before word of its was brought secretly to the papal palace. The courageous pontiff set forth at the head of his clergy, and discovered the monster in a cave near the church. In a loud voice the pontiff ordered the cockatrice to give up the ghost, in the name of God; whereupon the dragon vomited forth a great cloud of flame from its mouth, and forthwith died.

When word of this reached Joan, who had had herself entered in the school of the Greeks, she smiled quietly to herself. Rather remote, this, from the high disputations that she had known at Fulda, in England, in Paris, most of all in Athens. Her heart gave a twinge when she thought of these places: for the thought of Cenwulf came into her mind as well, and with it an old tug at her heartstrings. But her face stayed rigid marble; and none knew what passed behind its sealed portals.

She had visited the school of the Saxons, and the

school of the Teutons, the school of the Lombards and the school of the Franks, even the school of the Jews, before deciding which to enter. Only among the Greeks did she find that quickness of wit and wisdom she sought for. The school itself boasted proudly of the ancient connection of great St. Augustine with it; there was no name in Christendom to rank with the name of the great author of The City of God, and Joan saw no fairer life for herself than following in his footsteps.

Her name was known already to the heads of the school, for her famed disputations in Fulda, in England, and in the kingdom of Charles the Bald; they welcomed her, and from the start gave her a chamber for her lectures. Her life here was quiet, at first; she felt herself a plant transplanted from the heaven of love to the hell of loneliness, and it was not easy to forget this, but in long meditation, and speech saddened by an inner loss.

Meanwhile, the world without wagged on. The Saracens were still ravaging remote parts of Italy, and might at any time reappear before the pope's seat. He accordingly conceived the plan of building a new city around St. Peter's. First he surrounded St. Peter's with walls and bastions; and then he opened to the emperor his plans for a new city. Lothair, mollified by much Leo had done, including those two enamelled portraits on the gold tables before the sepulchre of him who held the keys to heaven, not only sent his good will, but great sums of money to hasten the building of the city. The notables of Rome were consulted, and, following their advice, Leo had set to work upon the building of the foundations countless serfs gathered from the lands of

the nobles and the monasteries.

Every day Leo could be seen striding among the workmen, whether the air was filled with sun or chill, wind or rain. As he was midway of this work, news came that a large host of the Saracens, both Arabs and Moors, had paused at the island of Sardinia for restocking their ships with food, and were on their way to Tiber mouth. Expecting this, Leo had prudently formed an alliance with three vassals of the Greek empire, with the free maritime states of Gayeta, Napoli and Amalfi. The pope sent speedy word to them of the danger that threatened. The fleets of these new allies, under command of Caesarius, son of a Neapolitan duke, cast anchor off Ostia, and their leaders proceeded at once to the Lateran.

Leo, knowing well that Caesarius had already routed the Saracens once, pretended vast surprise at the providential arrival, and took the principal allies into his arms. Followed by his bands of soldiers, the holy father proceeded with the sea fighter to Ostia, and there solemnly blessed his forces. They took the holy communion, kissed the pope's feet with martial devotion, and knelt as he prayed: "O heavenly father, who shielded St. Peter and St. Paul in their hours of peril at sea, protect as well these deliverers of the tombs of your saints, and iron their arms against the assailants of your holy name."

Just as the solemn prayer ended, the sails of the Saracens were seen out at sea. The soldiers chanted joy at this happy augury, and a large part of them during the night concealed themselves beside the rocks on

the shore. Very prudently the holy pontiff decided that God would not wish him to risk his life so near to the coming carnage; and so he followed this whisper of God in his heart, and betook himself hurriedly to the safety of the walls of Rome.

Day came, and with it the landing of the Saracens. Unsuspectingly a large part of them were allowed to disembark; then with a horrid tumult the warriors of the allies rushed forth, and put almost all of the affrighted Arabs to the sword.

And then God spoke, as was his wont to do, in a sudden tempest. The Christian ships were driven providentially into a nearby haven; the ships of the pagans were scattered and dashed to pieces against the rocks of a hostile unknown shore. Captives by the hundred were taken; and the sword and the gibbet soon disposed of them, to the extent that they were no longer numerous enough to endanger the Christian forces. The rest were set to work restoring the edifices they had demolished, a few years before.

The pontiff, at the head of the populace and the exuberant allies, said thanks to God at the shrines of the apostles; and, as trophy of the victory, hung before Peter's altar thirteen Arabian bows of pure and massy silver.

On the 27th of June, 849, the new city was completed, thanks to the lashed toil of the Saracenic prisoners. Leo celebrated this as was fitting. All the bishops of Italy, the clergy of Rome, the nobles, and the people, were summoned. The teacher of the Greek school, known as Brother John Anglicus, was on hand,

leading her classes. Leo appeared at the head of the immense procession with bare feet and with a forehead covered with ashes. He and the rejoicing train made the circuit of the walls several times, lifting hymns and psalms in praise of God's goodness. At each station the pope sprinkled the walls liberally with holy water; before each gate he prayed; and, in the end, celebrated mass in St. Peter's, after which he distributed rich largess to the workmen, even to the Saracens who had aided in the holy work. The new city was named Leontine in honor of the courageous pope, who now besought God and his apostolic host and the hosts of the angels to preserve forever the new Rome, as well as the old one, pure, prosperous, and impregnable.

For the further glory of God, Leo established a convent of nuns in his own house. Word of his doings with these nuns spread throughout the city, in due time. But there were many who held that all that Leo did was of God. Certain of her pupils took these differing views to Joan, in the school of the Greeks, for her word upon them.

She told them she would give them answer on the morrow.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Prince of the Wise

"IT IS WELL KNOWN," JOAN SPOKE GENTLY, when her audience had assembled on the next day, "that the holy father, Pope Leo the Fourth, the hundred and seventh vicar of God over the see of Rome, has founded a convent of nuns in his own house, for the greater glory of God. Is there more to be said upon this?"

A sour-faced monk of the north shook his head. "The doings in that house, learned brother, are clearly inspired by some evil spirit—by Uriel or Raguel, by Tobiel or Inias, by Zubinac or Sabaoc or Simill, by Belial or Apollyon or Beelzebub himself!"

"What are these doings?" queried Joan softly.

The monk looked defiantly about the room. "They are the fruits of carnal concupiscence, have no doubt of that—violation of their oaths of chastity by these nuns, and fornications and adulteries of divers kinds. So I am told, by many."

"Who are these many, severally and dividedly?" said Joan.

"They are trustworthy witnesses, all of them," said the monk shrewdly, fearing he had fallen into a trap of some sort. "But I can not give their names—for they fear, one and all of them, that they will not live a day and a night, if their names be given."

"But the righteous man, who speaks the truth, does not fear to speak it to any ears, as is well known; since God protects those who speak the truth, in that their truth-speaking is doing the will of God. Is this not taught by the fathers, from the earliest of them?" Joan queried severely.

"It is so taught; but perhaps the words of the fathers do not apply to Rome today."

"The words of the fathers are from everlasting to everlasting, and may be relied on," said Joan more sharply. "Do you yourself know any of these things directly?"

"Nay, good brother," a monk from the distant Sclavs broke in shrewdly, "is not such a word one to be said before a church council, called to adjudge whether or not this occupant of St. Peter's seat is worthy of holding that seat? The question in my mind is, if such things are true, are they done of God, or of the evil one?"

And Joan nodded slowly. "There is truth in what you say. Such matters are to be laid before a church council. But, if there is not one single witness to appear before the church council, there will be no church council called. For there must be an accuser, as well as an accused. Will you be accuser of the pope"—to the sour-faced northern monk.

He paled, and shrank back. "Not I, holy Brother John. I but tell what came to me—"

"Is there one of you will be this accuser?" Joan looked from face to face.

And no one said Yes to her.

"If there is no accuser, then, there will be no council,

and these matters can not be established. It is well known," more slowly, "that there were abuses in the lives of the canons and canonesses in the church, when the teachings of good St. Chrodegang concerning them had been forgotten. The emperor Louis the Easy, at the instigation of the holy father Stephen the Fifth, made rules ending the drunkenness and licentiousness of these religious, which went so far as to include their living together in constant concubinage, adultery and incest, and actually rearing the illicit fruits of this lawless intercourse in the same convents. The emperor required them to occupy separate convents, the men in one and the women in another, and he even stipulated what quantity of food and drink they might lawfully consume, that their gluttony and drunkenness might be ended. But this was done anciently, and is ended, as the church records prove."

"There are no church records," a zealous young Neapolitan said smoothly, "Concerning what the present Leo does. But there will be."

"Until which hour," Joan retorted, "how can we judge them? Under first Adrian, it is well known that there were abuses among the clergy of Spain and Italy, consisting in clerics and even bishops filling their houses with courtezans and eunuchs, as well as of selling Christian maidens to the Saracens, or conducting brothels for them. But all this was ended anciently, as the church records prove. The holy Boniface, when Zachary was pope, spoke publicly of sodomite and adulterous priests and clerics; but this has long been ended. I could speak until my tongue fell from my mouth for very weariness of such old offenses; but there would be no gain, since

they are all, thanks be to God, long ended. These were things of the dead past, the dark past; we live in a modern age, and, but for the pestilential attacks of these godless Saracens, we have no such matters to annoy us. The hour of sin in the church is ended," firmly. "Leo is a godly pope, as far as all the records of the church go. He will be succeeded by ever godlier popes," with thrilling fervor, "until in the end each pope is saint before he is pope. Never again will God let his holy seat on earth be stained by adulterer or pederast, by committer of incest or other evil abomination. And this is so, because all things go from worse to better, and not from better to worse. For this is God's will."

Most of her hearers were of a mind with her; but the same sour-faced northern monk was up again. "In my land, this may be so; all know it is not so in Italy. We know, we of the north, what the Italian priests and monks are like. If there is one cleric in Rome," he thundered like a very Chrodegang, "who can swear by the holy mother of God that he has never slept with woman, I will eat a double measure of garlic cloves in the courtyard of St. Peter!"

"Am I a cleric in Rome?" queried Joan, a dangerous glint in her eyes.

"You are—a shrewd-tongued one, and a clever-tongued one, in whose truth I believe," said the sour old monk more softly. "I meant nothing against you, Brother John— After all, you are of English blood—"

Joan interrupted him, hand rigidly upraised. "I swear, by the holy mother of God, that I have never slept with woman, as man sleeps with woman, or held

any godless intercourse with any woman! Now, brother," lowering her hand with a smile, "it is up to you to live up to your word, and eat your double measure of garlic, as you spoke."

The monk, abashed, subsided into his seat.

"Will you name an hour for this public banquet?" said Joan softly. "For it is very like eating your words, which indeed stink like garlic; and Rome will smell the sweeter, when such words are eaten. I myself desire to be witness of your feast. Shall we say this very afternoon, an hour before sunset?"

Grumblingly the monk agreed; and, from that hour on, several of the most vehement partisans of the learned teacher kept an eye on him, that he might not miss his own banquet.

And now Joan altered her voice. "We have too much loose talk against those in high places, with naught to back it. Let me first take the worst case possible against Pope Leo, and see where that leads us. Suppose he does keep a convent of nuns in his own house, and use them in debaucheries and unlawful commerce of various sorts. Is this the will of God, or of the devil? First let me ask, is he the vicar of God, or of the evil one?"

"Of God," several answered, wonderingly.

"Good. Was his election of God, or of the evil one?"

"The miracle of the cockatrice—" began one.

"—The salvation of Rome from the Saracens—"

"The guarding of the holy shrines, the building of the new city hard by St. Peters—" a third added.

"Attest that his election was of God?" Joan's

eloquent anger lashed all who heard it.

"Even so." "Clear." "No doubt, good brother."

"Then if his election is of God, are his deeds of God or the evil one?"

The monk from the Sclavs spoke swiftly. "By your belief, following him you call St. Augustine, a man is predestined to salvation; and his deeds must be of God."

Joan flashed a grateful look. "Well put, brother. Then," there was flame in her eyes, her tone, "if he violate God's canons as to his commerce with these nuns, is this act or these acts of God, or of the evil one?"

"How can it be the act of God?" savagely flung in the discomfited sour-faced northern monk.

Joan's hand stilled the others. "Because God has his own purposes to work out, not shared with you or me, Brother Gundalbert, or with any but his own archangels and the saints in Paradise. It may be that God intends a miracle, by this means, to convert some of the ungodly, whether among the nuns, or among the rest of the people of the world. It may be that God intends thus to establish that he may use the lowliest conduit through which to let the water of his salvation pass. It may be that he intends thus to depress Leo through the mire, to let him rise higher at the end. But he is God's vicar, of God's own choice, his acts willed of God, his reward and punishment willed of God: and, if God rules all, God rules St. Peter's chair most of all, and there is no condemnation for what is done by him who sits there."

There was a gasp of delight at this unanswerable logic.

Then Joan's face grew sterner. "But this was as-

suming the worst, and it is Christian to assume the best, and not the worst. No matter what Leo does, it is of God. And is it not more likely that God's will is that all that goes on in Leo's house is godly?"

"Unquestionably."

"Then," triumphantly, "till there be proof positive of other actions—which will still be of God's ordaining—we will be most Christian insofar as we assume and hold in our hearts that all that is done by God's vicar is as pure in motive and fulfilling as if God himself achieved it."

There were no dissentients at this, barring the abashed northern monk.

There were many more matters that the learned teacher took up, and disposed of as eloquently. Early in the afternoon she excused herself, to take her meal, cautioning all to be on hand in the courtyard of St. Peter's an hour before sunset, to witness the feast; and privately making sure that Brother Gundalbert was well watched and escorted in the meantime, that he might not avoid his swift words.

Back in her own cell, Joan smiled bitterly to herself. There had been no accident in her words. All night she had planned how best she might answer the charge against the pontiff, so as to bring her most favorably to his attention.

Her reason for this was no light one. She had started, as she recalled, a woman, among strange people, sprung of a doubtful union: and from this she had determined to secure wisdom, such as none other in Christendom possessed. This she had done. Next, driven forward by

the irk in her own body, the spring burgeoning toward love, she had determined to secure love, such as no woman had: and she had secured this, and a bitter gain it was in the end, when it was riven apart by the fell clutch of disease in distant Athens, leaving her lonely thereafter. And now there was a gap in her life, which she must needs fill somehow. Not by another lover: for, after Cenwulf, how could she look on man again? But wisdom was hers, and utter loneliness, and one thing else there was that man or woman might attain: and that was power.

Power, in Rome, came through closeness to St. Peter's seat. Closeness to that seat came from being known by Leo as one whom it would benefit him to bring close. Thus she had planned what to say and how to say it, so that the holy father could not but know not only of her own following, but of her allegiance to his power.

Yet already her heart ached, at the emptiness of the easy victory that she had started, and that she would attain. For the applause of the whole world, and the highest power that it vouchsafed, were utter emptiness, when matched against one slim hour with him she had loved so long and so passionately, and would never see again in this life.

Yet that was over: and all that was left to her was to gain all that remained. Face pale marble at these thoughts, she set out two hours before sunset for the courtyard of St. Peter's. Her inner unhappiness drove her walking vigorously up the Quirinal, and then across to the Pincian hill. She walked more slowly through

the great forests of pine at the top of this hill, listening to the sweet bickering of the birds, and smelling the sweet savor of the flowers at her feet. A low wind whispered in the trees, and there was a quickening of all life, but in her own dead heart. Alone. . . . utterly alone. . . .

She came to the sheer edge of the hill, and stared down at the new city of Leontine and the guarded church of St. Peter far below her. All of this, and utterly more, she would give, for just one hour with Cenwulf again. . . .

Her face pale marble, she climbed down the hillside, and passed over to the courtyard of the church.

She did not need to be told that word of what she had said had been whispered into the ear below the tiara. She did not need to be told that Leo's self would be watching, hidden, from the church above. Here was a moiling crowd assembled, who hailed her with raucous delight as she appeared, walking alone. They swirled around her, opening a way for her feet, like a very passage of a king or pontiff. And so she came at last to the center of the courtyard, where Gundalbert, grimmer of face and sourer than ever, waited, surrounded by those she had whispered to, and their friends.

She smiled brief greeting to him and all. "The banquet is spread, my friend. Eat your words, in God's high name!"

He started bravely enough, with stoic resignation accepting the unfortunate outcome of his words. Then he slowed, and then savagely crammed the strong food into his mouth. The crowd jeered and crowed at his every movement. And so it was, until he had eaten all

but the last few of the cloves. And then suddenly he fell on the pavement, and writhed in extreme anguish of stomach.

Joan shook her head sadly. "The man has said more than he can stomach, or than any man could. Get him to the nearest abbey, and have the brothers do what they can for him."

There were wild cheers for her and her utter learning. And just about as she was turning away, low of heart because naught else had happened, she was plucked quietly by the sleeve. "His Highness Leo is willing to grant audience to you," said the pretentious nuncio ceremoniously.

With beating heart, she aimed her steps toward the marble stairs of the sacred structure.

CHAPTER XIX

The Voice of Peter

ONCE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PONTIFF, her heart calmed down. He was but a man, she realized at once, and far less close to God than she was. His face was lined and rugged, with deep planning and savage determination; he looked worn, and not well, and her heart went out slowly toward him.

Negligently he extended his foot for her to kiss, and then sat studying her. "You have a keen face, Brother John Anglicus, that bespeaks a keen mind," he said at last slowly.

"I have trained it toward God's service," she said simply.

He laughed, and there was metal in the sound. "God's service has earned you what I have never achieved, O Prince of the Wise," he said.

Joan was not sure whether he jeered, or praised. Her marble cheeks colored faintly. "I am no prince, sire, but a—"

He dismissed the objection casually. "You must have heard the name all Rome calls you by, and many beyond Rome. My name spreads further," a trifle bitterly, "but not by any such title as this."

Joan faced him straightly. "If I have heard it, sire, I have ordered my ears to forget it, that my heart may stay humble."

"Well spoken, young brother. Yet we can do something with that name. We can use it. You are no war lord," he smiled a trifle ruefully, "as I perforce must be, what with brown dogs snapping at my feet, and huge white dogs snapping at my head."

"Dogs train into good guardians," she said demurely. "Especially white dogs, sire."

"Yes, you are wise."

"But you," Joan flattered him shrewdly, "are holy—else how your miracles, of the slain cockatrice, of the dreadful fire which you ended by your holy prayers? I have no name like this."

"Miracles are food for the ignorant; wisdom, for the few nobler minds. You have more wisdom, Brother John; you have a tongue some jeweller wrought, whether he dwell on high or in the bottomless pit." He stared at her appraisingly. "Word was brought to me of what you said this day, to that barking cur Gundalbert." He laughed, like harsh metal clanging. "I only wish he had chocked to his death on the stinking cloves, rather than merely have to retch his way back to recovery. Well, fleas bite, and we scratch: and God made them too. How goes your work at this strange academy of the Greeks, and what do you plan next?"

Joan's somber marble face lighted up, at this. "I do better than I deserve. They have given me now their largest chamber for my sessions, and there are always those that can not secure entrance. Now they are to let me add a course of abstract knowledge, such as the early fathers taught, following in the steps of the great pagans." she watched him anxiously.

He nodded. "Tell me of it."

She breathed more freely. "Three years it is to last; and it will cover all branches of science. I still teach the seven liberal arts—the Trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, the Quadrivium of geometry, dealing with the face of the earth, and the manifestations of nature; arithmetic; music, especially the plain-song of the church; and astronomy, with the influence of the solar and stellar motions upon our lives. And, after these, philosophy: and then that climax of all philosophies, our own blessed faith, in doctrine and apostolic writings and the word of God itself. But this new course will take all knowledge for its province, and restore order to it, as—" with swift shrewdness, "your highness has restored order to harassed Italy."

He nodded approval. "I see all good in what you are doing. I hold with Augustine and Jerome, that literature and rhetoric and philosophy are harmless, or indeed beneficial, so long as they are vassals always paying service to Christian life. Good. In all things good. I might use you here," slowly, appraisingly. "I have much room for wit, and more for loyalty." He dwelt for a silent space upon this, that she might weigh it from every face. "You have wit. Your words today showed loyalty."

"I leave you to judge the former. I am loyal," she answered as simply as he spoke.

"And yet," he spoke more slowly, "I may have larger use for you elsewhere. Here, I have my own thumb to crush fleas." He revolved it with grim satisfaction slowly upon the arm of his chair. "I have no trouble in

my own family. But there is Rome, and Rome can turn from sheep to wolf overnight. If I put you here," he seemed to be thinking the problem aloud, "all will at once add one more to my side, and let it go at that. And one more is too few for my needs. If I leave you where you are, yet as my man there, you are none on my side, in people's open gaze, but you can constantly add more and more to my side."

Joan nodded, intently following his tortuous thinking, her mind racing far ahead of it to things this Leo would never dream of. For, after all, he was iron, she saw, and not gold, a man of war for all of his learning, rather than a man of learning forced into war.

"Here," he said slowly, "you can name your upward steps, if your wit and loyalty are what I read in your carven face. Sub-deacon, cardinal deacon, cardinal priest, cardinal bishop, there is no limit to what I can give you, and gladly: for I pay well those who serve well. There, it will be wiser if I give you, openly, nothing. All know that the ass knows his master's fodder; and none heed the bray toward the feed bin. Leave you out of the family, and your words may be trumpets in my behalf, blown with that discreet wit I know you have, and leading souls not only to God, but to Leo." He smiled in grim good fellowship. Joan liked the smile.

"Choose, then—the eagle flight here in my council, or the subtler service outside."

Joan shrugged smilingly. "There is no choice to be made. I seek to dwell in your heart, not in your coffers or among your dignitaries, barred from that inner oneness that is life's highest reward."

He studied her open face, and nodded with slow satisfaction. "Prince of the Wise is too slim a title for you, Brother John. You will earn a higher one yet. For this present, then, you remain a teacher at the school of the Greeks. On some tomorrow, we will speak again. Have your ear under the pavement," he leaned forward with pleading intensity, "that no whisper misses you. I will name several who will bear your secret whispers to me, who will come to you after nightfall always. What you need, they will have my treasurer send you. My ear is always open to you—"

"Mine, for you," Joan bowed, as a negligent wafture of the warrior pope's hand spoke her dismissal.

More and more the holy father, as the months passed, relied upon Joan for advice in troublous matters. There was the problem of what to do with the driven hordes of Corsicans, who came flocking into the holy city in their rags, driven from their island home by the Moors, and who besought the pontiff to make them his men, pledging themselves and their descendants forever to preserve an utter fidelity toward the holy see.

"Your highness is fortifying Porto, which is still open to the inroads of the pagans," Joan adjudged quickly. "You need men. Make them your men, by giving them the desolated city, and cattle and horses, and food and even money. And make all this very public, that the whole world will hail you Leo the charitable, as well as Leo the saintly."

Other of his advisers had proposed other things; but this plan of Joan's beguiled him most, and it was this that he did. At her further suggestion, he asked Lothair

to confirm the deed, that it might be known throughout the empire. The emperor, seeing all but the motive behind the request, gladly confirmed it in writing; and this deed of confirmation was solemnly deposited upon the altar of St. Peter's, in the presence of the nobles, the clergy, and the populace. And all went forth praising Leo for his magnanimity, as Joan has prophesied they would.

One thing the pope did, that Joan had strongly advised against. This was a further elevation of the turbulent Hincmar, archbishop of Reims. Hincmar, who had now been Lothair's man, now the man of Charles the Bald, now an admirer of Godescalus, now his most bitter enemy, was granted by Leo leave to wear his pallium, or vestment of delegated papal authority, constantly, and not merely on great occasions. "For he is a soul bonded to ambition," Joan said shrewdly, "and, the more you give him, the more he will want. He will trouble you and those who come after you, if you lift him too high."

But the judgment of Joan was passed over, at the insistence of other advisers; and all that Joan had said, and more, seemed like to come true, as soon as Hincmar returned to Reims. For rather ruthlessly, on his return from Rome, the noisy bishop annexed to his see many domains formerly granted by his church to pious laymen; and more than ruthlessly he removed from office those clerks ordained by his rival and predecessor, Ebbo, during his reappearance as archbishop. And there was a wider catalogue of things he did, as if the pallium had made him pope of Reims, above the pope of Rome. Leo

noted all, and he himself told Joan of all. "You were rightly called Prince of the Wise, Brother John; and I would be more like you, if I hearkened to your words the more often."

But Joan reminded the pontiff, concerning Hincmor, that fools and jesters were tolerated by all wise monarchs, before being slapped first, and then set in the torture to geld their folly; and this answer comforted Leo.

And so Joan, to the general eye, visited thus once the papal room, and then returned quietly to her assemblies in the school of the Greeks. There was some irk among her vast and swelling host of admirers that Leo had not lifted her in the church, for her glittering wisdom and her golden tongue. "She should be a cardinal bishop of the Latern church," these grumbled. "There are seven days of the week, and of these Sunday is the holiest. There are seven cardinal bishops, and seven only: namely, the bishops of Ostia, of Porto and Santa Rufina, of Albano and Sabina, of Tusculum and Palestrina; and of these the bishop of Ostia is the highest, as dean of all the cardinal bishops. There are seven holy leaders in the church, the Prince of the Wise, Leo the Pope and Benedict the priest of the order of St. Callixtus, Hrabanus Maurus of Fulda and Hincmar of Reims, Abbot Lupus Servatus of Ferrieres and the holy Anastasius; and of these Brother John Anglicus is the holiest, and the wisest, and the most golden-tongued. Why is she not chief among the cardinal bishops; or, at least, cardinal priest, or cardinal deacon?"

Word of this unrest reached Joan, and she set herself to cure it. "There are many in the church of Rome

holier than all these, and wiser, and more golden of tongue. Among them is young Father Adrian, the son of Bishop Talarus, himself kin to two popes. I have heard him say often that if he were lifted to the chair of St. Peter's once, or twice, or even thrice, he would yet not sit in it, so unworthy does he deem himself. There is no virtue among us higher than humility; and this learned young father is chief among us for humility. Yet it is not seemly, in this shadowed hour, for the humblest among us to sit on the highest seat; for God hails humility, and so do we of the church; but the pagans will not so hail it, nor the bickering kings and princes of the earth. I am only a teacher, among the humblest of God's shepherds; it is not seemly for me to rise higher on earth, since my soul is set on rising higher in service to God."

"None stands higher than you in the wisdom of God, or the service of God, Brother John," enthusiastically an abbot cried aloud, as she ended.

"You can not be right," she corrected smilingly. "For, if once I felt that you were right, I would lose that very humility which is a Christian's highest virtue, and would at once be shrunk small in God's service. And, since without doubt Leo, as our head, is wisest of us all, he knows as well my little worth; for, if he deemed me of high worth, he would deem me low in humility. And so I am most content to be unseen, unheard, and unknown, here in this coign of winding Tiber's banks, humbly serving God's will."

Her name grew larger, as word of these sayings stretched out and was blown forth, like bruit of a greater

modern miracle. A new chamber was built for the school of the Greeks, to house the throngs that came to hear the words of English John; and all were glad that God had given means to the school to build so amply, in this year when prices rose and the masses walked the streets of Rome seeking labor, and in vain. And no one knew that the sums to pay for this chamber had come straight from Leo's treasury, except the pope, and his treasurer, and Joan, and the head of the school; and these were discreet persons, all of them, who held that it was not Christian to flaunt too great knowledge of such matters.

Yet the astute Greeks among her listeners would not let the matter die. "You should welcome preferment in the church, beloved Brother John; for it means preferment in God's service," one of these sagely disputed with her.

"I should welcome rather demotion in the church on earth, that it might be as a wound I received gladly in the warfare for Christ."

"In the church at Constantinople, merit is ranked higher. You would already be at least head of your own bishopric," the brother continued.

"I know the church of the East as well; and I know that the young emperor, whose fifteenth birthday caused such bloody rioting between the greens and the blues, has sworn by God's name that he will name his fool as his patriarch. In that church I might rise higher. But I am God's fool, and we of the West judge more wisely that the fool should wear the pointed cap, and not the mitre." There was deep scheming in the way she led each disputation.

Even sour old Gundalbert, cured wholly of his banquet of garlic cloves, was moved to his feet at this. "Fool? They are all fools in Rome but you, Brother John. There is no wisdom like yours in Rome, no, not in all Christendom, even in my native northern lands."

"The wise on earth is the fool in God's eyes, matched with His all-wisdom. The wiser you hold me to be, the more fool I know I am, in God's sight."

"Mitre?" another cried. "You should have the crown of the Lombards, the crown of Charlemagne, the tiara itself!"

There was wild applause at this. But Joan stilled the tumult with a rigid lifted hand of pale marble. "I do not envy Louis, nor Lothair, nor godly Leo himself, these badges of service to God. Only if all these were taken to God's bosom, and none but me were left to carry out his will on earth, would I hold myself worthy of the least of these."

Word of this was carried to Leo, and he smiled oilily at the wit of the young teacher. But he never knew how deep this wit pierced; or how it dammed all words in her favor, until all Rome surged with admiration for her godliness, her humility, her resplendent folly in God's eyes.

Again and again her followers came back to it, no matter how remote the welfare of Joan was to what high abstract learning she dealt with. "What if we march in a body to St. Peter's, with all Rome at our heels, and ourselves saw to it that the red hat or the pallium was given to you? Such things have been, in days gone."

"Five centuries ago," said Joan quietly, "those erring brothers who called themselves the Circumcelliones sought violently to die in God's name, by appearing in the assemblies of the pagans and challenging them to put the seekers of martyrdom to death. When this did not wholly earn death for all of them, we have the words of the holy St. Augustine for it that hundreds, yea, thousands of them surged to the brows of jutting cliffs, and with cries of ecstasy plunged themselves down, crying upon God to stretch forth his arms and convey their mangled bodies to Paradise. We of God's church hold that this was error; and that God gives us life to live, and not to die, but when He wills it. If you march like Circumcelliones to St. Peter's, there may be no arm of God there to keep you from dashing to your deaths on the rocks of the holy father's righteous disapproval."

If she had sought preferment, there would have been many to wield a waspish tongue; but, the more insistently she put it from her, the more all sought it for her. For Rome was catacombed with the intrigues of unnumbered thousands seeking preferment; and Joan, in her vast robe of humility, was as easily noted as the mountain belching fire above Napoli.

Most of all the people's voice murmured against the manner of Leo: now surly and blustering like a very emperor; now, if rumor spoke aright, cosseting and tumbling the nuns in the convent he had set up in his house; and often, as word came to him of some shrewd stroke of statescraft that had humbled a king or set up a rival to him, laughing uproariously, as he quaffed the wines of Italy in the eyes of all his family.

It was Brother Anteros, of Mt. Athos, who grew most bitter about this. "Laughter is not for men of God," he said savagely, more than once. "Was it not him you call St. Jerome himself, that pious Christian of revered memory, who said, 'The duty of a monk is not to teach, but to weep?' "

"You propose then, brother, that I should cease to teach, and devote myself to lamentations hereafter?" Joan adroitly evaded what he spoke of.

"My words go not to you, but against those who laugh in high places. You have taught us yourself of those the West calls saints: of St. Arsenius, who wept so constantly that his eyelashes fell off, and who always wore a cloth upon his breast, to catch his tears. You have yourself taught us that St. Abraham wept daily; that St. John the Dwarf was so outraged when he saw a monk laugh, that he at once burst into tears; that St. Basil says that laughing was the one bodily affliction which Christ never knew. How, then, shall we bow to one over Christendom, who spends his hours laughing, until the tiara rocks uncertainly on his head?"

Joan's marble face stayed marble, as she shook her head in somber dissent. "All that you say, Brother Anteros, was truly spoken by and of these learned men. But those were the days before the mantle of God's grace had stretched from the Tweed to the Euphrates, from the Spanish March to the land of the Friesians, from the headwaters of the Nile upward to Peter's city that we dwell in. As God's victory spreads, the need for tears abates. Even the flood in Noah's time did not last forever."

"You hold, then," the monk pursued her shrewdly, "that weeping is not of God, and laughter is?"

"There is a time for weeping, and a time for an end of weeping," she paraphrased the psalmist quietly; "and there is a time for laughing, and a time for an end of laughing. The angels of God, who lifted their carols above starred Bethlehem, did not weep, as they brought to the world tidings of great joy. Who weeps at joy but one whose wits have wandered? I tell you the coming of Jesus brought joy to the world, and I will laugh thanks to God whenever my mind swells with that great news! Should the Christian weep, when he learns of souls brought to God—of pagan nations turned to God's service, of pagan idols overthrown, of saints who earn the crown of eternal light by meekly following God's will, of Saracens shattered on the rocks of a Christian shore, of basilisks and cockatrices slain by the voice of God's vicar? For all these, these tidings of great joy, there should be laughter to rock the stars, and break like spuming waves at the foot of God's throne!"

There were some who followed her, whom she would willingly have had elsewhere. For rumors of her godly life of abstinence had spread throughout God's earth, especially since she had confounded the bitter scoffer Gundalbert with proof of her own chastity; and all who served chastity took her as their evangel, as opposed to the pope and his rumored amusements. This was one disputation that would never die; and there was no leader for chastity so noted, but for Joan, as the crabbed and venerable Cenfrith, onetime monk of Sherborne in distant England, bishop now with his own see in Saxony,

and spending his old age in the thankless task of turning Rome from its incontinent ways. This old pest had come into Joan's following soon after the occasion when Gundalbert banqueted on garlic; many others of like mind had followed him, and Joan was hard put to it to rebuff their violent zeal against women and love.

She could count on it, that, at least once month a month, Bishop Cenfrith would appear solemnly with his following, to seek to wring from her a condemnation of the pope. When she saw his quivering and desire-strangled old body approaching, she sighed, and laid aside what she had planned: for she knew what would come. Word of all that she said, on this and all matters, was carried at once to Leo's ears, she knew well; and at times she trembled at how close she came to saying aught that would break her hold on the pope, whose health was no longer what it had been, for all that he bore himself like a warrior still.

One nightfall she was told, by one of Leo's messengers, that the ascetic bishop had boasted that day that, on the morrow, he would confront Joan and drive her so far, that the wave of her opposition to carnal copulation would lift her high as the Dome of St. Peter's. The messenger looked half frightened, half amused, as he told her, "His Highness commends the bishop to you, Brother John, in the fair hope that you will agree with him that naught could so benefit the church of Rome, as having this pestiferous Cenfrith seduced in public by a harem of harlots. He was but jesting—"

"There is wisdom in the jest even of the Holy Father," said Joan, piously and tactfully; and retired

to her study to prepare herself for this disputation.

How could she so rein this dispute, that it pleased Leo and always lifted her higher?

CHAPTER XX

The Gates of Hell

FRESH AS THE MORNING, LIKE A MARBLE temple washed white by an all night rain, Joan walked to her platform, and let her eyes dwell on the admiring, almost adoring, throng before her. Most of them she had met and vanquished in earnest disputation; for that, they loved her the more, so great was the charm of her victorious logic, so gracious her smile when her opponent lay prostrate before her unswerving reasons.

That great block of seats, there, off to her left, at the front—vacant, but for burly solitary monks at the ends of the benches, evidently guards holding them for a special group—those must be for Cenfrith and his followers. As if at a signal, no sooner had she appeared than the thin-nosed Saxon bishop appeared at the back of the chamber, and teetered ceremoniously down to the front bench on the left, followed by a grim group who occupied every bench near him, some even standing cramped against the wall, so great was the press.

She bowed, to begin speaking. But Cenfrith was up first. "Holy Brother John Anglicus," he wheezed, "a dream came to me during the night, and I wondered if you would vouchsafe to interpret it for me, before proceeding with this discussion of the merits of the quarrel

between the Homoiousians and the Homoousians."

"Blood has been shed ere now, on such recondite matters of doctrine as our topic for today. Witness that heretic emperor who leaned toward Arius, and drowned eighty priests on a single day. Witness the three thousand Christians who were slaughtered in Constantinople, when the Arian Macedonius replaced the Athanasian Paul. Witness the deeds of Bishop George of Cappadocia in Alexandria, when he caused the holy virgins to be stripped naked, and flogged with prickly palm branches or scorched over a slow fire, until they abjured God's own teaching and promised adherence to the evil teachings of Arius. Witness the dreadful manhandling of the noble Hypatia in Alexandria, her flesh torn from her bones with sharp shells, and her mangled naked body cast into the flames. Witness— But this is all an old tale. We do not need such massacres, in studious Rome. Let us lay aside the strife of doctrines, and turn to the pleasanter theme of dreams."

She lifted her hand, to silence him the more, while the spell of her jewelled words did its will. Solemnly she intoned.

"For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not,
In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;
Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction,
That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.

What is this purpose, learned father, that God seeks to withdraw you from? What is this pride in you, that he wishes to hide from your heart?"

There was a ripple of amused appreciation of her apt preliminary rebuke. But she spoke through it, "In a dream, Solomon sought wisdom of God, and received it. I trust that this, too, was your dream, pious Bishop. Tell us your dream." Her voice was a soft as a coo of doves murmuring in May; yet all within the great chamber heard it clearly.

He half faced her, half faced the group, largely hostile to him, on the right side of the chamber. "I dreamed that a woman, in the palace of the pope, grew pregnant, and at her appointed time gave birth to a child. And then I awoke. Now it is clear that no woman should inhabit the palace of the pope, as these nuns named of Leo do." He paused belligerently.

Joan lifted a careless pale hand. "You say this is clear? What if these women are placed there by the holy father himself, and are sainted women devoting themselves to Our Lord's service?"

"It is well known," Cenfrith spoke with ascetic bitterness, "that woman is the gate to hell. Tertullian himself said so."

"Was Mary, mother of our Lord, gate to hell?" asked Joan softly.

Cenfrith quivered at this, abashed to find a reply.

"Jesus himself, as all know, descended into hell, and arose again on the third day," Joan pursued him remorselessly. "If he descended into hell, was not the gate by which he descended a holy gate, because he descended through it?"

And again Cenfrith was silent. He spoke abruptly: "But—my dream—"

"Well, what is wrong with it, that stirs your face and your heart so strangely? Is there aught wrong with a woman becoming pregnant, and bearing a child?" she led him on.

He glared at her indignantly, his aged face working. "But all know that pregnancy is the fruit of carnal copulation, and that carnal copulation is a stench in the nostrils of the lord! Consider the words of Hieronymus, 'Marriage is always a vice'; consider the words of Origen, 'Marriage is impure and unholy'."

"Pregnancy," Joan spoke with infinite slowness, each word dropping into the silence like a stone dropped into a still silent pool, "need not come from carnal copulation. When Mary, the mother of Our Lord, was great with child, there had been no carnal copulation before it."

A gasp of delight shivered through all who heard her, except a few around Cenfrith, and the ancient bishop himself.

"Carnal copulation," Joan spoke as firmly, "may be of God. Was not St. Felicitas great with child, and indeed in the pangs of childbirth, as she lay in prison awaiting the moment of her martyrdom? Was not all this the will of God, for which the holy woman was later canonized?"

Cenfrith bit his bloodless lips in his agitation. "Yet —in the palace of the pope—when all know that carnal copulation—"

Joan laughed in icy derision. "If another son were being born to God, in the pontiff's own palace, you would

murmur as you murmur now; and, in Bethlehem, you would have lifted your hand to stone the mother of God, for that she was pregnant. This woman in your dream may have been another saint like to Felicitas, awaiting some holy martyrdom."

"Let us leave talk of pregnancy, then, and look to the deeper vice of commerce between men and women." Baffled in his dream attack, he sought to come close to what was closest to his heart.

"Before we leave your dream," Joan said firmly, "give me leave to give you its meaning. The woman in your dream, in the palace of the pope, was the holy pontiff himself—who has laid by commerce such as man does, to father the whole church. He is represented, in your dream, in the likeness of a holy woman about to give birth to a child; and this child, borne to the pontiff, will no doubt be some new revelation of the will of God, or some new miracle, or some new victory to the Cross, led by Leo's self, against the cruel hordes of the Crescent."

There was a tumult of applause, as she ended her interpretation. Several beside Cenfrith urged him to desist; but he would not, for fear this would be the last time he would hold strength enough to seek to turn Christendom into his own lone ways.

He raised a shaking head. "I spoke of the vice of commerce between men and women," he reminded her acidly.

"St. Peter had a wife. Was that a vice, in him? Christians do not hold so, ancient Bishop. Moreover, he ordered wives to obey their husbands, thereby ordaining

obedience in a wife as a Christian virtue. Could virtue come from a state of vice? St. Paul wrote that the husband was the head of his wife; if the body be foul, could the head be virtuous?"

A far off look came over her dreaming face. "God himself ordained marriage, both to Adam, and to Noah. Is God's ordinance vile? Solomon said that he who finds a good wife obtains favor with God: was this ancient wise king vile, and his words vile? Paul wrote to Timothy that the young women were to marry, and bear children: was this ordinance of the holy apostle foul?"

"Yet the fathers of the church—"

But Joan could not be stilled now. "The first miracle of Our Lord took place at a wedding feast at Cana. Would the Son of God have sanctified that ceremony by his presence, and vouchsafed of his loving heart to perform a miracle there, if the ceremony had been vile, and the state it led to vile?"

Cenfrith almost turned purple, as he saw the tide of debate swinging utterly against him. "These teachings from your lips, when you know well how the sainted hermits of the desert held marriage, and even the sight of women, the most ungodly thing that life could offer! You have read in Jerome how a young Christian, during Diocletian's persecution, bound tight with ribands of silk in a fair garden, girt by all to charm the ear and eye, was set upon by a wanton harlot, nude as she was born, odored with all seductive perfumes, her unbound hair spiced to stir the blood of the most chaste among men, her nipples gilded, her thighs savory with per-

fumes—" In the ecstasy of his description, the old bishop almost frothed at the mouth, and his eyes leered like the eyes of a goat in heat. "And when she wreathed herself around the chaste Christian, and sought to waken his body to evil commerce, he bit out his tongue, he spat it in her face! So may all men do, when women tempt them!"

"Shall I present a woman before you," Joan flung at him hotly, "and have you bite your waspish tongue out, and fling it where you will? But you spoke of marriage, not of such temptations."

"Marriage is as evil; the fathers have taught so. I have taught so. The clench of naked bodies in the spring rut, the vile writhing commerce of the marriage bed—"

Joan's eyes flashed. "Yet it was Peter who ordered husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, and honor them, as being the weaker vessels; it was Paul who said men ought to love their wives as their own bodies—again and again he said it, to churches throughout the world. Are you right, and these great apostles of Our Lord himself wrong? And again," her finger levelled at him as if to impale him on the bright point of her logic, "holy matrimony is a sacrament of our church. Would you condemn the whole church for this universal teaching, and set yourself up as a lone heretic, seeking to turn all men to ice, instead of leaving them those hot flames of living that God made them?"

Cenfrith's weak old eyes flashed pale wavering flame. "Yet one of God's chosen ministers—one of his clergy—a monk, a deacon, a priest, a bishop, a pope—for him to

touch these daughters of Satan is hell's work, not God's!"

There was applause at this, from a few. Joan did not heed it: "Was it Paul who said that a deacon should be the husband of one wife, and that a bishop should be the husband of one wife? Or was it Satan who spoke so, in the holy New Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ?"

"Yet if they vow celibacy for themselves, and after break their oath—"

" 'There be some who have made themselves eunuchs, for the kingdom of heaven's sake'," Joan quoted swiftly. "Mayhap in heaven the church will rate these highly; today, we bar them from the highest honors in the church. If a man of God vow himself to celibacy, it is well that he keep his vow. None doubt that."

"But if he break it, whether he be priest or pope—" The fire was close to the surface now.

Joan strid a step toward him. "God is love; and if he break it for love's sake, he breaks it for God's sake," she flaunted, glorying in baring her heart at last. In Cenwulf's memory she must say these words. "Mere commerce, such as the beasts of the field share in, is—" She had been of a mind to condemn it; suddenly a deeper surge of truth possessed her tongue, and she spoke as she had not planned: "—is planted in the heart, of beast as of man, by God himself. If a man mortify it, well; if a man mortify it not, well. God is love, venerable bishop: and that you have forgotten, if indeed you ever learned it. Let that sink into your soul, and blossom there forever into a love such as you have never known."

Cenfrith was aghast. "You hold that even illicit commerce—"

She threw her head back in triumph, her golden tones poured forth: "The church is the bride of the Lamb, as woman is the bride of man. Whom God hath joined together, in the love He plants in their hearts, let no man put asunder, on peril of hell fire! God is love; and, when love brings man and woman together, there is no oath ever registered that is more than witless words spoken by a man in a fever of icy ignorance."

And again she lifted her head, and stood a step further back from him. "Love, such as man feels for woman and woman for man, is for the young in heart and soul: and except we become young in heart and soul, we can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Love such as this is not for the old; but only a memoried love that reaches out to all men, and shows itself in pious and charitable deeds. Love that has altered into hate, as the juice of the grape alters into vinegar, is not of God. Those who condemn women and love were never young, but live old, and were born old, and will die old, lacking that youth of soul that alone opens the gates of Paradise."

And a third time she spoke, without pausing. "You hint much against the Holy Father Leo. There is naught certain said by any one, nor any witness to be found who will truly say aught against him. But if the worst that you say against him is true, he is still chosen of God, and his acts are of God, and the love in his heart is of God. I myself speak, as you know, as one who has never known the love of woman, as man loves woman. Yet if God sends it into my heart to love a woman so, I will love her, before the face of God, and know that

I can do naught higher! And you, cease snarling such bitter and unbased lies against the head of Christendom as you are wont to do, and look into your own hating and hateful heart, your own withered and bitter heart, and in abject humility cast yourself before the throne of God, and pray him for forgiveness, before it is too late, and your soul sinks downward into the eternal torment of the burning pit! Venerable as you are, bishop as you are, I dub you son of Satan, and not of God, for such filth as you spill upon the name of God's vicar, and upon that sex whom God selected to mother his own son!"

Her heaving passion ceased suddenly as a summer storm, and there was a breathless silence in the vast chamber. Then arose such a shout of approval as the walls had never heard before, and they surged forward to wring her hand, and some kissed the hem of her robe, and even her foot. There would have been rough handling of old Cenfrith and his band, if Joan had not stilled this.

When word of this was brought to Leo, he smiled shrewdly, and summoned his messenger. "Probe out the heart of Brother John with great care," the pontiff said. "If he is as I think he is, with much discretion test to see if he would not thank me for the gift of two young nuns who have just entered my convent, virgins both, and sorely in need of such hot instruction as I doubt not this fiery young Chrysostom can give them."

But the messenger returned, and shook his head. "I did not open your most generous offer, holy father; the young brother was marble, as I touched the suburbs of the subject, and perhaps you yourself had best broach it to him."

"Well," Leo said slowly—or so the messenger, who told this to another of the papal family, reported—"I grow surfeited a trifle; and, if you should chance to visit either of the two end rooms at the northerly corridor of the convent, you might find it to your advantage." With much more matter of what followed, which concerns not at all the history of Joan or her times.

Then came a hurried summons to Joan to attend the holy father himself at his bedside, for that he ailed slightly and could not greet her in a usual audience; and the matter between them would not admit of further delay. She was aghast, when she entered the chamber where the pope lay, to see how waxen his cheeks were, how feverish his face.

He waved her at length to a seat beside his bed. "You told me once you would be loyal, Brother John; you have been so."

She nodded, studying him, appraising what the leeches could do for him. . . .

"I told you your wit was unequalled; it has been, in matters that touched me. By your advice I rebuilt Porto, and I have no more faithful sons than those former Corsicans who dwell there. By your advice my workmen have just finished, as well, the new city of Leopolis, to receive the unfortunate inhabitants of Centumcella, who, driven from their homes by the Saracens forty years ago, had lived since as beasts of the forest. Against your advice I lifted Hincmar of Reims, and much trouble it has caused me. Know you now what Louis, that pest of a son of Lothair, has done?"

Joan smiled slowly. "Of old, or this month? Even when Sergius was pope, and he was mere king of the Lombards, he sought to be hailed here as emperor. Your Highness crowned him joint emperor three years ago. When he married Engelberga, a lax daughter of Louis the German, his uncle, he began to bear himself here as if he were utter emperor in Italy. You have ridden him shrewdly, sire, against the Saracens; to crush out certain accusations against yourself, which my words could not hush; and in divers more secret matters, which I need not speak of now. And what you summon me for now is his espousal of the cause of Daniel, chief of your militia here in Rome, and a traitor to your cause."

Leo twitched, as a spasm of pain shook him. "You warned me against this Daniel, Brother John. Would God I had been wise enough to do as you said, then!"

Joan shook her head. "That is over, now. For Daniel has gone to this co-emperor Louis, and told him that your prefect Gratian seeks to vomit Louis and his court out of all control of Rome. And Louis even now is marching southward, to enter Rome and hold you to an accounting."

"But how, unless you are in league with the devil, can you know such matters, some hid even from me!" the aged pope marvelled.

"Sire, you bade me keep my ear to the ground, and beneath it; and I too have my loyal eyes, in every city and every court in Rome, and many in wider places." Joan was boasting a little, but not much.

"I should have had you at my side, all these years. What, now, shall I do?"

Joan spoke succinctly. "Get well. Be the man you were. Open the gates to Louis. Take him in your arms, on Peter's steps. He will flout you: turn the other cheek," Joan's smile was crafty. "Give him all he asks, which will be little of what he could take. Let your prefect be tried; I know that he can not be convicted, for I myself will appear for him. Then, in the end, so twist the event, that your name is spread abroad as the most merciful ruler in all Christendom."

In the end, Leo agreed to do his best to do all these. Within three days, as Joan had predicted, Louis swaggered into the holy city, with no by your leave to pope or senate; and his troops swaggered behind him. On Peter's steps the pope greeted him like a brother, and spoke words of wisdom—which Joan had suggested—to him. Louis made no answer, but forthwith ordered the pope to convoke a council, to try the case of this prefect Gratian, accused of an insult to the majesty of Louis, and of treason to him.

Leo named a day for the council: and had there his lords, in number more than matching the following of Louis the emperor. Daniel, the chief of the militia, opened the session, and told dreadful things of Gratian, which would have earned him death, and more, if they were true.

Then the prefect rose to answer. The pope himself questioned him: "Where were you, on such a day, and such another day, when this Daniel says that you spoke to such a man, and such another man, these matters hostile to his excellency the king of the Lombards and holy Roman emperor?"

Then arose such a tumult, as Gratian's answer could hardly be heard. Frowningly Leo stilled this—knowing well it had been prepared by Joan. For many were crying, "He was with us, in the school of the Greeks, listening to our learned Brother John, the Prince of the Wise!"

And in the enforced silence the prefect spoke: "I was in none of these places, and spoke to none of these men. I sat in the assemblies of Brother John Anglicus, and learned from him."

"Send and get that teacher," Leo commanded curtly, as Joan had told him to do.

And she came: and she spoke with a low voice, slowly. "I had no wish to say aught in this matter. For I mingle not in the doings of prelates and mundane rulers, Holy Father, but humbly teach the wisdom of God. I beg to be excused from this assemblage; for my class waits."

"We know your name for golden wisdom, good brother," Louis wooed the teacher. "Yet you must speak, that a man may be condemned or saved by the truth you will utter."

"Speak," Leo commanded.

And Joan, face even more humbled, said, "I know naught of the matters charged against my pupil Gratian the prefect. But, on all the days you speak of, Gratian was with me from sunup to noon, and after he lunched with me and several of these, again till nightfall, and after the evening meal with us again until midnight. Take not my word for it, Holy Father, but question these of my pupils—"

And they set up a roar corroborating the teacher,

as she had directed them to do.

Louis smiled wrily at the pope. "This is final. Speak our joint decree."

Leo, still suffering from his recent illness, stood as straight as he could. "It is the will of Louis the Second, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and king of the Lombards, and of myself, God's vicar on earth, that the prefect Gratian be freed of all charges of misdeed; and that Daniel, chief of the militia of Rome, be held guilty of calumny, and be delivered over to the prefect, to be punished as his will directs."

And there was a roar of approval, from the followers of Louis no less than from the party of Leo.

But Leo raised a trembling hand, as Gratian, scowling fiercely, directed his men to seize the shrinking man. "But I, Leo, God's vicar on earth, beg of you, Gratian, to give me leave to set this man free, that in humbleness of heart he can devote his life to God and the expiration of his sins." For so Joan had directed him to say.

Gratian yielded to the pontiff's request; and, face paling from the exertion, Leo affixed his hand to the decree, already drawn up; and, after a farewell to Louis, went back to his sick bed. As he lay, in agony from his distemper, he meditated ways of repaying Joan for thus being his salvation.

CHAPTER XXI

St. Peter's Chair

IN THIS WISE MATTERS WERE, WHEN NEWS spread through the holy city that the pontiff had sickened, and was like to die. And now was the hour when the lion lay dying, and the jackals gathered to seek to garner his prey. There was a following that gathered about Anastasius, who had already been deposed from the priesthood by Leo for his intriguing ambition. There was Father Benedict, of the order of St. Callixtus, known for his austere life and the purity of his morals; a faint few voices were raised for him. There was a following of friends about a subdeacon in the Lateran, a physician's son named Nicholas. There were the harsh extremists who followed the abashed Cenfrith, who made up by their bicker for their lack of numbers. But most of all of these was the mass of the clergy, the students of the schools, most of the nobles, and the bulk of the populace, who had another name in their hearts, and brought it to their tongues without delay.

"John!" "English John!" "Brother John Anglicus!" From end to end of the city it resounded. As clergy, nobles, and people gathered for the election, these parties clashed; and usually it was a vast following for Joan that collided with some small group that drunkenly shouted the name of Anastasius, or bitterly begged for

Cenfrith or one of the others. A few heads were bashed in, a few noses bloodied, as they proceeded to the place where the election was to be held. But this was all in a spirit of high good humor, for so vast was the majority for Joan, that all knew none other would stand any chance of selection.

When the crowd gathered, there was no name but Joan's mentioned: a few with drawn fists stood perchance beside the more rabid of the followers of Cenfrith and Anastasius, and hinted that it would do God a service if they kept their lips closed at this hour. And when Joan's name was uttered as "Brother John Anglicus," there arose such a shout as shook the walls of the city, and made the Tiber quiver within her mud banks.

The unanimous voice of all in whose hands the election lay had made the chaste and learned teacher the head of Christendom, the vicar of God on earth. A great train assembled around her at once—only Cenfrith, of her rivals, failed to be of it—and escorted her to the papal palace. For all that the emperor's word must still be awaited, Joan, with icy pride welling up within her heart, mounted the steps—her steps, from now on—and gave her foot to be kissed by the clergy, the nobles, the chiefs of the citizens of Rome. Word was sent to the emperor, and Louis at once sent commissioners to commend the choice. These haughty envoys stood beneath her as three bishops consecrated the new pontiff, in St. Peter's church. And then, attended by an immense retinue, she proceeded to the papal palace, and seated herself at last upon the apostolic chair.

That first day, she did no further official act, but

rose and said, "You have chosen the unworthiest of God's servants to sit upon the worthiest seat in the world. Yet I know well that it is not John Anglicus, whom you have named Pope John the Eighth, whom you have chosen; you have chosen, instead, the wisdom of God to be your pontiff. It has been given me, at times, to utter this wisdom. And, without seeking direction of God my father, I will in no wise act upon any matter. This night I will consult God upon my knees, and on the morrow will speak decrees dictated by God's holy wisdom."

This saying pleased all who heard it, and most of all the haughty envoys of the emperor Louis. The new pope sent privily to them to attend her at a private audience; and, before consulting God upon her knees, she plied them with wine, that she might learn of their loosened lips what was the heart of the co-emperor, as well as they shared it. She learned much that she never forgot, at this session.

They staggered off, hiccuping happily, at last. Even wine had its holy uses, she reflected shrewdly.

She walked quietly over to a window, and stood just inside the precious hangings, parting them slightly, so as to share in the cool of the huge night without. So small, so shrunk, this little Rome lay, in the midst of the huge blackness of land and sky around her! Somewhere, glittering resplendent beyond some far heavy pall of that black sky, sat God's throne, ringed by the seraphim, and cherubim, the infinite hosts of the sainted dead and the blessed among the dead, with the Mother of God on the left hand, and the Son on the right, and

God the father in the center, and the Holy Spirit hovering in the form of a white dove above his head. Sky forever blue, day forever golden, weeping tears of golden sorrow when aught went wrong on his footstool earth, laughing golden laughter when souls accepted Him or His cause thrived here, seeing all things, remembering all things, foreknowing all things, willing all things, even what had been done this day in Rome, when she had been consecrated as chief over all Christendom.

To the greater glory of God. . . .

Why were not all on earth such as she, singled-souled as she had been toward wisdom under a sky of peace, toward love under a sky of love, toward power under God? Why must men bicker and scheme and plot, slay and torture and ravish, burn and mutilate and massacre, the length and breadth of Christendom no less than in the dark pagan lands? Well, God must will it all, the evil with the good, or there would be no evil, and all good, as there was in heaven.

And God must will as will her efforts, and the efforts of all who conned and lived His word, to put an end to the evil, and enthrone the good in all spots under sun. God had willed her the ill of drunken, bickering, licentious parents; and the good of wisdom beside it. God had willed the ill of the loss of Cenwulf; and even more clearly the good of the sweet years beside him, and in his arms. She smiled sadly now. For if Cenwulf had lived, her life would have been so full, that there would have been no room in it for that ache for power that had put her, in the end, on Peter's seat. So love had been taken from her, that she might the more wholly

be God's. And God had willed her elevation to this noblest seat in all the world, to be used for His greater glory.

Suddenly, from out the dark below her, came the rush of soft feet on the grass, the swish of garments, the solid sound of a body, or two bodies, flinging themselves upon the sward just under her window. She drew herself more stiffly up, and made her senses keen to see what manner of things took place just under her window. There was the deep throaty laughter of a woman, and the pleading tones of a man's voice. "No, no, but no," again and again. Then the laughter and the naying hushed, and only deep breathing, louder and louder, shook the silence.

As the breathing grew hoarser, Joan for very curiosity parted the curtains the more, and looked silently down on what was below her. A nun, yes—the robe established that; and—why, it was that sweet-faced young sister Agatha, who had so recently entered Leo's convent! The man who cosseted with her was— Yes, it was the very messenger the dead pope had sent so often to Joan, in the darkness of night, to seek counsel of her, or share his will with her. And the two of them were locked in each other's arms now, and heedless of all else in the world.

Joan let the curtain close, and stared sadly at the wall. It was not seemly, here in her very palace, or beside it—even though the two were young, and stirred by the stir of spring. There was much she must do. No need for this convent of nuns in her palace, now: on the morrow she would see to it that it removed to a more

seemly distance. There were evil priests and brothers, some of them attached to the papal family, who used their office but to sate their senses, seducing women and girls through the confessional, taking toll of the nuns, even straying further in their practices from the oaths they had made. These could be lopped off one by one. . . .

And wider, vaster things. . . . All Italy set in order. . . . The abbeys, monasteries, nunneries devoted to the service of God, and to high philosophy. . . . The evil bandits lessoned to leave the land, or forfeit their lives. . . . The Saracens pushed back forever from the islands and from Italy itself. . . . The Lombard king, the emperors, the kings and princes of Europe, brought to kneel before the see of God. . . . Some shrewd vassalage to be imposed upon the eastern empire, and upon the patriarchs at Constantinople and further west. . . .

Why, if her wit and shrewdness stayed by her, she might bring even the pagan world to kneel before the Lord of all creation, and his Son, and the Virgin Mother, and the Holy Spirit. Pagans had been converted, ere this—pagan Rome itself, and the savage northern tribes wandering blindly in error who had fathered her, and the wilder tribes surrounding them. . . . Miracles had been done, and greater ones were yet to come: if her godliness only matched her will, she might bring the world kneeling to the feet of Jesus!

She knelt at last, to pray for this. And pray she did; but ever as she prayed her mind, disturbed at all that had happed this day, strayed here and there—to a hill high over Mainz, with a young girl yielding her

flower to man's importunity; to sweet hours beside Cenwulf in the forest ways, or in the peopled towns; to a still night of silver in the temple of victory. . . . Her prayer was most for the repose of the soul of Cenwulf, and for a soon meeting with him, when she had laid by God's cares on earth, and went to God's reward, which would be, most of all, union again with him whom all her heart adored.

She rose, and cast by, one by one, her heavy robes. The night air in her chamber was balmy with the waking spring, and there were sweet odors in it—and some of these, she knew, had been bred from the sweet visions of Cenwulf that thronged above her. She stood before a vast mirror of polished metal, as she let the last garment slip to the floor.

She stared at her body, glimmering back at her from the polished metal: and the sight was lovely in her eyes. There was marble in the face, pale pink like the marble from Pentelicus: pale, from her vigils at her studies, from her inbreeding long sorrow, from her high meditations. Below that sloped down a body that Aphrodite might have worn, with bright young virginal breasts still, russet tipped, with a torso like the torso of the virgin goddess of the chase, with legs like slimly tapering marble pillars to buttress up the pediment and the friezes above.

She smiled quaintly, as her ivory skin rippled with the play of the muscles beneath. This was a Joan such as the world did not see; and a lovelier Joan it was than the one the world saw, so swaddled up in vast robes of secrecy. Ah, the ancient peoples were right: there was

no beauty like the bare beauty of woman or man. . . . The world knew only feet to be kissed, hands to bless, a face to window the soul within, and, girdling these and above these, the pontifical robes, the tiara. If she could stand bared thus before the world, wearing no tire but the tiara, there would be a vicar of God that must turn men and women from all low and casual ways, to seek the peaks of life, as she had sought and found them!

Perhaps some far tomorrow would see this sight. For this now, this must all be laid by.

She had reached the height on earth now. Naught to do, but to stay here, and widen the height in God's name, and then yield up her ghost for its lovelier peaks, under the brightness of God's throne!

She lay down at length to sleep, having made sure anew that the door was bolted. And sleep came, bringing dreams sweeter than the visions that had hovered above her. Her face smiled as she slept, and again and again her drowsing lips uttered one name, and one only, and it was not a name of a god, but of a man.

Morning came, with dawn sending fingers of gold through the window hangings to rouse and warm her, and a discreet knocking outside the door. She had ordered that no attendant wake her, since, she had said, she devoted all her early morning hours to silent meditation and prayer. Thus no one would see her as she had seen herself the night before; and Pope John would stay Pope John still.

The days passed evenly, at first. She did no deed, but after a night's meditation upon it; and the deeds she did were such as to win the acclaim of Christendom. She

conferred the sacred orders on worthy deacons, and priests, and prelates; she administered the sacraments of the church to the faithful; and her feet were kissed by commoners and nobles, princes and abbots, archbishops and kings.

She did not blow always like a summer breeze, that was clear from the first week of her pontificate. For she summoned before her many priests, the enormity of whose crimes was well known to her—priests guilty of murder of layman or cleric, of abandoning themselves to men or beasts against the order of nature, of incest or sacrilege or many other crimes—and deposed them from their priesthood. And certain nuns and even two abbesses, who had publicly flaunted their harlotries, were also punished. The nunnery that Leo had established in his palace was quietly moved to a more seemly place; and many other acts were done for the glory of God, in ridding the church of certain of its crying evils.

She lifted high in her family many of those pupils whose zeal and high living she knew from her work at the school of the Greeks. She gave preferment to Father Benedict, priest of the order of St. Callixtus, who had been mentioned for pope when Joan herself was elected; she made the subdeacon Nicholas a deacon; and young Father Adrian, a cousin of that pope called the Hog's Snout, yet utterly the opposite of that Sergius for piety and good works, she made a cardinal priest.

Father Benedict looked with ill favor on the elevation of the younger priest. "Holy father," he said aside to Joan, "you are lifting to your breast a dangerous rival to your power. Know you not that Rome hails

Adrian almost as she hails you?"

"For what does Rome hail him?" Joan asked softly.

Father Benedict grunted. "It chatters of miracles and godly deeds without number."

Joan nodded. "I was new come to Rome myself, from Athens, good father, when this Father Adrian's first miracle was performed. He was but a deacon then, young, though his cousin Sergius was father of all Christendom. On one day, for something he had done well, the pope gave the young deacon forty pennies, for himself. Adrian, pious of heart, did not spend these pennies on his own pleasures, but took himself to the poor quarter where he lived, and assembled the poor, that he might give them, a penny to each, in God's name. I myself, father, was in the throng that saw what followed."

"I have heard somewhat of this—" began the scheming and pious priest.

Joan lifted a hand. "There were so many of these poor, that Adrian's heart was troubled, and he had hard work separating out the most infirm and needy among them. He fell on his knees, and prayed aloud to God to give his charity to all of them—I myself heard the prayer. And then he gave to the blind and the infirm, a penny to each; to the aged, the lame, the women, the children, the widowed, the fatherless, he gave, a penny to each. And ever new poor arrived, until it seemed all of Rome stood quietly around him, with piteous pleading hands outstretched. From sunrise to sunfall this continued; and there were always pennies in the good deacon's purse, until at sunfall he poured from it several huge coffers full, for his alms for the next day. Now

this was a miracle, and a signal mark of God's favor. For did not the holy Elijah multiply a barrel of meal and a cruse of oil in the house of a widow woman, so that it failed not? And did not the holy Elisha multiply a pot of oil for a widow woman, the widow of a son of one of the prophets, until every empty vessel was filled of it? And did not Our Lord himself multiply five loaves and two fishes, and again seven loaves and a few little fishes, until vast multitudes were filled, and there remained baskets full of the fragments thereof? Surely the godliness of Father Adian is great, that God worked no less a miracle with his forty pennies."

Still the pious priest was not satisfied. "I thought but to warn you, holy father—"

And Joan smiled. "Warn me always of the good, Father Benedict; and I will always give them all preferment within my power to give."

And in such goodly fashion did Joan set out upon the many duties that devolved upon the earthly father of the church.

CHAPTER XXII

A Queen Seeks Comfort

WORD OF ALL THIS CAME SOMEHOW TO the new cardinal, Father Adrian; and his heart warmed so toward Joan, that he was at her side constantly. She did nothing that in his eyes did not seem of God, and as he himself would have done; and this comforted his heart exceedingly. And Joan, for her part, warmed as much toward him. For he was almost of an age with her, being but a few years younger; and he was godly, and handsome in the fashion of the men of Italy. His hair was dark, and his eyes were dark, and there was a hint of the dark hue of the olive upon his cheeks. And yet, the more he looked at Joan, the more he reminded her of one she could not forget—of that tall flaxen-haired sea-eyed monk Cenwulf, who had been her lover for so long, before God took him.

More and more Joan came to rely upon Adrian, to carry out her will; for she could always be sure that he would use his last effort to achieve it.

There were matters enough to trouble her, and some of them she settled privily, so that no word of her doings reached the people of Rome. There came envoys to her secretly from Charles the Bald, king of Neustria, the brother of the old emperor Lothair, telling of the divers minds that were held by the clergy of France upon the

sacrament of the Eucharist, the holy communion of Our Lord Jesus Christ; and of his desire to put an end to these divisions. These envoys said that the king inclined most to the opinion of the learned Father Bertram of Corbie, and sought word from the pope on his opinions.

"I know this Bertram," said Joan to Adrian slowly, as she mulled over the words of the envoys. "Once I myself confronted him in a disputation, concerning the veneration of the saints in the calendar, which he opposed. Few in the church have as much learning as he; but learning all disordered is no better than no learning, and at times far worse. You heard what the envoys said he held, concerning the eucharist?"

"In part," said Adrian doubtfully; who, truth to tell, had been so shocked by the words, that he had withdrawn himself and not listened.

Joan studied him keenly. "As Christians, we know that the body and blood of Christ themselves are present during the communion, and are in verity consumed by the communicants, under the likeness of wine and unleavened bread. But this Father Bertram holds that this is not so, and that the body and blood of Christ are received by the communicants in spirit only, and not in reality."

"But this is blasphemy, holy father!" Adrian's dark face glowed with holy ardor. "For we all know that Jesus Christ himself is verily in the bread and wine; that he passes through all the digestive functions of man, and is not harmed even in man's excrement, still remaining the body and blood of our Lord."

"It is this which the overlearned Bertram forgets.

I will send you privily to Charles the Bald of Neustria, to warn him that, if he permits this heresy to be spread in his kingdom, he will find himself and all other heretics of like nature put ouside the fold of mother church entirely. Yet I send you, dear Adrian, not to warn so much as to persuade. For it may be that your own godly wit will prevail against the errors of the learned monk from Corbie, and will persuade the king to bow to the eternally settled teachings of the church."

The envoys were sent back with word to the king that the pope's own envoy would speak to him; and, at the end of two months, Adrian returned in pious jubilation to Rome, with the word of the king that never would he again trouble the ears of the pope with word of this teaching of Bertram's.

Joan also sent a special envoy to the aged emperor, Lothair, and won his firm support; and she smoothed out various matters of dispute between Rome and the eastern empire. She even found time to compose prefaces to several masses, with the music to accompany these, and several canons of the church, which were acceptable to all Christendom. More and more all Christendom rang with her praises; and she herself, in her humility, thanked God for what she was accomplishing, and most for the aid she had from the pious young Adrian and others of her family. She thanked Adrian, as well as God; and this brought him closer to her heart, so that he was hardly ever away from her, but while she slept.

Another troublous matter was brought to her, soon after this. Young king Lothair, second son of the old emperor, had married Teutberga, a sister of Abbot Hubert

of St. Maurice. Becoming infatuated with a princess named Waldrada, and learning of certain things that went on between his wife Teutberga and her brother Hubert, he had determined to put aside his wife, and espouse the princess. Now the queen, Teutberga, travelled secretly to Rome, to secure the support of the holy pontiff on her side, and to make sure that her husband could never secure a dissolution of her marriage, that he might marry Waldrada.

Joan granted the queen a private audience—that much in courtesy she had to do. Only Father Adrian and the pope's secretary were present in the room beside. Teutberga had come to the audience attired as if for the bagnio, Joan noted at once. Under her outer heavy robes were shifts woven in the east, so sheer that not one of her treasures was unrevealed. The queen paid small heed to the cardinal priest and the secretary, but prettily threw herself on the floor before the pope, and kissed her foot, squirming like a cat in heat. She sought to take Joan's hand, and press it to her lips.

Joan repulsed her fimly. "Since the time of third Leo, that has been forbidden, your majesty."

"But not to me, a queen!" Reproachfully she raised glorious dark eyes meltingly to the pontiff, and half lay upon the floor, with her opulent breasts against the papal knee.

Joan smiled politely. "Were you a queen of four score years and ten, I might make an exception. Lacking proof of that, the ordinance of Leo applies. What is it that you would have me do for you?"

The queen looked at the pope piteously. "Save my

husband from a deadly sin, your highness. For he seeks to divorce me, contrary to all the teachings of holy mother church."

"For what cause?" asked Joan idly, lifting shapely eyelids.

Teutberga rolled her eyes pleadingly, seductively, at the young pontiff. "What matter the cause, when divorce itself is criminal?"

"For what cause?" Joan repeated, with more metal in her tone.

"For a mere invention, a charge of adultery that lives but in his own febrile imagination, stirred by the glance of a strumpet named Waldrada," said Teutberga firmly.

"With whom?" Joan's query was still casual.

"Sire, that I can not answer; for there are words that will not sully my lips, so frightful are they."

Joan nodded. "Your obvious purity relieves my heart, holy queen. This charge, concerning you and your brother Hubert—"

"You know, then?" paling, and moving a step back from the pontiff's throne.

Joan shook a solemn head. "Is aught hid from God, or from God's vicar? Nor it is hid from either of us that this deacon Hubert is accused of many monstrous offenses, such as using a nearby nunnery for a brothel, and himself collecting the pence that pay for the commerce with the nuns. If your husband makes proof of this charge—"

Teutberga drew herself eret; her bosom heaved tumultuously, her eyes darted magnificent fire. "Sire, I

cast myself on the breast of mother church, which holds all divorce a crime in god's eyes!"

"There are words of the church fathers," said Joan learnedly, "justifying divorce, when the wife has committed adultery; and, in all cases save this where Christians avail themselves of the civil law, and secure divorce, there are severe penances imposed. Great Charlemagne pronounced divorce a crime, but one not punishable by the law; and himself took advantage of the law to secure his own divorce. Yet the church has power still, to sever from its holy communion those who are guilty of this crime."

The queen looked with faint distaste at the two immobile spectators of the audience, Adrian and the secretary. "Could I not discuss this matter with your learned self with none else present?"

Joan laughed quietly. "I deal with a larger divorce, at this moment: with the divorce of the eastern empire from the western, and of the eastern church from the true church. But I shall send Father Adrian here—" Adrian smiled, and came near the pope's side, "to hear what other matters you have to say, and convey them to me in such secrecy as you will."

He walked aside for conference with Adrian, laying a friendly hand on his shoulder. "This lusty queen is no doubt guilty of all that comes into her mind. I have no will to traffic with her further; yet, if you mind not, I will send her to you, to batter her concupiscent pleas against the rock of your continence, dear father."

Adrian smiled earnestly. "I do not think she deserves to be heard, your highness; yet I am ever at your

disposal, and I will let her talk her tongue out, if only you will not expect me to listen, but to report merely that there is naught you should do."

Joan patted the priest's back. "Have it so, then." With that, she dismissed the importunate queen, promising that she could see Adrian privily that night.

But Adrian called the father aside, and reminded him that one of the bishops of Rome had bidden the pope that night to a private feast of rejoicing, in honor of some saint; and that the pope had asked Adrian to accompany him.

Joan frowned. "I had forgot that, of a truth. Yet I will go alone, or take Benedict with me, and leave you to iron out this lady's pleadings, and cast the mantle of your ice over her melting summer warmth. Report to me on the morrow."'

And so it was decided.

Joan, mind still tangled in the mazes of the problem of the eastern church, went thoughfully to the episcopal palace, accompanied by her secretary. Life, with problems such as she had, had small room for feasts and banquets. Yet one could not forget the intercourse of friends, and it might be that things could be learned from the bishop and his guests which could be turned to good use later.

The banquet began decorously enough; though Joan was surprised that there were girls, heavily garbed, to serve the guests, who numbered six and six only. But Joan, who tasted the wine only sparingly, soon knew that there was more in it than the juice of the grape; there were other substances there, used to inflame the carnal

passions. She sipped the more sparingly, but so that no one noticed her abstinence; and bent her eyes to observing the conduct of the others.

As they served each course, the serving maidens grew slimmer, discarding a garment at a time on a pile of stuff near the door. Soon they were like very nymphs, provocatively alluring with every wile that the bagnio practiced. The heady wine, freighted with strange aphrodisiacs from the east, rose to the brains of the other guests, stirring without intoxicating. One portly bishop had his serving maid on his knees, forcing beakers down her willing lips; another, a cardinal deacon, had his maid face downward across his lap, reddening her bared buttocks with heavy smacks of his ponderous open hand, and all in fun.

The banquet grew madder and madder. There was profane music, and more profane dances, with posturings to break the marble calm of a temple of Time; there were quiet withdrawals of guests and maidens, two by two, to some other portions of the episcopal palace. Joan endured a little of this, and then took her host quietly aside. Disguising what was in her heart, she told him a story of envoys from the East waiting for her return, who could not be postponed. Never had she attended such a banquet, she said—so that he did not guess just how she meant her words—and, if only she had leave to go, she would plan to return in an hour. . . .

Leeringly he let her out; and she did not return.

Yet she passed that night in great disquiet. The sight of bared female bodies squirming in the rough clench of men was a thing she had put from herself, for

these many years now, ever since that awful death in Athens; and her blood raced as it had not raced since then. Perhaps the potions in the little wine she had sipped had been stronger than she guessed; in any case, her body was all in a heat, and she could hardly compose herself to sleep. When she did sleep, she dreamed red and riotous adventures, with herself pursued by a bull ready to gore her, by a great maned lion out of the Lybian wastes, by a huge bearded Saracen with sword ready to disembowel her.

And then her dream grew softer. She fled for safety to a cool spring-green mead, and only when she lay among its flowers did she see the form of her pursuer near at hand. It was one of the guests at the banquet, she deemed at first. Then, as the man strode gently nearer, she saw it was a younger man, with a fair face hid in shadow. The face seemed like the face of Cenwulf; yet the shadow falling upon it made it seem more like the face of Adrian.

All night her dreams continued; and she woke, still restless. Before she appeared in public, she flung her soul prostrate before God in prayer, and besought his aid to her in conquering these stirrings of the flesh, which she thought she had put by her so long ago.

And now at last Adrian came, and many others with him, so that she could have no word privily with him, for the press that surrounded them both. Listlessly she went through the morning's cares; and, as soon as she could, she dismissed all but Adrian, and called him to her side.

"Your face is pale," she solicitously to him. "Did you not sleep well?"

"Yours is paler," he answered, staring strangely upon her. "I only hope you did not stay long at the banquet. There is talk already of what went on there."

"What talk?" she asked straightly.

He flushed, and shook his head. "Talk that must be untrue, for that you were there: of naked girls serving the banquet, of revelry and debauchery afterwards. . ."

"This may be all true," Joan said straightly. "For your ears only, dear father, I left there within the hour of my arrival, with the banquet hardly begun."

His eyes widened. "You did not like the bawdy show, then?"

"Would you?" she reproached him quietly.

Again he flushed. "Before God, I do not know. Yesterday, I would have answered with clear heart that I would not. I—I slept ill, too."

Joan studied his pallid face. "That shameless queen, Teutberga?"

He nodded. "Yes."

"Tell me."

He studied her, face working strangely. "It is easy to do, for that I love you so, good father. You called me your beloved helper once—"

"More than once," she aided him.

"I have felt," he said slowly, "at times, as if you were Our Lord himself, and I your beloved disciple. Surely the tie between Jesus and young John can not have been closer than the tie between us twain, your highness! I mean no impiety—"

"I know," all understanding, all golden sympathy.

"For I love you," he said as simply.

"And I love you," Joan replied wonderingly. "I love all Christians, and you most of all, Adrian, for that you are the most Christian of all I know."

"I have never been able to search my own heart," he said, "and to make sure that the love I bear you is all of God."

Now Joan was troubled. "I—I do not quite know what you mean, Adrian."

He walked in distress to the far end of the chamber, and back, before answering her. "The love of man for man. . . . David loved Jonathan, and Damon loved Pythias, more than the love of man for woman; and an end on it. Yet we are both read deeply in the lore of the Greeks, holy father, and there was a love of man for man that was more violent than these, and more—more vile than these."

Joan nodded compassiontely. "Sodom knew this love, and Gomorrah, and many evil lands, Adrian."

He faced her, brows furrowed. "The church has called it vile, but the great pagans did not call it vile. Witness Socrates, and Plato, and so many more. . . . I do not know," he said, face broken, tone broken.

And she, as if an echo of the turmoil within him, said out of her compassion, "I do not know."

"I have kissed your foot, holy father," he began slowly; and then, like a spring torrent crashing down a mountain side, until at its foot it swept away a whole village, he flung himself at her feet. "But I have longed to kiss your hand, and your lips, holy father, and hold you tight to my breast as I would hold God's salvation! Oh, I know, I know, this must have been sent of the

evil one; I have wrestled all night in silent prayer, begging God to sponge my heart clean of all carnal thoughts: but still your quiet golden voice, the smile of your full lips, the dazzle of your seablue eyes, would dance before me, like a very temptation of the evil one—and all my holiness was as straw in the blast of a tempest. Oh, John, John—"

"I did not dream that you were moved so much," she said, biting her lips at the end until they almost bled.

"I did not dream that I would ever tell you I had loved you so much," said the priest slowly. "For I held this to be all of the evil one. But—after last night—"

"And what took place last night?" Joan queried, her heart more icy than before.

"You shall hear it all." And then he paused, to collect himself.

CHAPTER XXIII

Joan Utters Her Heart

HE SLID DOWN TO THE FLOOR AT HER FEET, and looked away from her. "What are we to do, we who devote ourselves to chastity and continence in God's name, when we are so shaken and moved of desire, that we are as fiery furnaces of lust? For this I was last night, holy father: and God knows, and you know, none of my seeking. . . .

"She came to me, this Queen Teutberga, at my lodgings at nine o'clock, as she had said she would. When her outer robes were off, there was no such open flaunting of her body as we both witnessed yesterday noon; but she was tightly wound with a heavier material, which looped under her breasts and held them taut, and disclosed nothing of what my eyes could not but see before. All humble and contrite her face was, and she came as a very penitent."

A cruel catlike look came into Joan's eyes. "She would be shrewd enough to do that."

"Yes," mournfully. "First of all she sought me to kneel down beside her, and pray with her. The touch of her warm shoulder against mine. . . . I felt stirrings such as I was not used to; and my mind would not leave off playing with what lay under the robe, with those woman's lures I had seen that morning. For a long

time we knelt thus; and then she asked me to hear her confession."

Joan could see his body shiver, as he spoke. She herself shuddered, but he could not see it.

He turned on the floor at last, searching her face for comfort. "Then she spoke to me, as to God's ear, such a tale as I have never heard from any penitent. It was all dreadful, all seething hot with lust and passion. . . . Since she had been a little girl it had gone on; her brother Hubert, and others he led her to, long before she was plighted and wed to the young Lothair. . . . And, since, with men beyond number—with nobles of the kingdom and servants of the palace, with bishops and monks, with abbots and strolling song-singers. There were no deeps of the inferno of lust that she had not dwelt in, holy father: and ever as she told it, she wove her tale so skillfully, that I sorrowed for her abject baptism in lust, and could not but see my own body moving through the red phantasmagoria of luxury that she pictured so amply."

Joan nodded, lips tense. "This queen is a shrewd woman."

Adrian shook his head. "I did not hold her so, at first, but a simple girl, wallowing in mire of man's planning. I do not know. . . . She had never found before me, she said, man who could rise above the fire of the furnace of desire; and, if only I could comfort her, by making sure that I could so rise, it might aid her hereafter to ride any tempest of passion. I did not know what she meant, at first. Then with one gesture she had slipped out of the taut robe, and stood bare before me."

Joan sat forward, gripping her hands until the nails made stigmata in her palms. "And—then—" Her own lips were too dry for her tongue to dampen them.

Adrian rose to his feet, and paced bitterly back and forth. "It was to test me, and herself, she said. She besought me to let drop my own priest's robe, so that bare as we were born we might fight the devil side by side. That I did not do, holy father—I swear it."

Joan nodded, not trusting herself to speak.

"Yet I let her stand close before me, in her penitential luxury lifting her wicked seductive arms and wreathing them about her head, and moving her bare body until I was like to die with shame for her, and another feeling within myself. She slowly wove those arms around my neck, father, she lifted her lips and laid them against mine—"

Joan half rose from her chair. "You—you did not—This all repelled you, Father Adrian—"

He turned astonished eyes at her. "Never in my life did I long for anything more than commerce with this woman! Oh, father, you do not know what it is—you have ice in your veins, and not blood! I have put love and lust from me, since the days of my youth; I have never before known the clasp of nude woman, the feel of her bare arms drawing me against her pulsing breasts, the soft cool humor of her lips on mine— And I would have given my soul to have taken her, as she longed for me to!"

"And you would not?" She had herself reined somehow now, but it was not easy.

"I did not," he hung his head. "It had all come too

suddenly upon me. I spoke such balsam as I might to soothe her rutting spirit, and sent her out quickly, for fear she would read the yielding in my will. But—but—" he hung his head, "I said she might come again this night, that we might talk her case over again. It is this I must confess to you, holy father, and secure your absolution. For I fear there is sin in my heart, seeking to escape, like a beast of the jungle caged, that would not suffer its bars of straw forever!"

"I absolve you," said Joan, with the sign of the cross.

He stood, face working, biting his lips in his inner torment. "Yet there is a worser sin of concupiscence I fear me I need absolution from, holy father. I spoke of the love of man for man; and you know how my heart clings to the hem of your robes, as you too have deigned to love me. She left. . . . I was left alone. I could not sleep, but visions came to plague me all night. . . Temptations such as Anthony never knew. . . . For it was not her face I saw, for the most part, in these mad raging fantasies, but—but your face, holy father. I must —I must prostrate myself, seeking God's forgiveness for this; but, if it be not spoken, how can that forgiveness come? Once indeed I drowsed, so worn that I could not keep my eyes wide; and then—" his eyes stayed on the floor, "came the worst dream of all—I was standing before you, in my dream, and it was your lips that I kissed, with such a thrill of ineffable ecstasy as my body and soul had never known before! I awoke, shuddering back from this pit of the evil one to snare my soul to its eternal damnation—"

Joan was as shaken as he; but, at least, she could sit still, and hide her inner torture. And this time she did not know what to say, for the strange flooding ecstasy that moved throughout her, such as she had never known.

"I know," he said sorrowfully, "that this can not be of God, but is from the evil one. And I must geld my heart of it; and I will. No; not commerce between man and man. . . . Oh, father, if only we did not need to wish things we should not do!"

And Joan spoke at last, such words as she would never have planned to utter. "Is it so sure that we ever wish to do things we should not do?"

Somehow the meaning of her words did not reach him. For he had other things to ask of her: "Father, have you never slept with woman, as man sleeps with woman?"

And Joan said quietly, "No. Never."

"Father, that is not a mortal sin, in God's eyes, is it? Even in the case of one vowed in celibacy? Have I not heard that you have so held?"

"It is not a mortal sin in God's eyes." He voice was a bell booming remotely over far still waters, whose turmoil was all unseen below.

"Father," like a plea out of a soul in agony it came, "if I slept with woman carnally, would that not drive from my heart all foul and unnatural desires, such as came last night to plague me?"

And she was up on her feet, like a tigress at the crack of a whip. "Are you mad, Adrian? How could there fail to be love between us, we who are so alike, who seek wisdom together, and live purely before God to-

gether? How can this be sin, Adrian?" Wildly, more wildly, "Think what you are saying, my beloved—brother." She added the last word in sudden panic.

"I can not live in the racking tortures of the desires that came to me last night, holy father. I must find some way to lessen them. Prayer can not, nor confession; but perhaps immersing myself in a lesser sin will do this. No, I have pondered it all night; there is none other way."

"What do you plan to do?" Joan sat back, baffled, within her chair, eyes catlike watching him.

"Queen Teutberga comes tonight," he said flatly, dispiritedly.

Joan drew in a deep icy breath, and could hardly speak for a space. Then she gasped, "She is an evil woman, a demon sent to tempt you, Adrian."

He nodded. "I know not. I only know I shall use her, who is small temptation to me now, to avoid falling into a vast ocean of temptation. God will forgive me that; he could never forgive me the other," face hidden.

Then his icy face came up. "This is true, as I stand here soul naked before God. If I wished her now, holy father, I would not take her. That I could control. If my eye offended me, I could pluck it out; I could hack off my arm; I could ox myself, wether myself, rather than yield to mere lust for woman. But it is a more dreadful lust that shakes me; and I take her as penance, and not as prize."

"I forbid it," said Joan, eyes half closed.

He walked slowly around the room. "I shall con-

fess, when all is over. There is no other way."

"You want her!" —a quick savage little taunt, as her blue eyes turned greenish.

"No," mournfully. "I want— Oh, God, I do not know what I want! I want an end to the raging fever in my blood, the racing ardor in my brain, the rioting humor in my soul! Love—love—I who have put it from me, it shakes and teases me now like a mouse in the punishing claws of a cat, until the body of my soul is scored dripping red with the torment I know! I do not want her, I do not know what I want, I want you—" He stopped paling, as if he could have bit his tongue out, "I want a woman, but not her—I want my mate, and I shall never see her: but she has your eyes, holy father and your lips, that I know, and I shall never find her the length of the broad world! Yet these fires leap too high to let me live, unless I quench them; what prayer can not do, this venial sinning may."

"I forbid it," Joan eyed him strangely.

He stood, head bowed, before her. "I shall go, now, and fight this fight within my own soul. I shall not forget your words, holy father." He made as if to leave.

Joan rose, and stood, as if carven of ice, above him. "You still will to go in to this woman this night?"

His anguished face fronted hers wildly. "Her, or any woman—a harlot of the streets would do as well—"

She smiled upon him at last, like sun after a long spell of gray. With no word, she went to the outer door of the chamber, and spoke briefly to the guard without. Then she reentered, bolting the door of the chamber. She stood midway of the room, studying him half long-

ingly, half fearfully. "Wait but a moment—I myself will send a woman in to you."

With no more words than this, she vanished behind the hangings at the end of the long chamber, that led into her private study.

All uncomprehending, all unbelieving, he waited, watching the softly swaying curtains, that bore this moving memory of her passing.

And now the curtains moved again, and a slim marble hand parted them, and a woman walked slowly toward him. Bare she was, as Aphrodite when she was born out of the waves, in the old story; and godlike she was, like Aphrodite; her body was the body of a goddess, and her face was the face he had kissed in his dream.

His senses reeled, as if he had suddenly gone mad. What phantasm of the devil— "John!" As if to exorcise away an evil spirit, he made the sign of the cross, taking a step backward as he did so.

But the spirit did not vanish. Instead, out of those ripe, soft lips, with tones singing like gold touched lightly, she said, "Not John, but Joan, Adrian. For Joan I was born, and Joan I grew; this John is but for the world, not for you and I."

"But—but you are a monk, and a priest, and father of us all! What—what thaumaturgy is this?"

"It is no wonder-working, Adrian my dear, but *natura naturans*—nature, acting in its own way. To all the world, I am John, and a man, a monk, and God's vicar on earth; to none else but you, Adrian, beside myself and God, am I a woman. Never till last night, Adrian, did I know that I longed for you as woman longs for man—"

His face was icy pale now. "You, a woman, have been monk, and are the supreme pontiff of us all?"

She nodded, troubled at how he did not come nearer. And then she smiled more goldenly: "Put it rather that I, a monk, and pontiff, am a woman, who loves you, Adrian my dear." And, since he would not come nearer, she went nearer to him.

Her eyes rained love on him, her lips smile in invitation, her arms spread slowly. He did not make up his mind to touch her, he did not have to. As if he had no will of his own, he was in her arms, his own around her. He felt the velvet marvel of warm sweet woman's flesh beneath his fingers, he could feel the spiked breasts making soft wounds upon his own, his head leaned down slowly until his lips descended upon her own.

And so he knew, at last, what the love of woman was like.

It may have been an hour later, or two hours, or two centuries—time had stopped, for both of them—when they found themselves seated side by side on the floor of the chamber. It was a trifle chillier now, in the air of the chamber, and she had drawn his habit about her shoulders, and then run prettily to her study and gotten her own to fling around him. And so they sat smiling at each other.

But there was something sharper than a smile on his face—a troubled indecision, that she itched to share.

"What are you thinking of, my only love? Something ploughs its furrows in the alabaster brow of yours—some troubling care or other. Love, my love, the hour for care is past!"

He turned his large brown eyes upon her, and spoke

his heart. "I am still troubled, Joan my one dear, at all this. Surely it can not be right for a woman to be in holy orders, much less father of us all!"

She smiled, in her own sole field at last. "It is well known, my dear, that among the Collyridian heretics, women were admitted to the priesthood. Up to the last two or three centuries, women could become priestesses in our faith; the council of Chalcedon formally declares this, and provides for their consecration as priests."

Adrian shook a troubled head. "There are those who hold that this permitted no more than women as deaconesses," he objected.

"But the better opinion is to the contrary. From the early church this was true. Did not St. Clemens Romanus detail in full the duties of these priestesses—how they might celebrate holy nuptials, preach the gospel to men as well as to women, and disrobe both to anoint them and immerse them in baptism? Did not the learned Atton, bishop of Verceil, describe the functions of priestesses in the early Christian church, and the deaconesses under them? Recall too the words of Athanasius and Cyprian upon these women—dispraising their excesses but still admitting their importance."

"Yet—as pope—" still troubled.

"God ordained all this," said Joan softly. "God permitted much more. Who does not know of the courtezan Marguerite, who entered a monastery of men as brother Pelegian, and served there until her death? Who does not know of Eugenea, daughter of the noted Philip, governor of Alexandria, who governed a convent of monks during the reign of the emperor Gallienus, and only bared her sex when accused of the seduction of a young girl,

to disprove the charge?"

"These things are well known" Adrian admitted. "I see you do not mention that patriarch of Constantinople who, under the emperor Basil, was a woman; and whose sex was discovered by a divine revelation given to a prince of Beneventum, named Telchisus."

"I omitted her," smiled Joan, "because, after all, Constantinople no longer serves God as we of the West serve Him; and because they held there, wrongly, that the woman had done wrong, and in the end shut her in a nunnery. I seek no nunnery, dear, as long as I have you!"

"Not to speak," he added thoughtfully, "of the noted abbesses who have labored so splendidly to bring souls to Christ; or of the female saints, who shine so bright in the calendar!"

"Not to speak" added Joan softly, "of the mother of God herself, who is known for her perpetual virginity, for all that she had a son; for her sinlessness; and for her compassion, which makes her man's chief advocate before the holy throne."

"We shall talk more of these things," Adrian ended, thoughtfully. "But my soul leaps, Joan my one dear, that it was not an unnatural love that filled my heart for you, and set me hungering and thirsting for the touch of your lips!"

She laughed, and leant forward to pay toll again. She drew back: "And tonight, do you have a mind still to unbar your door to the hotly rutting queen of Lorraine, my Adrian?"

He sealed her taunting lips with a kiss. And for a long space there were no more words in the chamber.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Earth Quakes

LATE ON THAT SAME AFTERNOON, THERE was a knock at the door of the papal chamber.

"Come in," said Joan quietly. For she had unbolted the door half an hour before.

The doorman announced that the deacon Nicholas craved audience, and that with him was that Queen Teutberga who had had audience with the pope the day preceding. Joan ordered that her secretary be sent for, and that the visitors be admitted.

Nicholas held the hangings wide for Teutberga to enter; and she had melting eyes for Joan and for Adrian, who stood silent beside her; but most for Nicholas, who was with her. And Joan looked once at Adrian, and Adrian at her: evidently she had sought a weaker vessel, and, for aught both knew, had found it.

"Your Highness," Deacon Nicholas began quietly, after that he had kissed the pontiff's foot, "this godly queen came to my chambers early this morning, with tales of dreadful things occurring in the kingdom of Lothair of Lorraine. Her secret mission to Rome is to crave the support of Your Highness, in making sure that her husband, that Prince Lothair, does not commit a mortal crime, and be damned forever for it."

"Is she a godly queen, with no mortal stain upon

her soul?" asked Joan quietly.

The deacon smiled happily. "She has confessed to me, holy father, and I have absolved her."

"As I absolved her last night of the same sin," said Adrian, "unless indeed her confession spoke of some sin indulged in after my midnight absolution of her."

Nicholas flushed a trifle nervously at this. "She is clearly doubly absolved, then, and doubly pure of soul. The sin that she seeks to save her husband from is the sin of divorce, and the more grievous sin of a double marriage. Have I your word to speak?" solicitously, to the pope.

Joan nodded, secretly amused at the quick conversion of the new legate.

"Second marriages, as all know, are of hell," began Nicholas unctuously. "If we permit this Prince Lothair to secure a divorce, and enter into such a marriage, we permit a Christian prince to damn his soul forever—which it is our sacred duty to prevent."

"Proceed," said Joan quietly.

"Even the Montanists and the Novatians, as Your Highness well knows, condemned second marriages utterly. Our church views such carnal couplings with the most complete abhorrence, though granting that men at times subside into such a slough. Did not Athenagoras name digamy, or a second marriage, as a decent adultery?"

"He did," Joan agreed solemnly.

"Did not the learned Clement of Alexandria describe the lapse from one marriage into many as fornication? St. Jerome pointed out that the first Adam had one wife;

that the second Adam, that is to say, Jesus Christ Our Lord, had no wife; and that those who approve of digamy offer to us a third Adam, who was twice married, whom they should follow."

Joan yawned, blissfully wearied with the day's doings. "These are well known to me, brother."

Nicholas nodded. "The learned Origen said, 'Christ may save a digamist, but he will surely never crown him.' And St. Gregory Nazianzen spoke shrewdly, 'If there are two Christs, there may be two husbands or two wives.' And consider—if we allow this Prince Lothair to embark upon a second marriage, which is at best a fault to be pardoned and indulged, this may whet his appetite for a third marriage, a fourth marriage, and so unending. Consider again the words of the saintly Gregory Nazianzen: 'A third marriage is iniquity; but he who exceeds this number is manifestly bestial'."

While he was speaking, the doors had opened, and Father Benedict of the order of St. Callixtus had entered. "This is an old story," he said savagely. "And if this is an evil in the lay, how much worse is it among the clergy! I have been urged, Your Highness, by divers voices, to enforce the canon against unchaste persons administering ecclesiastical rites. If I enforced this, there would be none left in holy orders but boys, too young to have yielded to the flesh!"

Joan smiled at his vehemence. "'Except ye become as a little child—'"

The eyes of Benedict widened. "Yet if I observe the church canon against bastards, there would be none whatever in all Christendom left to administer the rites, sav-

ing always Your Highness, and my humble self, and Cenfrith of Saxony, and perhaps these other twain here within this chamber," and he stared accusingly at Adrian and Nicholas.

Joan sought to turn him from his course tactfully. "We are here to consider the matter of Prince Lothair of Lorraine, in secret session—"

"We have had popes, in the dark ages now so luckily gone forever," Benedict, once launched, never ended until he had given outlet to his whole reservoir of eloquence, "who have been publicly charged and condemned for such sins of the flesh as adultery, and incest, and crimes against nature with men and beasts. Your predecessor, Holy Father, was forced to take action against an abbot-elect of England, who was found, upon testing, to have nineteen known bastards in one village in that land on the world's rim. We have deposed a bishop of Burgundy for having sixty-four proved illegitimate children; and an abbot of Spain, for maintaining one hundred and five concubines in public. We know that monks and nuns inhabit the same convents, often sleeping together in nakedness to test their chastity; and most often needing plenary indulgence after this same test. And I have private word, which I shall unfold to Your Highness in due season, of the legate of Your Highness sent to the eastern imperial court, who was surprised in the arms of a courtesan of the Stamboul docks, an hour after he had delivered a philippic against clerical marriage, incontinence, and unchastity. In God's name, must we geld the world, to turn it to God?"

Joan fanned his fire tolerantly, as she observed with

what ill grace Teutberga listened to these detours from her matter, and how she stamped her queenly little foot in her impatience, and chewed upon her finger nails as if she had not eaten for a se'nnight. "And yet, dear Father Benedict, there are before me now many petitions of the lay members of many parishes, asking that I order their heavenly fathers publicly to take concubines, that there may be some rest for the wives and sisters and daughters of these same petitioners."

"It is too true," said Benedict gravely. "It is knowledge of such matters that makes me hold Origen so high. But I did not come upon this well-worn matter, Your Highness. There is a woman without, who accuses me—"

"I am sure you can be accused of naught but holiness," said Joan flatteringly. "Meanwhile, let us listen to what more may be said upon the matter of this queen here with us."

Nicholas looked sourly at the interrupting Benedict. "I had finished my disquisition upon the evils of second marriages, sire. I ask Your Highness, in the name of this holy and pious queen, to save her husband from the sin of a second marriage, by privily conveying to him that the ban of the church will ensue upon such a godless step."

"Yet what if she has given such cause of divorce as the civil law allows, and the church does not frown upon? What if I commend the divorce, and order the queen to get her to a nunnery, and the king to stay unwed thereafter?" asked Joan smoothly.

There was a headshaking at this. But Teutberga broke in hotly, "So long as that hot bitch does not have

him, let him do as he wills. There is play in nunneries too."

Nicholas looked frightened. "She but means—"

"She has wit enough to make clear her meaning," said Joan without delay. "In any case, we will take no action, without word from our son Lothair. For no man is heard, without giving him a chance to speak; and no man is condemned, without giving him a chance to condemn his accuser; and a king or a prince least of all. I order our daughter to return to her husband, and bring this matter in due course before us. Besides," and Joan looked shrewdly at the woman, "have you given your husband male heir?"

"No, sire; God has not vouchsafed me—"

"Yet the laws of your land provide that princess and kings are entitled to have male heirs from their wives, else the kingdom at their death goes to no one, and grave disorder results. I counsel you to return to your husband, and beg God to grant such a miracle to you as he vouchsafed to aged Sarah, and many more listed in Holy Writ."

She looked at Nicholas, and he at her. And there was hot laughter in her eyes. "It may be that God, on this visit to his holy city, sire, will set such a miracle in motion, and that Lorraine will have a prince after all, to hold the reins of the land when my husband is food for worms."

"There are many miracles that take place in Rome," said Joan gravely, liking most to have boxed the ears of the shameless queen. "And God will no doubt grant more. But one thing more, before you go." And Joan

studied her face slowly, the more as she saw Adrian watching it with a feeling that was not all distaste. "We have not spoken of this matter of your brother, the deacon Hubert."

Nicholas raised astonished eyes. "But that was given to me under the seal of the confessional, Holy Father."

"It was not so given to me," said Joan briefly. "I have known of these doings almost as soon as they commenced. Adultery may be a venial sin; but incest is a mortal sin."

"As I have always taught," said Benedict piously. "And, for this, I am charged—"

"Of that in a moment," said Joan quietly. "And the prostitution of nuns for illicit commerce, for hire, is surely a mortal sin."

Benedict, who had walked over to the window, whirled around with startled suddenness. "That is another matter that I came to lay before Your Highness," he said savagely. "There is a certain father over a church in Brittany who has announced, in a sermon, that he will absolve all sins, for certain gifts to his church." He folded his arms, and faced Joan savagely.

"To wit?" asked the pope, wrinkling her brows.

"The list is long," said Benedict morosely, "and, to my way of thinking, it is all of Satan, and none of God. Item, if an ecclesiastic commits the sin of the flesh, whether with nuns, his cousins, nieces, goddaughters, or any other woman, he shall be absolved for a payment of twelve pence. If he add to this offense the sin of bestiality, he shall add twenty pence to his gift. If he have not offended with women, but only with men or

beasts, he shall give in all only eighteen pence to the church."

"Infamy!" said Adrian severely.

"His church will grow rich, at this rate," mused Joan.

"I have but commenced," Benedict continued. "Item, if a priest have deflowered a virgin, he shall add one penny to his gift. Item, if a nun abandon herself to several men, simultaneously or in succession, and desire preferment in her nunnery, she shall pay sixteen pence. Item, for a sin of lust committed by a layman, three pence. Item, if a woman living in adultery desire to continue this state, she shall pay to the priest fourteen pence; and a husband living in adultery, the same. If to this be added incest with their children, they shall add one penny."

"But this is all evil," said Joan soberly.

"There is much more. Item, for murder of one's child, four pence; for murder of one's parents, the same. Item, if a woman destroy a child as yet unborn in her womb, and the father aid in the crime, they shall each pay five pence. If one procure the abortion of a child of which he is not the father, he shall pay two pence less. Item, if one desire absolution for every accidental murder he shall ever commit, he must pay twenty one pence. Item, if a eunuch desire sacred orders, he shall pay to the church fifty pence. Item—"

"Enough, and more than enough, of this godless sale of God's grace! Give me but the name of the priest—"

Benedict raised a quiet hand. "He has even now proposed to his bishop to follow the same course; and

it was from the bishop I received word of this, without name of the priest, asking me for Your Highness's word upon the project, which he deems one to reflect glory on God, and to afford great wealth to the church." He paused cynically, arms again crossed over his breast.

But Joan was stormy now. "And so they would sell God's mercy, at so many pence the pardon! Is it not enough to barter the bones of the very saints, the hair from the head and the private parts of the Virgin Mother and the holy apostles, and even to display the foreskin of Our Lord himself for a price, but that they must even barter the pardons of the Almighty? What will our faith come to, if we turn our churches into stores such as sell dried beans and cloves of garlic?"

But Nicholas took a more practical view of the matter. "After all, the church of God can not prevail, unless it have wealth; and it may be worth commending when any of the clergy devises a method to augment his revenues, until the church holds the wealth of Christendom."

"On that hour, I cease to head God's church," said Joan, almost wildly. "For sin is of the soul, and money is of the body."

"Yet the church is of the soul, and its wealth is of the soul too," said Nicholas shrewdly.

Joan's eyes were a very tempest. "'Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat'," she quoted violently. "And wealth, you say, is of the soul, when it appertain to God's church?"

"Once it is provided," said Nicholas severely, "it is of the soul."

"My soul differs from that soul, then," said Joan.

"And mine," said Adrian fervently.

"And mine," said rugged old Benedict harshly.

And then the curtains were parted, and a brother from Monte Cassino came in, his face terror-filled, his hands trembling. "I have ridden hard all the way, sire," he said, falling on his knees to kiss the pope's foot. "There is dreadful news from our superior. Scarce six hours ago, there was a dreadful perturbation of the earth in the region around our monastery. The face of the earth groaned and shook, the walls shook, and several pentbuildings of the monastery were hurled down to the ground. Our superior begs Your Grace to offer prayers at once for the faithful throughout Christendom; for this surely portends that some vast evil is about to befall our church!"

Joan summoned the doorman to her, by a swift wafture of her hand' "Brother Agathon, is there word of this in Rome?"

He too stared with troubled eyes. "There are many without that seek to report to Your Highness some small quivering and shaking of the earth; but I did not deem it fit to interrupt Your Highness, till this messenger came."

Nicholas crossed himself. "Surely this is a warning to Your Grace of the evil that this Prince Lothair seeks to do, to the shame of all Christendom and the loss of his eternal soul!"

And Teutberga crossed herself as well, her eyes

lingering fondly on the body of Nicholas.

One by one they crossed themselves. "We shall look into this matter further," said Joan, face troubled. And then, to Benedict, "you spoke of a matter of some woman, who accused you of somewhat or other. Bid her enter. And you," to Teutberga, severely, "stay you beside us, that you may see God's justice administered.

Teutberga and Nicholas looked swiftly at each other. It was the queen who spoke. "I did have other matters to attend to—"

"They wait," said Joan firmly, "on God's affairs. Ah! So this is your accuser," as a peasant woman was led into the chamber.

CHAPTER XXV

A Descent Into Hell

"YOUR NAME?" JOAN ASKED THE PEASANT woman kindly.

She turned frightened eyes on the pope, flung herself abject to kiss the sacred foot, and bent stooping before the papal chair. "She is dead, sire—my daughter is dead!"

"Your name?" the secretary prompted, severely.

She turned frightened eyes in this direction now. "I am but a flower woman of the market place, holy father. My name is but Maria the flower-woman. But my daughter is dead!" And, eyes hid in her copious apron, she rocked to and fro wordlessly in her grief.

"How did she die?" asked Joan, heart stirred to sympathy.

"He killed her," said the old mother, with terrible quietness, pointing an earth-stained bony finger at Benedict.

"He killed her?" in unbelief.

"She killed herself," said Benedict, dispassionately, "out of a guilty conscience. It was all reported to me. She threw herself over the piers of the Pons Probi, and at God's will died in the waters of the Tiber."

"Why did she do this deed?" Joan, mind still troubled, persisted.

"He made her," sobbed the old mother. "He taught her such dreadful things of hell, that just before her confirmation she sought death, rather than face life."

"The case was deplorable," said Benedict simply, "but necessary, as a lesson to others. This bright little girl was overly nervous; she dreamed much, and cried out in her sleep at the visions sent by the devil to plague her. And so I taught her of hell, as I was required to do."

"But you made the poor child mad," the tearful old mother insisted. "Night after night she woke shrieking from her sleep—"

Benedict shook a stern head, and faced Joan. "I leave it to Your Grace to decide," he said soberly. "I drew for her mind merely a picture of the redhot dungeons of hell, that she might shun evil, and seek good. I pictured her a girl of her own age—ten it was, was it not, good mother?"

"Nine—she was nine last Candlemas," the other sobbed.

"—A girl of nine, then. I pictured this girl of nine standing with bare feet on the redhot floor of a dungeon of hell. I pictured the girl saying," and he was off in the words of his teaching now, eyes ecstatic, "'I have been standing on this redhot floor for years. Day and night my only standing-place has been this redhot floor. Look at my burnt and bleeding feet. Oh dear God of mercy, let me go off this burning floor for one only moment, only for one single short moment!' But God in his infinite mercy shook his head. I went on, Your Grace, to the picturing of the other dungeons, the second, the third, the fourth—the boiling kettle. In the midst of the kettle I pictured a burning boy. His eyes were

burning like two burning coals. Two long flames came out of his ears, and two more out of his nostrils. When he oped his mouth, blazing fire rolled out. And listen! There is a sound like a kettle boiling. It is the sound of the blood boiling in the scalded veins of the boy. The brain was boiling and bubbling in the little head, the marrow boiling and bubbling in his bones. Infinite heat, eternal torture, torment, agony. And then the fifth dungeon, the redhot oven. In this redhot oven was a little child. I made the little girl hear the screams of this little child—I made her see how it turned and twisted about in the fire, beating its head against the roof of the burning oven, stamping its burning little feet on the burning floor. I told her, all the while, that God had been very good to this child. For no doubt God saw that it would grow worse and worse, as it grew older, and would never repent; and so would have to be punished the more eternally in hell. And so in his mercy God called this little child out of life in its early childhood, and in his mercy gave it no worse fate than the burning oven. It was this little child, I think, that this woman's daughter would not get out of her mind."

The woman raised a hideous torn face at him. "Murderer! Murderer! You killed her—"

But Joan stopped the woman sternly. "Yet let us hear all."

Benedict nodded gratefully. "I taught her God's own truth, as Your Grace well knows. —How all without the church, and many within it, are doomed to an eternity of agony in a real and undying fire. Holy Father," persuasively, "I taught her all the lovely legends of the

church about hell. I told her of St. Macarius, who, walking through the desert, saw a skull upon the ground. He struck it with his staff, and it began to speak. It told him that it was the skull of a pagan priest, who lived long before Christ came to save mankind, and had hence been doomed to hell forever. Heaven was high above earth, the skull said; but the flames of hell leapt higher, to embrace the souls plunged into it. The souls of the damned were pressed together back to back; and this skull made but one request, that it might be turned face to face with its brother, which would grant him some faint consolation in the eternity of fiery agony still before him."

"But all this is well known!" Adrian wondered aloud.

Joan said nothing.

"We know how many have been carried in a trance into hell, and have returned to tell of its horrors," piously Benedict continued. "We know well that volcanoes are the portals of hell, and that this shaking and tremor of the earth's face, this day reported from Monte Cassino, is but an evidence that the day of judgment is at hand, when God's sheep will be lifted to graze forever on green pastures, and God's goats will be plunged forever in blackly burning brimstone! Oh, Your Grace, I omitted no lesson in my teaching of this little girl; for she listened to all wide-eyed, missing nothing, and I saw a chance to bring a very saintly soul to God. I told her how the unceasing stir within Vesuvius and the craters of Sicily marked the impending ruin of this worthless world, and the coming of God's kingdom.

I told her the vision of the sainted monk—"

All crossed themselves piously.

"—Who visited hell in person, seeing the devil bound by redhot chains, on a burning gridiron in the center of hell. The screams of his never-ending agony made the rafters of hell to quiver back his screams; but his hands were free, and with these he seized the lost souls God tossed to him, to crush them like grapes against his teeth, and then draw them by his breath down into the fiery cavern of his throat. I omitted no detail of the picture, so assiduous was I to save her soul. I depicted the demons with hooks of redhot iron, who plunged souls alternately into eternal fire and eternal ice. I brought to life before her pious young eyes the lost souls hung up by their tongues in torment, the ones eternally sawn asunder, the ones gnawed by undying serpents, the others beaten together on an anvil and welded into a single glowing mass, the ones boiled and then strained through a cloth, the ones mated forever to demons whose limbs were coiling limbs of flame. I made the very fires of hell real to her—with sulphur and brimstone added to increase the heat and give that unbearable stench which adds torment to the damned; and I proved to her, by the words of the fathers, that these flames and these fires alone gave forth no light, but added the horror of darkness to the horror of unending pain. I gave her little hand my hand to hold, as if my hand had been the hand of the demon, and made her walk in her fancy with me across the narrow bridge that spans the abyss to hell, from which the souls of the sinners were plunged into the eternal burning dark below— There was naught that I omitted."

"This was all well," said Nicholas severely.

"I even told her of the robin redbreast, whose mission is to take single drops in its beak to unbaptized infants in hell; and whose hell-crimsoned breast shows how its breast has been singed, in piercing the flames to perform this sacred office. I pointed out to her the sun as it fell, glowing with that red that came over its face as it looked down into the hell that awaited all but God's saints. Your Grace," plausibly, persuasively, "I omitted no lesson that might lead the young mind to piety and God. And yet, so unresponsive she was to my teaching, so ungrateful for my labors in her behalf, that she cast herself into Tiber waters, and now her thankless mother accuses me of what the child herself, in her wickedness, did!"

And Joan drew in her breath sharply. "We know that the earth is filled with the mercy of God. Sometimes I wonder. . . . But is this all that the learned father did?" severely, to the mother.

"Your Highness, this drove my poor little daughter to her death! Night after night she would wake shrieking on her bed, screaming that the demons were clenching her in redhot pincers, and dipping her body into the flames of hell! Night after night—"

"If there was no more than this," she said sorrowfully, "there is naught done by this father, but what God would have done. So we are taught. So we are taught. . . . God is not kind to sinners, that they may serve as a lesson to his saints."

"But she was no sinner—a wee little brown-haired girl, hardly nine yet—"

"She threw herself into the Tiber," said Joan sadly. "We will pray for her soul. If a gift is made to your priest, he will say masses for the repose of her soul in purgatory, and in the hope that it may ascend into heaven. Though, in a case of self-destruction. . . ."

"When they brought her little drowned body in to my house, I thought I should go mad with grief," the mother mourned on. "You have never had a daughter, Your Grace—"

"I will myself say a prayer to God's mercy for her," said Joan slowly. "Yet, good woman, if indeed she has earned this hell she was instructed in so thoroughly, let this lead you toward God. For the sight of the endless agony of the damned does not awake grieving in the heart of the blessed, as is well known. Their minds will be sated with joy as they gaze on the unspeakable anguish of the wicked, and they will return joyful thanks to God for their own freedom."

Benedict faced the mother sternly. "When you see the body of your own daughter tortured in the flames of hell, you will lift your voice in sweet joy to God's throne—"

The mother writhed her body up from the floor, her clawlike clenched hands lifted as if to gouge out the eyes of the holy priest. "Your God is a demon, and no God! Your God—"

But Joan, in her sudden wrath, made the sign of the cross above the woman. "In the name of God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, I exorcise the demon that has possessed this woman! Demon, come forth!"

Frightened, abashed, the woman sank again to the ground.

And Joan spoke more quietly. "Woman, you could not say what you have said, unless you have wandered in evil ways and vain imaginings. If demons have entered your soul to possess it, know that the hosts of the angels hover around your head, to preserve your soul; and the hosts of the haloed saints, to preserve it. The saints stand ready to speak in your behalf in God's ever waiting ear."

"I know no saints," she muttered, "but my daughter, she was a saint."

Joan frowned ominously. "There is no church, no monastery, no abbey, no nunnery, not sacred to some saint. Give what you can to them. The more you give, the more the saint listens to your prayers, the more he pleads with God for your soul's salvation. There was an evil man," said Joan, "who had done some good. As the angels were weighing the good and the evil deeds of this man, and the evil was weighing down in the scales, which would have damned the man to hell, a priest of holy St. Lawrence threw on the side of the good deeds on the scales a heavy chalice of gold, which the man had devoted to the altar of the saint. At once, the good deeds outweighed the evil deeds, and the soul was saved for God!"

Adrian nodded. "We know that Dagobert, king of the Franks, was snatched from the very arms of the demons of hell, by the prayers of the saints Denis and Maurice and Martin, for gifts he had made to their chapels."

"We know," said Benedict severely, "that the mighty Charlemagne was saved from the fires of hell, because the monasteries and sacred buildings he had built outweighed his evil deeds."

"All these things are so," said Joan quietly. "And now, good woman, depart from us, and heed well all we have said."

"My daughter—" she began, hopelessly.

And Joan's face grew hard. "There is no room in God's mercy for the one who kills himself, but in the case of virgins who slew themselves to escape pagan ravishment. Your daughter is damned forever. Let your care rather be to make yourself fit for eternal bliss, lest you yourself find yourself plunged forever into eternal torment!"

And, with this, the woman was led forth.

In came the doorman, followed by several clerical messengers, their very robes showing evidence of the hard way they had ridden or run to the papal palace.

"Your Grace," the first one fell on his knees to say, "I come from Ostia. There has been such a quaking of the earth there, as never happed in the memory of man! Houses were overthrown, the spire of a church toppled, a woman and her nursing babe were killed!"

The second, the third of them, from sections to the north of the city, had a like story to tell.

Benedict smiled grimly. "This must show God's displeasure with this benighted mother who has just left us, who brought a groundless charge against one of His servants."

"But I hold," said Nicholas savagely, "that it is a

warning to the Holy Father to yield to the plea of this godly queen, and make sure that her husband commit no mortal sin against God's grace!"

"Yet now, if we have leave to go—" Familiarly Queen Teutberga twined her arm within the arm of the deacon Nicholas, and sought to lead him forth.

"Queen Teutberga," said Joan slowly, "I wished you to hear this learned discourse upon hell, that it might aid your own heart as to your own course of life. You have heard. May you profit by all. When proper report of this matter you speak of comes before us, we will pass upon it. For this nonce, go, and sin no more."

She drew herself up sharply, and then melted into a glance of wistful lure at the pontiff. And she and Nicholas went forth.

Quietly Joan dismissed her secretary, and Benedict, and Adrian. "But you, father," she said to Adrian, "return to me after dinner. There are matters we must mull over, you and I."

CHAPTER XXVI

A Plague of Grasshoppers

THERE WERE MANY THINGS THAT JOAN and her lover Adrian had to talk over, during the days and nights that followed. She had been May-soft in her love for Cenwulf, at first; and this had warmed at last to a woman's love, like June sunshine. But now for years she had put this from her; and she clung to Adrian, each time, as if this would be the last time they would be together; and he, for his part, out of his own long starvation, clung as wildly.

Yet there were hours when doubts and qualms came to him. "It can not be, Joan my one love," he would say to her, in sadness, "that what has happened to you has been of God. For we know that God says—" And so he would be off, disputing skilfully with her; for his own wit was only a trifle less than her own.

At the first, she would argue down each scruple that he held, and win at the end. But it grew so that her hunger and thirst for him would not let her delay until the last ergo had been ended; and then she would be no more pope, no more doctor, but woman only; and a flood of tears, softly sprinkled on his shoulders, would drench his arguments so wholly, that he would perforce yield to her swift importunity.

And stlil news filtered in, of earthquakes that shook

cities in Italy, and cities in Burgundy; of a tremor in the valley of the Rhine and a trembling in the land of the Saxons and the Friesians; of perturbations of solid earth far to the east, and in England on the western rim of the square earth. All Christendom wondered what these things portended; and it was not until news came to Joan from the east that she was able to say, with some finality, what evil so stirred the heart of God, that his solid earth rocked like a sea shaken of monsters.

It was the evil deeds of Michael, emperor of the east, that were to blame for God's displeasure, no doubt of it. This Michael was now in his eighteenth year, and emperor; and he put by the wise counsels of his mother, Theodora, and took the reins of government into his own hand. This Christian emperor of the eastern empire first sent his mother into private life, to mourn over the ingratitude, the evil ways, and the inevitable ultimate ruin of her son. And then, freed of this sole restraint, the young Michael lived what had been his longing so long.

Away with gravity, away with wisdom! Welcome vice and folly, welcome lust and wine-ribald laughter.... Was there money in the treasury, shrewdly heaped up by Theodora's wise hoarding? Here were a horde of sycophants, vile men who rolled awed eyes at the precocious passions of the young ruler, and schooled him ever and ever in lower depths of lust's practices.

The emperor put on the blue livery: let the green, the red, the white, go to his shameless favorites: while he himself made as his first ambition to excel in the chariot races of the hippodrome. He was about to commence a race, his restive steeds snorting and pawing as

he reined them in, when a messenger came with news of a barbarian invasion of one of his frontiers. "Clap your mouth to, and forget your message!" Michael thundered. "This race is the sport of the gods, and the gods brook no inteference with their sports." And so he raced on to a victory, tactfully granted him by the other charioteers; and the barbarians surged ever closer to the capital.

There had been beacons spread from Tarsus to Constantine's city, to give word of barbarian attack. Well, such matters diverted his imperial highness from his strivings in the hippodrome or on the perfumed couch: let the beacons be snuffed, for the last time, that they might bar no more his whole absorption in his pleasures. The one sure way to Michael's heart was to be a master of the reins: to such, he gave his confidence and esteem, his ample treasures, the honor of his company at their feasts, the honor of presenting their children at the baptismal font.

And the wine flowed, and the women were disrobed, and hot lust ruled in the imperial palaces.

When some of the more godly of his prelates sought to curb his restive will by the bit of God's frown, he pondered a day and a night on how to snuff this, as he had snuffed the ancient beacons: and he found the way. A childish boast, out of his love for the fool Zyzymon, whose antics delighted him. . . .

"Let the fool be the patriarch, in God's name!" he hiccuped drunkenly. "Let him have twelve metropolitans, among them I myself; let the altar be used for practical purposes, if nature speaks, and the sacred ves-

sels of the altar comfort the body of man, as well as his soul. God's holy communion? Come, Zyzymon, I myself will aid you to give it. And surely wine and unleavened bread are not as holy as vinegar and mustard, which I decree hereafter for our eucharist!"

The real patriarch held his place still; but, on days of the sacred processions, the drunken emperor and his drunken buffoon of a patriarch, with the rest of the drunken train, would ride on asses straight into the holy procession. Then the emperor, and the buffoon, and the rest of the favorites, would shout filthy ribaldries at the Christian procession, and thumb their noses and make more ribald gesticulations at them, until the Christan marchers could hardly keep from laughing at this parody of God's service.

His crowns, as victor in the hippodrome, Michael received from the statue of the Virgin Mother; and, to pay back Constantine the Image-breaker for his activities, the imperial tomb was violated, and the imperial bones publicly burnt.

Word of all this came to Joan and the rest of her family in Italy, and was spread among the people, and among the people and princes of the other Western lands. Of a surety, it was this flouting of God's ordinances that set the good God to grumbing in these earthquakes, and promised an especial dungeon in hell for the eastern heretic!

Yet Joan and her lover Adrian still kept at their pleasant pastime; and often, at the end of a night of such commerce, Joan would be called upon to uproot some nest of debauchery, as of a convent where the monks

and nuns followed the lusts of the flesh instead of the will of the spirit; or of a prelate who flaunted too uxoriously his liking for the fleshpots of his diocese.

And now came word of more marvels, over the harassed earth. In the city of Bressenu, or Bresnau, came such a rain of blood as bathed the whole city in crimson gore, out of the bleeding breasts of the clouds; and all Christendom marvelled at this. And now came word of clouds of monstrous grasshoppers drifting savagely over France, and devouring all green life beneath them: vile worms, with six vast wings and six vast legs. All Christendom fell on its knees to avert this plague, when word of it was spread abroad. And a wind came from God, and drove them to sea between Havre and Calais. But their drowned bodies, once they fell into the sea, were driven to the shores both of France and England, and set up such a stench and such a sickness, that most of the people dwelling along these shores were infected with the sickness, and indeed died of it.

There were many learned doctors who held that these grasshoppers were indeed demons or imps of the evil one, sent to plague France for her evil ways. But a large party, Joan among them, likened this plague to the plague which God himself had sent into ancient Egypt, in the time of Moses, to warn the forces of the Pharaoh to let go the chosen of God who were captive there. And they spoke learnedly of the need of releasing all godly persons confined for any cause whatsoever throughout the length and breadth of Christendom; and many indeed were released, but not all, and of those released many had to be encelled soon thereafter, for the

murder and rapine they spread broadcast throughout the lands nearby.

But, in private with Adrian, Joan admitted how little she knew of God's will in this regard. "I am a tupped ewe if I understand it aright," she said sadly. "If God had only sent this plague over the empire of the east, all would be clear. Or over the kingdom of young Lothair, where, as report has it, that lively queen Teutberga and her brother Hubert the deacon do all that they can to tempt the mercy of God. Indeed, this plague was not far from Lothair's seat; it may be that that is the answer. But all is dark, Adrian my dear, and naught clear."

He comforted her as best he could, and slowly, after the dead were buried, men forgot this.

And now came the festival of Christ's birth again. And Joan had been pope two years now, and she celebrated this festival in seemly fashion, and after retired with Adrian to her own chambers. And all marvelled that two such godly Christians were so close, the one the pope, the other his chief adviser. There was no problem, howsoever abstruse, that their learning together could not solve; and ever and again they had to repair to each other's company, to take their problems on their knees to God, and let Him give them wisdom. The odor of this sanctity in St. Peter's spread throughout Christendom, and it was a different odor from the odor from Constantinople, where all things were ordered so contrary to the will of God.

After the festival of Christ's birth, came such a winter as Italy had never known. The Adriatic sea was

entirely frozen over, and the merchants on either side of it bore their merchandise across it in wagons, instead of ships. Yet it was warm in the chambers of the pope, and Joan and Adrian, warm in each other's arms, knew small concern that the eternal seaway had become like unto the seaways to the north, which were solid ice from year's beginning to year's end.

And marvels did not cease. A concourse of monks came from Spain, to report a further miracle that had been noted there. Not since the discovery of the body of St. James the Apostle in Santiago de Compostela had there been such a happening in Spain as this. Christian zeal, these monks reported, had almost ceased, since the voluntary martyrs of Cordova had ceased to plague the reluctant cadis to behead them, by reviling the prophet of Mecca.

And now it was all awake again, due to the evil deed of a monk, who had dug into the grave of St. Vincent, one of the two holiest graves in Spain. This monk had ravished the body from the tomb, intending to sell it, bit by bit, to Christians, since it was well known that there were no miracles it could not perform. For it was this Vincent who had stood firm in Valencia before the Roman governor; who had been visited in his cell by angels, the sight whereof converted the Roman warders into Christians forthwith. After he had gently died, the Roman governor had exposed his body to wild beasts, that they might devour it; but a raven had been sent by God, who had miraculously shielded it. The body was then cast into the sea, but the sea itself vomited it upon the shore, so holy was it; and it was buried by a

pious woman outside Valencia.

Now came the new miracle. The body of the saint came alive again, in the baggage of the blasphemous monk, and, long dead as it was, trudged all the way to the church at Valencia, and stood upon the steps of the church, and thundered with a loud voice for admittance. This marvel was attested by the priests and deacons of the church, as well as by the presiding bishop of Valencia. And Joan, marvelling, gave her hand to attest this miracle: but there were many who queried what it portended, and Joan was troubled to answer them. In the end, she held with the major opinion, that it foretold the soon coming of the day of judgment, when all the holy dead would walk anew, and be lifted to God's kingdom, and the evil dead would be cast into the eternal tortures of the brimstone lake and divers other torments long prepared for their reception.

The first icy month went by, and, to her dismay, Joan noted that her flowers did not come. It was so again, when another chill month had passed. Now there was no doubt of it in her mind that, as was the way of woman, she was great with child. And her heart sagged low with very fear; for how could she hide this from the sight of all?

As yet, her body showed nothing, and her ample robes hid all, and would hide more indeed than her body yet showed. Nor did she tell Adrian of what troubled her, for this was no matter for her to share with any but God, she held. She prayed constantly for guidance; but no guidance came.

A woman was condemned for performing abortions

upon certain nuns; and, instead of condemning her in public, Joan ordered that the woman be brought privily before her. She allowed, beside, only the advocate for the woman, and told this advocate to present her case as well as might be.

The lawyer went sauvely into his argument. It was held among all the classic peoples, he said, that the slaughter of a child as yet unborn was no crime. Aristotle himself had commended the practice, when the populace had reached a certain limit. Greece did not condemn it nor the Roman republic, nor the empire, until in its late and dying moments.

"Those were the moments when Christianity had come in," Joan corrected.

"Yet the empire then was dying, to be revived only by the great Charlemagne. It was performed out of licentiousness; it was performed to escape the rigors of poverty; it was performed, Holy Father, even out of vanity, when woman did not seek to be disfigured by childbirth. While it was no doubt held culpable by Ovid and Seneca, Favorinus and Plutarch and Juvenal, they held it no more culpable than we hold voiding one's wind at banquets—to be blamed, but not to be punished."

"Yet our church," Joan said slowly "from the first has held it no better than infanticide. The Council of Ancyra barred the mother guilty of this from the sacrament of the eucharist until the very hour of her death."

"Yet, later, Your Grace, this was lessened to a penitence of ten years; and later still, to a penitence of seven. The church wisely has seen that the offense is not so great as, in its ignorant youth, it held it."

"Yet those were the days of the holy fathers of the church," said Joan softly, "and it is meet that we regard their words with high attention. For the soul unbaptized is condemned to hell; and how can one baptize a babe still unborn? We know of that vile man who slew a pregnant woman, in order that he might behold the condition of the unborn child in the mother's womb; and, bitten by remorse, he fled to the desert, to expiate his double murder in a lifetime of penance and prayer. Then the voice of God told him that he had been forgiven the murder of the woman; but he died not yet sure in his mind that he could ever secure forgiveness for slaying the unborn child." She squirmed unhappily, as these things came into her mind.

The lawyer shook his head. "The man did not know he was condemned forever for this. The mercy of God is wide, Holy Father."

"And his judgment harsh, against those who sin against his holy will. I will regard the case. You may go, and leave me to question this woman privily."

Joan questioned the woman carefully as to how she went about procuring an abortion, and all connected with it. The midwife, indeed, was more of an advocate for herself than the lawyer had been. For he had confined himself to quoting ancient precedents; and she threw herself on the mercy of the pope, after she had given the details of her procedure. "For these were nuns, Holy Father, young nuns. They had not willed to have children, or, indeed, to know men carnally. But Your Highness knows what priests are; is there man or woman in the world today who does not know of their

importunities? And so they had yielded, and they were like to have bastards, and there is growing up a strange distaste for bastards among certain Christians, Holy Father—I have even heard Your Grace named among them. And so they came to me, weeping with their troubles. Was I to leave them to be the jest of their mates, and the prey of men—and to bring forth bastards to stain their names and their savor of chastity?"

"But, to slay an immortal soul—" Joan, having satisfied her mind as to the ways of abortions, could return to her judgment now.

"Holy Father," said the midwife soberly, "if you've seen as many foetuses as I have, you would not talk about immortal souls. In the first few months, they are no more than egg yolk midway to hatching. They have no more immortal souls—"

But Joan made the sign of the cross and sent the woman out to her condemnation. Then, alone with her own problem, she wrestled long with the devil in this regard. Yet, no matter what she did, she would not jeopardize her own immortal soul, nor the soul of the young life stirring within her.

And so, with a heavy heart, she went to her evening meal, and then privily let in Adrian. But there was no talk between them of this thing; for Joan had not shared it with him, as yet.

CHAPTER XXVII

In Full Consistory

JOAN SET OUT TO FIND, FROM MORE RECONdite authorities than any she had yet mastered, all that could be known of this strange condition that had come upon her. Not that it was a rare state: did not Uranus, the sky, as taught by them of old, forever cover Gea, the earth, as a man covers a woman; and did not all life on earth, all the trees and the shrubs, and the herbs and even the grass of the field, come from this perpetual embrace? Yet it was her own state that concerned her; and she set to work in the library of the papal palace, to see what the wisdom of old had said as to this state.

In the end, she rose from her study unsatisfied. A little she had learned, but not what she would know. Here was the learned Soranus, who showed that the womb of woman did not hold two harbors of Venus, the one on the right being warm, so that seed which lodged there became male children; the one on the left being chill and damp, so that the seed which lodged there became female children; but that, instead, the womb was one. Moschion held this too, but held further that women who had been trained as singers knew no flowers: could it be that this accounted for her state?

Or was it possible that Appolonius was right, and that godly women were often plagued with demons, who

gave them a false and bloated illusion of being great with child, when there was no child within them? This were a comfort, were it so. . . . Galen was learned; but what good to her to learn from him that women and men were alike, but that her chiller nature bent her members of love inward, where his were outward; and that seed from the right grew men, and from the left women?

Then followed a multitude of writers, who taught her much quaint knowledge, but little to answer her present need. As that beavers, rabbits and gazelles were spawned by impurities in still water that was foul. . . . As that the breasts of a virgin, if lashed with nettles, would give milk. . . . As that crows conceive through their eyes, that great fish give birth through their mouths, and that all vermin are engendered and born out of dirt and filth. . . . As that the seed of a man, if placed in heating horse dung, would bear a child, as a fowl's egg hatched.

Yet, in all this, little learning that would aid her. What did it avail her to read that a boy in Saxonia had lost a tooth, and in its place had grown a tooth of solid gold? That a veritable sea-monster had been caught off the coasts of the Low Countries, with the head and arms and breasts of a woman, and the body of a fish, who was baptized and married and gave birth to children with the head of a fish and the nether extremities of a man or a woman? That oak trees, upon being sprinkled with holy water, bore branches of grapes, which made an excellent sparkling wine; and that an evil magician had veritably made figs grow out of thistles?

She was more interested in an attested fact from Spain, that a woman who had been married for nineteen years found herself overnight altered to a male, so that the marriage had been dissolved, and the woman as man had married a woman and had children by her. Joan had heard before of such miracles: but what relic or what conjuration brought them forth the writings did not state, so that they in no wise aided her. She did not pause over such miracles as the transportation, by angels, of the house in which the annunciation was made to the Mother of God to Italy; or of saints long dead rising from their graves, at the invocation of a pope that he needed some among them to be patron saints of newly converted lands. These things were true, as all knew; but they could not salve her need.

Feverishly she came at last upon those writings which dealt with the bearing of children. Here was the attested story of a woman in the Rhine country who had given birth to fifteen living children at one time, all of whom remained alive. Here was the story of the woman who sought alms of a princess, the poor woman bearing at the time twins in her arms. The princess, who knew little, rebuked the woman as a harlot, saying all knew it was impossible that two children could be born at the same time from one man. Whereupon the poor woman prayed God to establish her innocence, and to give to the princess as many children at a birth as there were days in the year. And of a verity the princess grew big, and at the appointed time gave birth to one hundred and eighty two boys, and one hundred and eighty two girls, and one child that was both at once,

each being the size of a little chick, all of which were at once baptized by a holy abbot, the boys all in the name of John, the girls all in the name of Mary, and the last child as John Mary, though one writer attested its name was Mary John; yet God took the mother and all the children shortly after the baptism, as all knew.

Yet nowhere could she learn aught clearly of how the child would be born to her, or how she could tell if it would be one or many, or male or female. She read more and more deeply, in her search, leaving matters of moment to be administered by Adrian, with the assistance of Benedict and Nicholas and others of her family. Now here were the quaint writers who showed God's loving care in having all races worship the cross of his son, albeit in their blindness they made this cross like to a man's arrow with its double quivers, and at the end of the arrow the holy oval of the woman. There was no land that did not hold sacred monuments of the pagans to man's arrow, most like to a church spire. And here were quaint drawings of strange forgotten crosses, and of the trinity in the form of the arrow and the double quivers, and still quainter forms. And here were gravings of mandrake roots, like to men and women, and stranger roots like to man's arrow or its targe. Here, at last, were charms to be used against conception, most noted among these being the abracadabra, in the form of the Mount of Venus, which was a sure and potent charm. But it was too late for her to avail herself of that now, or of other charms which she might have used in time.

For a time she pondered over the lore of all lands

as to virgin birth. Here were stories of maidens who became great with child after eating of a certain plant; or after swallowing a pebble; or by the touch of a moonbeam or a flash of lightning; or by some god in the form of a swan, a bull, a shower of gold; or by bathing in water sacred to a god, or walking under an arch devoted to a god, or listening to the words of a god, as the Virgin Mother herself had conceived. Could she not, as supreme pontiff, announce a vision that a child would be born to her, a virgin—and that by a miracle, she, a man, had been altered to a virgin woman, to bear this child? That might be done. . . . For a time she considered consulting Adrian upon this plan.

And then she hung her head discouraged. In the dark ages preceding, this miracle might have been accepted. But this was the modern age, an age where learning spread like purslane in a field, and this miracle would no doubt yield a ranker crop of doubts and misgivings than its supporters could uproot. And she smiled sadly to herself: it would be no compliment to Adrian to give vent to this miracle, in any case.

And suddenly, the method came to her. How blind of her, not to see the way all through! Nuns gave birth to children, abbesses even, and the whole was smoored forever in unknowingness, by having the whole matter done in secrecy. Her ample robes had hid that she was a woman thus long. They would hide her, until the very moment of delivery. If, perchance, the pope grew a little stout, none would lay this to aught but good food and much of it: she could count on it that no one would devise a rumor that the holy father, a man, was

great with child. She could go into retreat, and come forth purged of the fruit of much loving, and none the wiser. This, then, was the way, the one way, to hold her blameless in men's eyes.

She emerged from her absorbing studies of this mind: and there was a smile on her face, mirroring the content in her soul, that was like heady wine to those she encountered. She threw herself into the business before her, and wiped out in a day what it had taken more than a week to gather—and all done shrewdly and with more vigor than she had been wont to act for several weeks now. All of her family rejoiced at this kindly recovery, and word of it spread throughout Rome.

She assembled her consistory of cardinals, all eighteen of them, for a public meeting, at which divers matters were brought forward and settled with much satisfaction; and then held the cardinals over for a secret consistory, to treat of a troubling matter that came to her from the empire. For word had come from Aix that the emperor Lothair had grown ill at last, what with the creeping on of age and the bickering of his sons, and was like to die; and he, and his co-emperor Louis, and the two sons Lothair and Charles, all wrote to the Holy Father for advice in this trying moment.

One by one the cardinals spoke what was in their minds; and, at the end, Joan announced her decision. She would herself send such a missive to old Lothair, as he could not help but heed her. With the aid of Adrian and Nicholas, she set herself to composing such a letter as the emperor could not refuse. In the end, he wrote her that he was about to follow all of her direc-

tions, entering the abbey of Prum, as she had urged him to do; dividing his lands among his three sons; and praising her goodness in certain exemptions she granted to the abbey, to hold force for a hundred years.

And so spring altered to summer, and carefully she laid her plans to let the child be born in the usual way, and then secretly conveyed away to some godly couple who would raise it, believing it was the child of a pious nun, who would grow up and do them much credit—since the story Joan planned was that the father of the child was, indeed, one of the cardinal priests himself. And slowly her body grew full, until it was a wonder Adrian did not notice its alteration. But what one sees day by day, even if it change slowly, remains the same in one's eyes: and he noted nothing.

And so summer altered slowly to the autumn season, and the olives ripened on the olive trees, and the grapes turned purple at the kiss of the sun, and the fields all neared their harvest, and it was so too with Joan. There was indolent heat in the air, which hung motionless over the holy city, and the night hours were the pleasanter, for then a cool breeze slipped softly down from the hills, and it was good to lie bare in the great chamber, and let the breeze cool what the fingering of love had warmed. Still came the tales from far parts of the world of a dreadful comet seen in the sky, which held its sway there from sunfall to sunrise; of a flood of meteors that fell in France, of a rain of toads and fishes in far Germany, of tremors of the earth by the Spanish March and in parched Sicily. One by one these things were reported to the holy father, and Joan and her advisers calmed the

minds of the people: evidently God sent further warning that men must turn from their sins, for His hour approached. And there were the fields and the vineyards and the olive trees to be tended, and the cows were big with calf, and the little chickens clucked and clacked about the barnyards, and there were brittle-legged colts to be tended; and men did not pause too long over the unrest in sky and far coigns of the earth.

Joan marvelled that Adrian observed naught; nor could she wake him to a sense of her condition. "What would you do, my love, if, after the fashion of women, I bore you a child?"

His eyes were on the mild stars of early autumn, and there was serene joy in his voice as he spoke: "Love it, as I love you, my one love."

"What would we do," she sought to make him understand, "if I had a child?"

"We would both love it," he laughed triumphantly.

She laughed more tremulously. "Men would take it ill, if the holy pontiff were delivered of a child."

He laughed tolerantly. "Or it I were, O noblest among all woman. Why dispute of such vain imaginings?"

She tested her lip slowly with her teeth. "We could not stay here, then," she objected.

"The world is wide," he answered her comfortably. "We could steal forth from Rome in the night, I tired as a lay clerk or a soldier, and you as very woman, and seek haven in the vast lands of Louis the German, or Charles the Hairless, or Emperor Louis. In this hot swelter that wraps Rome like a robe of fur on a summer

noon, such northerly climes would cool the overheated senses. And yet the balm of Capri, the plashing waters of Seville, or in some unguessed retreat beside the Golden Horn or some further stream. . . ."

"You, and I, and the child I am going to bear," she spoke with icy clearness.

This time, he did not miss her meaning. "Joan! My one— How stupid, how stupid you must hold me! So that is why. . . . Well," he sighed a slow vast sigh, "I am not sorry for it, my dear. You are my love, my one love, in our sight, in God's sight: and I have longed to hold you so, in the sight of all men. Now we can—"

"It is impossible." Again her note was icy.

"But— But what can you do? Surely you can not—"

"I am the pope," she said quietly. "I am man, in the eyes of the church. And the church of God is dearer to me than anything on earth— Save you, dear, of course; but you are a part of the church. I can not lay a stain upon its name. As man, I was monk at Fulda, and in England and France and Athens, and here in God's city; as man I was named pope; and man I shall be, until I die; and I leave it to you, Adrian my dear love, to see that I am laid in my grave with none guessing what you and I know so well. This much, at least, I owe to holy mother church."

"But—this child you will bear! Surely—"

"I know not. I have considered many things. Only this much I am sure of, that it must be born and baptized in God's name, all in secret; and, after that. . . ." She smiled softly. "You have a name for as pious and

continent a man as the church holds; yet, if you wish it, you can, at the right moment, admit that the child is yours, never saying by whom; and rear it for your own. The bastards of priests and abbots and popes ere now have risen high in the church, even to the highest; and it may well be that your child and mine, Adrian, will do this much too. Yet that can wait."

He was silent a long space before answering. "I am very glad you told me, Joan; I should have seen. . . . And, but for that, is all well with you? And when will—"

Then they went into such talk as lovers use, and then into an end of talk, which is always dearer to lovers than any talk can be.

Two days later, another consistory was held—a public one, to take up such matters as might be brought to the attention of the council of cardinals. After many matters had been disposed of, a man possessed of a demon was brought before the pope, to have the demon exorcised and driven forth, that it might plague the sufferer no more.

Solemnly Joan repeated the words of the exorcism, ordering the demon, no matter its name or nature, to leave at once the body of the man, in the name of God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The man writhed the more, froth dripping from his lips, and seemed in no wise aided by the exorcism.

And Joan rose and sprinkled holy water upon his body, and made the sign of the cross. And the man lay as if in a faint on the floor of the council chamber, and a wild shriek came from his lips, and a harsh hollow

voice, evilly crying, "Never, never, never, till my hour is come."

Firmly Joan faced the spirit of larkness. "I command you to go forth now!"

"When my hour is come, when my hour is come," a hollow harsh moaning of evil triumph, that was caught up and echoed by unseen voices high in the council chamber above them and below them, until it faded as if into the bowels of the earth.

"And when will that hour be, in the name of the sacred three, and the blessed saints, and the hosts of the angels?"

A cackling as of a thousand evil spirits in chorus together, then out of a sudden silence the harsh hollow voice again: "My hour will not be, until you, who are God's vicar on earth, and supreme pontiff of Christendom, and father of all fathers, will cause all the people of Rome to see a child born of a pope who is a woman!" And then such a bedlam and hubbub of demonic voices as none had ever heard broke out.

Joan had staggered, as the meaning of the words reached her, and was like to fall to the floor of the council chamber. Adrian, face white as very marble, put forth a hand to sustain her, as did others. But by the time the mad laughing had ceased, she had regained control of herself, and her face was marble as before.

She gripped her fingers within her palms, until they were red with unseen stigmata; and she spoke coldly and quietly. "This is evidently a most perverse and ungodly demon, whom I must wrestle with in the silence of my own chamber. For this day, let the consistory be

dissolved, to meet on the morrow." And, face unstirred, she walked out of the chamber, and hence to her own part of the palace.

Even Adrian did not dare follow her, so marble was her face.

But one did follow her, that none saw. Only, as she walked, she heard her own steps echo, and another sound beside this: the sound of faint hooved feet just behind her own. And ever as she walked there was a growing stench of brimstone in the air, and a faint far jeering laughter that turned her blood to icy ichor. And she knew that the demon was just behind her, and, as she entered her own chamber, that it stood there before her.

"Daughter of man," the demon said harshly, "it is time for us to have talk together."

CHAPTER XXVIII

A Vision From God

THERE WAS A LONG SILENCE IN THE CHAMber, and Joan summoned up all of her love of God and her courage to aid her in what must next be. For she had had no commerce with demons before, except in such wise as to drive them forth from men and women and little children that they plagued and buffeted: and it was not easy to keep her heart from being a little fearful, as she saw, in the further shadows of the room, the huge shadowy figure of the great demon, with its huge hunched shoulders and redly gleaming eyes, and a red gleam too at the tips of its pointed teeth, when it opened its vast gaping mouth to speak. But she stiffened up her heart, and faced it so sturdily that it could never guess, she was sure, how near it came to alarming her.

"Speak," she said, "in the name of God."

"In the name of God," the hollow voice rumbled, "I need not speak, but in the name of the prince of the air."

"But I am a man—a woman of God."

"Not wholly. You know the lore of Satan and Sammael, of Asmodeus the lustful and Belial, of Beelzebub and Zadkiel, of Uriel, Raguel, Tobiel, Inias, of Zubinac, Sabaoc, Simill, Mephistopheles, and many more—"

"In the name of God I know all these, to exorcise them and their hellish legions."

"You wear the tire of a man," the demon reasoned, "as do so many who serve the prince of the air."

"I wear the tire of God's service," she answered as firmly.

He shrank back, faintly baffled, seeming a little less in her sight. And then he swelled vast again. "But I dwell within your heart."

"It can not be!"—with a sudden intake of her breath. "My love has ever been of God—"

The demon cackled harshly. "Yet your God wishes his candle set upon a hill, and not placed under a bushel. You were not mine, until in your troubled state I entered your heart, and counselled you to hide this child you will bear from the face of all. From that moment, you became prey of my lord, and no more child of your own."

And Joan suddenly realized that he said all this most to tempt her, that by her lack of faith she might indeed yield to Satan. Again she called upon the three in the holy trinity, and made the sign of the cross again, and ordered the demon to depart forever.

Slowly the shadowy figure faded: but there was a vast exultation in the harsh hollow voice that came out at her, "Most holy father, woman in verity, after your delivery of your child you will belong to me and my lord, the prince of the air, body and soul, soul and body; and at that moment I will seize upon you, that your body and soul, soul and body may burn forever with me in the fires of eternal hell." With a harsh mocking laugh, the demon vanished; and Joan fell to the floor in a swoon.

When she awoke, hours later, body cramped from its long lying on the floor, she went to her knees, and carried

her burden to the heart of God. In abject humility she sought guidance as to what she should do in this sore strait, so as to save her immortal soul for God, and not let it suffer eternal torment in the black flames of hell. She arose with a heart comforted, knowing that there was some way that she could expiate her grievous crime, yet still not sure what that way must be. Something of what the demon had said to her she opened up to Adrian. He too spoke words of comfort to her, and urged her to repent so utterly that God could not but have mercy upon her forlorn and broken spirit.

This she did forthwith. She clad her fair limbs, next to the skin, with rough and rasping hair cloth. When she slept, she slept bare upon cruel cinders and ashes. She wept hourly, but in the sight of men. She laid upon herself divers other penances, the weight of which would have bent any lesser spirit to the ground beneath them; yet she added daily to them. She shaved off her hair, she ate no food but the holy communion, she drank only foul water, and performed divers other penances, worst of all being to deny herself wholly to Adrian.

And God took pity upon his penitent daughter, and his heart was melted by her tears, so that he sent her a vision. As she lay sleeping, her eyes still oozing tears of repentance even in her sleep, an angel of God appeared before her eyes, all glorious bright, and spoke to her. "God has been moved by your prayers and your penitence, daughter; yet your sin was great, not the least of it being your determination to keep all things hidden."

"I am God's lowliest handmaiden," she mourned, dropping her eyes at the dazzling splendor before her.

"His will is my will, and what he commands me, that will I do."

The angel spoke more softly. "God does not command, nor bind to salvation nor to damnation. There are two ways, and two only, open before you. This demon spoke of God's will: and the one way is that you continue to hide your crimes from all the world, and in that happening your body and soul, soul and body, will be delivered up to the eternal torment of the flames of hell."

Joan moaned within at this true saying of the angel. And then she queried, "But there is another way?"

"There is another way. Let but your shame, that you, a woman, have offered yourself to the world as a man, be known to all of Rome, and your sins will be forgiven you, and the endless bliss of heaven will be yours."

Joan half rose, her eyes shining. "I will go out at once, and bare my body before the world!"

But the angel said, "No; God in his own hour, now that you have chosen, will let the world know."

And with this she was content, and waited for the hour of God's revelation.

Now the burden within her grew heavier. Yet her heart was not as heavy as it had been; for she had God's promise of grace; and, as the time neared for her confinement, she recalled the words of the angels, which had specified no time as to when Rome was to learn that she was a woman. It might well be that God intended to let her bear her child unknown to the world, and perhaps grow old in faithful service to God, before this would be known, perhaps only after her death. She had God's promise of grace: that was a cup overflowing.

The fast of the tenth month approached, which first Leo had appointed, and which it was the custom to celebrate somewhat after the fashion of the Rogation Days, with a solemn procession. On the night before the day appointed, after Joan had ended her preparations for the morrow, she retired to her chamber, dismissing even Adrian. And all at once a deathly feeling seized her, and an agony such as she had not known, so that she felt she was like to swoon of the agony.

At first, as the pain eased, she was of a mind to send for some brother learned in simples—perhaps even for Adrian, since any other would at once tell, if he examined her, what burdened her belly so. Then all at once she knew: this was the beginning of the hour of her confinement.

She sent at once for the midwife whom she had approached, representing to the wise woman but it was a nun who was great with child, and whose name for chastity the holy father desired to keep hidden. The woman came, and kissed the foot of the pontiff, and waited for the pontiff to speak.

Joan described the first pain that had come to her, as if it had come to the nun she had spoken of. The old woman snorted, with small respect. "Your Grace is not used to such cases, as I of a truth am. A first confinement, Your Grace says? You are sure of it? In such a case, it may well be that the pains will continue half of a night, or a full night, or a night and a day, or even longer. If the worst comes, we shall have to get a sow gelder, to cut open the nun's body, and seek to bring forth the child alive. But God forbid that, for few live from such section.

Look you, Your Grace," and learnerdly she went into a discussion of the coming of the pains, slowly at first, and then more and more quickly, with the bursting of the water, until one could tell within an hour exactly when the child would be born. "Give me leave to return to my own household, Your Grace, and summon me when the pains come so fast, and no sooner."

Joan would not have it so, and had a room provided in her palace where the wise woman could sleep. And all that night the pains continued, but they came slowly and each one apart from the other, so that Joan knew that the coming of the child was not near.

Yet it was a lonely vigil, and pain-racked, the more because she held her lips fast until there was blood upon them, that she might not scream and alarm those of her household who slept near. In the long stretches between the pains, her fevered mind travelled back down the years, to early things long forgotten. There was the smell of the mast in the oak forests by Mainz, and the deep breathing of a stag that had frighted her so, one gray autumn morning; there was the baying of hounds, and the deeper roaring of old Cythbert and Wolfstan and the rest, as they lifted some godless Saxon saga into the shaken night, smashing great mugs for emphasis upon the scored board table. Then came softer memories, of soft and yielding hours in which she gave herself to Cenwulf, again and again, and the giving was sweet as before, and sweeter, for that it was so far away. Here was the droning voice of old Hrabanus Maurus, as he spoke for her scribing strange stories of saints and martyrs long forgotten. And here were sea scents, and the sight of corpses hanging be-

side the Thames, and the red glare of the burning hot against the sky; the quiet hours in the island city in the Seine, the bickering and raucous noises of weird Marseilles, the silver silence above sleeping Athens.

And now she wept as if she were about to die, for that no Cenwulf was with her, but only a corse beneath a long robe, forever silent. Now all at once she saw herself before a tangled sea of faces at the school of the Greeks, and all the faces were the faces of Cenwulf or of Adrian. She saw the fierce old warrior Leo before her, and saw herself as well purring things to him well acceptable to his ears. Then her spirit shuddered, at the banquet of the bishop where a naked girl slipped up behind her and sought to prison her face for a lustful kiss. Then came the white splendor of a kiss that was lustful, but all different, and it was only Adrian that was beside her in the whole world, they twain, and none beside.

That was the ploughing, this was the reaping; that joy was the seed, this pain was the harvest; that was the sin, this the expiation. Her head swirled giddily, as another seizure drove her to clench her hands until she felt they would fly apart, and her upper teeth bit down upon the lower lip until her wordless soundless screams shook her, like a mouse shaken of a cat. Yet this was not the end, dear God, not the end; not until the pains came swiftly, and these came with awful and solemn slowness, as if the earth itself were giving birth to the eternal mountains. . . .

The morning dawned grayly, but not as gray as her face. She put on her robes, and summoned her attendants to garb her in the pontificial ornaments. An-

other day of this, maybe, and then another night of this, maybe, and then death would be an easy chore, after this awful treadmill of recurring pain.

She strode forth, so wrapped up in her pontifical robes that none saw aught amiss in her bearing. Her horse waited without; and she was aided to the saddle. Before her was borne the cross and many banners; and at her side and behind her followed a train of metropolitans and bishops, cardinals and priests, deacons and nobles, magistrates and citizenry. So it was that she rode to St. Peter's great cathedral, and there solemnly performed the religious offices, and came forth again.

As she mounted her horse again, she almost swooned with the awful ardor of the pain that smote her. Now they came more swiftly, these pains: if only she were once more in the desolate isolation of her own chamber, safe from all prying eyes, but her own and God's. If only she could summon that wise midwife now, and have the agony done with. But this was not of God. And it might yet be all of a day before the agony was ended.

Toward St. John of the Lateran the procession took up its way. But by now, Joan knew that the hour of the confinement was near at hand. If she gritted her aching teeth and held in her voice and clenched her hands hardly enough, she might yet escape all this until she had returned to her own refuge, her one cave of isolation, her own chamber. But it was all dark to her.

They passed St. Clement's church, and the procession made for that vast amphitheatre erected of old by Domitian, upon the site of the lower end of Nero's Golden House,—that amphitheatre now called the Coliseum.

Just before they arrived at the public square before this vast building, the multiplying ever more swiftly hastening pain smote her with such violence, that she almost swooned again, and swayed forward upon her horse.

Then arose a clamor of those observing her, and cheering her, both those beside her and those lining the public square.

"He's ill!"

"The holy pope is fainting!"

"He's dying—did you see that face of agony?"

But no one moved quickly enough, not even Adrian; for he did not guess what was toward. So she fell from her horse to the ground.

They thronged around her, cardinals and commoners, bishops and tradesmen. Adrian had his arms beneath her head now, but her eyes were closed, and she did not know it.

"Holy Father—"

"Shall we get you into St. Clement's?"

"—Here's Brother Agathon; he'll bleed you, father—"

But Joan heeded none of their clamor. She gasped forth at last, "Get the midwife. . . . Old Lucia. . . . Quick—she lies just behind my chamber, in my palace. . . ."

"Midwife?" Astounded, they glanced one at the other. And Adrian could have bit his tongue out, for very shame at what was occurring.

"He said—midwife?"

"The Holy Father must be out of his wits!"

But Joan was shrieking now at last, all that she

had withheld for a night and half of a morning battering its way forth. "The water—I felt it! The child—Coming forth, now!"

With a terrible scream, she fainted.

One of the cardinals, who had small use for her and her pious ways, strode sternly forward, and ripped wide the robes of the pope. Those behind leaned forward, and fought for room to see what was there. They saw nothing, but a wild phantasmagoria of writhing ivory limbs, a swollen belly squirming in agony, a bloody thing half without, half within, the holy body.

Benedict, face working, smashed his fist full into the face of a leering man who leaned too close. Others of the monks, priests, and cardinals formed a close ring around the writing body on the ground, so that none could see what was there. Adrian, face dazed, lips speechless, sat still on the ground, his head almost swooning on Joan's robes, yet with his arm beneath her head still.

There were words that those without heard: "—A woman, by the girdle of Mary!"

"—In childbirth!"

"—Must be some device of the devil—some dread illusion, portending—"

But the priest who stopped and lifted the child knew that it was no illusion. A keen, clear, thin wailing woke the silent horror of the moment. He held the child redly, grotesquely, triumphantly upward, as if he had been very demon out of the pit lifting a lost soul for all his mates to see. "She's given birth to a bastard! The popes' a woman—"

Out throughout the crowd it spread like leaping flame: "John the Eighth is a woman, and no man! She has given birth to a child—"

"To twins—I saw them both—"

"They ought to hide such things, in decency, somehow. . . ."

The priest, face working, showed the red and wailing burden to the rest of them, one by one. His face was working savagely, awfully; he stood like an avenging angel, nothing but savage hate on his grimacing face.

And then he threw the babe at his feet, until its limp body smote the pavement; and, lifting his heavy foot, he ground the face of the infant into the cobbled way.

There was a shriek from one or two who stood above the deed; but the others said naught, only looked away. Then they looked back only at the white face of her who had been their head. Her tiara lay fouled with the mud of the road; her bare shorn head looked like the head of a very death in a charnel house; and, for all that her robe in more seemly fashion had been thrown over the bleeding ivory limbs, none among them could forget what his eyes had just seen so awfully.

"For this," a cardinal knelt and cruelly whispered, "we burn you alive!"

But Benedict smote him on the face, that he tumbled back with bleeding mouth, and vanished into the crowd.

Yet too many were of the same mind. "—Excommunicate—"

"Torture!"

"Hang her higher than Haman!"

The whole awful happening had been too much for Joan; her eyes were glazed, she seemed unable to move from the ground.

"Take her to the church, in God's name"—a zealous young subdeacon pleaded, tears running down his face. "Don't you see she's dying?"

But none moved. Only Adrian sat up, staring wildly, as if his eyes saw nothing. Then he dropped his eyes, and his face quivered, and he sobbed "Joan, Joan. . . ."

Her eyes had been closed. At his voice, they opened unseeingly at the sky. "Oh, God," she said once. And then, as she saw her lover's face curved over her, a faint whisper, dying away: "Fare well, my love, my one love. . . ."

And the eyes closed, and the body stilled, so that there was no more movement in it. After a harsh silence, at a nod from one of the cardinals, four among the brothers took up her body, and a fifth the body of the dead child, and set off with them to the church nearby.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Broken Statue

NOW A SHOUTING AROSE, FROM THE VAST crowd started as if by all together: "To St. John the Lateran's! Elect a pope! The woman pope is dead—give us a man, in God's name!"

The people, the nobles, the clergy, all hastened to the church toward which their procession had been tending. There were no parties among them, to urge the election of any. For none had expected Pope John the Eighth to die so soon, since there had been no word of illness of the pope; least of all did any expect that she would turn out to be a woman, and die in childbirth with the tiara crushed beneath her head. Now there was no talk of ambitious Anastasius, or the cardinals Benedict and Nicholas, who had been spoken of for the papacy aforetime. But, instead, all talked of the marvel that had happened that day in Rome.

There were many in Rome who would not believe the story yet. Word of strange doings spread fast, until the court before the church was crowded, and the inside of it more so. And some listened to the words of the eyewitnesses of the event, that the pope had turned out to be a woman, and had died in childbirth, and then called these eyewitnesses liars for their truth-telling. And there were many bloodied noses and scarred cheeks as a result of the rioting.

Now Benedict came out on the portico of the church, and lifted a hand to still the moiling mob. His face was all white, and his voice trembled as he spoke. "People of Rome, the council has asked me to speak briefly to you. The pope is dead."

"No," in a sudden explosive harsh cry from within.

The cardinal grew even paler. "The woman who was elected as pope, under the name of John the Eighth, is now dead. Some among us hold she could never have been pope, for all that she occupied St. Peter's seat for two years and more. Others of us, myself among them, hold that she was duly elected pope, and duly served as pope, and duly died as pope. For I—" And he faced them with his stern gaze, "loved this woman whom I held to be pope, since I held her to be all piety and wisdom and godliness. As so many of you did. If she is not pope, then I am not cardinal!" He flung this defiantly back at the voice just behind him.

"You're cardinal, no doubt of that. To your subject."

Benedict shook his head. "This is evil news I bring you. A woman, masquerading as a man, as the learned Brother John Anglicus of the Benedictine Order, from the monastery of Fulda, renowned over the world for her wisdom and godliness, was in error elected as pope more than two years ago, assuming the name of Pope John the Eighth. Now this woman, after presiding as pope more than two years, has died in childbirth: and you are summoned to the election of a new pope."

"Man or woman, she was godly, and wise, and she cured me of a demon!" a man screamed out suddenly.

"And me!"

"—Me!"

"She gave me bread, when I starved!"

"—Brought my husband to see the ways of God, and I'm a happy woman—"

"We were her pupils—we know how godly he was—she was. . . ."

Benedict stilled the sudden tumult. "Before you proceed to the election, one thing I wish to say. Much as I loved this pope, for her wisdom and piety, I realize that a stain has been cast upon the church, which we can never wipe out. And it has been proposed—"

"You yourself, Benedict," an admiring young cardinal deacon flung an arm over his shoulder, "you yourself proposed it."

Benedict did not answer him: "It has been proposed that, in commemoration of this dreadful stain, never hereafter shall pope of Rome pass that evil corner where Satan manifested his works and the woman-pope died in childbirth. This will be duly enacted."

He had slipped out of their sight before they knew it, and was gone.

Cardinal Nicholas appeared where he had been. "People of Rome, one more thing I have proposed, that the clergy will enact. We will make sure, hereafter, that no woman ever sits in St. Peter's seat, by subjecting every pope elect to a test—"

He was jeered out: "Shame!"

"For shame!"

A wild taunt, that pierced the hearing of all: "What about Teutberga?"

And, quickly taken up, "Who slept with the queen?"

An angry monk from Saxony roared aloud, "We want no cardinals, for they were all close to this arch-fiend, this woman who usurped the throne!"

Nicholas paled the more at this. But a voice near to the Saxon monk lifted, "We saw her as often as they. Who in Rome—who in Christendom—does not know her wisdom, her godliness? Hey, Your Reverence," he roared aloud to Nicholas, "did you know this pope was a woman?"

Nicholas saw a sudden chance here. He came forward slowly. "None in Christendom was more noted for learning than this woman who tricked us all. Our holy father Leo, long dead, held her high in his councils. She was the unanimous choice of all Rome; and we were not cardinals then. All Rome knew her. If any are at fault, all Rome, all Christendom, are at fault."

There was a roar of approval at this, that drowned out the few dissenters.

Then the business of electing a new pope commenced. No parties, no candidates, at first. . . . But quickly Anastasius got his group together; and there were voices for Benedict, for Nicholas, for many more. Suddenly a monk rose and called stridently, "John the Eighth may have been a woman, but she was a godly woman, a saint I'd call her. We want a godly man for pope now. Who is more godly, in Rome, than the cardinal priest Adrian?"

Horror-stricken, one voice shouted, "—Closest to the woman!"

"And closest to God," the monk called. "Who else among all these has performed miracles, save Adrian only?"

There was a sudden chorus of praise; yet there were, as well, those who spoke against the young cardinal, for that all knew how close to the counsels of Joan he had been. In the end, all voted unanimously for his elevation to the holy see.

He was not to be found, at first; and when at last the deputation found him, bent in prayer, he turned a marble face to their entreaties. "No," he said, again and again. "No. I will not consider it. Not under any considerations."

They pressed him for a reason.

He faced them, face strangely moved. "I loved this godly woman who has been your pope, more than any she trusted to aid her in carrying out God's will. She made me cardinal, and I did not dream she was woman. Now this is all too well known. . . . I shall spend the rest of my life on my knees, praying God for mercy for her. I will not be pope."

When this resolution could not be shaken, they returned to the church of St. John the Lateran, and the business of voting started anew. Still all insisted that, at this moment, a pope must be chosen who was known to be godly, and pious, and worthy of wiping out the stain of having a woman for pope. And, in the end, the cardinal priest Benedict was elected.

They found him in the church of St. Callixtus, and notified him. He too, once they made known their will, shook his head. "I was too close to the woman pope," he besought them. "You need your best, and not me. Do not draw me from this church; my brow is not broad enough to uphold St. Peter's tiara on it."

But they were determined to make him pope; and, in the end, he yielded to their entreaties, not without tears of sorrowing rejoicing. They bore him exultingly to the patriarchal palace, and here he mounted the throne of the apostles amid shouts which shook the walls. At once Nicholas, Bishop of Anaguia, and Mercury, captain of the Roman militia, were sent to the emperor Louis, to ask his consent.

But Anastasius, who had been deposed by fourth Leo, and whose pleas for reinstatement Joan had ever refused, sent one of his legates, Arsenes, prelate of Eugubio, after them. He caught up with them, and persuaded them to join in a plot to elevate the over-liberal Anastasius to the papacy. Seduced by his promises, the three of them returned with their trains to Italy, and announced that Louis would not ratify the choice of Benedict, for that he had been too close to the woman-pope; and that his own legates were on the way, to speak for him.

Meanwhile, Louis sent his commissioners, and Anastasius privily met them, and engaged them upon his side. When the new pontiff sent the bishops Gregory and Maion with his letter of abject submission to the emperor, Anastasius had them celled. Two more legates, the unwilling Cardinal Adrian and Duke Gregory, were treated as harshly; and then Anastasius and the emperor's legates marched into Rome, and ordered clergy, people, and senate to appear before them.

Anastasius, in the presence of the emperor's legates, entered St. Peter's, and solemnly burned the tablet of the council, on which was inscribed his deposition. Then he

invaded the palace of the Lateran, and had his followers drag Benedict from the holy throne. After Anastasius himself despoiled the holy father of his pontifical ornaments, he struck him across the face with his bishop's cross, and turned him over to his followers—who soon bound Benedict with cords, and drove him forth with staves from the palace.

So it was that Anastasius, supported chiefly by evil priests who had been deposed by Joan, and by scheming prelates and envoys, mounted the chair of St. Peter. But this pleased none else in Rome. Cardinals, bishops, priests, even commoners, beat their breasts, and threw themselves prostrate before God. A word spread through the city, and all assembled in the church of Emilius, and swore to resist the tyranny. The envoys received word of this, surrounded the building, and presented the points of their swords at the bishops, cardinals, and clergy, demanding of them that they surrender, and hail Anastasius as pontiff.

The prelates bared their breasts to the swords: "Strike, if you dare. But we will never hail as head of the church one who has been deposed by a pope and his council."

The envoys withdrew, to consider this; then, fired with the scent of blood, they reentered the church, and said they would massacre the cardinals and bishops, if they did not yield. This time the citizens rushed out and overwhelmed the envoys, and forced them to yield. In the end, after a hearing, the envoys yielded wholly, and Benedict sat upon the throne from which Anastasius had been driven.

During this while, the pupils of Joan, and many who loved her for her godliness, had her buried, not in a church, but on the very spot where her tragic death had occurred. Over her tomb, which held also the body of the murdered child, they built speedily a chapel, adorned with a marble statue. This showed the woman pope clothed in her papal garments, with the triple-crowned tiara upon her head, and holding a young child in her arms, very like the Virgin Mother with the young Jesus. Word of this was brought to Benedict, and he did nothing.

There were many problems crowding upon the new pope's attention. There was the visit of Ethelwulf, from far-off England, with his gifts of a crown, images, and vessels of gold, of a silver-gilt paten of Saxon make, and of precious vestments and curtains. Since the crown weighed forty pounds, and the other gifts were as valuable, Benedict thankfully received them; and also the king's promise to give a tenth of the land in his kingdom to the church, to reestablish Peter's pence in his kingdom, and to provide, at his death, a lordly annual gift to the holy see. He also rebuilt the school of the But one thing only he said to Benedict: "It is not seemly that this woman pope, who befouled Peter's chair so long, should be hailed as an English woman; since, indeed, she was not even born in England. I marvel that Your Grace let her marble statue disfigure your holy city."

Benedict the pope pondered over this. There were other cares of state—pilgrim monks sent by Abbot Lupus

Servatus, to be instructed in the customs of the Roman church; gifts from the eastern emperor, and a request that Benedict confirm the emperor's sentence of deposition against Gregory, bishop of Syracuse; a requisition from the turbulent Hincmar, bishop of Reims, asking the pontiff to approve the synod of Soissons, which fourth Leo had rejected, and to cite before him that deacon Hubert who was accused of more crimes than many men are able to imagine.

Benedict had the monks trained; deposed the bishop; approved the synod; and read with solicitous interest the account of the evil doings of Hubert—of this turning a nunnery into a brothel, in which he hired out the usance of the bodies of the nuns at so many pence, pocketing the money; as well as of his incestuous dealings with his sister Teutberga, wife of King Lothair of Lorraine. A foul business, all this: Benedict remembered the hot-eyed queen, the one day he had seen her; and, in the end, after receiving Lothair's orders for him to punish the guilty, he ordered the guilty brother of the queen to appear before him in Rome in thirty days, to justify himself from the charges.

More and more he pondered upon the case of Joan. After all, her tenure had been a stain upon the church. It would not be good for men of after time to recall that a woman had not only been pope, but had been honored with a marble statue, most like unto that of the Virgin Mother, child in arms.

And so he went with his workmen, and ordered the statue to be broken down. His heart was soft as he saw them approach the chaste beauty of the marble, and

saw a rude and ribald hammer blow strike off the tiara, and another disfigure the lovely serene face, so full of godliness and wisdom, and a third knock the marble child from the marble arms.

Benedict turned away, sick at heart. "It is defaced now," he called back. "Have done. We have dishonored the statue; and it is dishonor to us that we have done so. Leave the godly sinner in peace."

After three years, this pope was gathered to his fathers; and, after him, that putty Nicholas who had yielded to Teutberga was lifted to Peter's chair, and yielded to her again, to the scandal of Christendom, as, according to rumors, did many prelates of Rome; and there were other dark doings in the nine years that he was pontiff. After him Adrian, who had been twice elected and had twice refused the pontificate, was elected a third time, and the clergy and nobles and people would not take No from him, and this time at last he said Yes. And an evil pope came after him, and many after more evil still.

But none of these doings troubled the marble peace of the disfigured statue just on the edge of the public square beyond St. Clement's church; nor the marble rest of the mother and child, who slowly crumbled into a long forgetfulness in the earth she had so honored by her living.

APPENDIX

The Card Game, Pope Joan

The old English round game of cards, Pope Joan, is named after the woman pope. It is a thrilling and colorful game, which may be used for brisk gambling. The wide English interest in the game establishes the interest in the historical figure for whom it was named.

The Deck

Fifty-one cards constitute the deck used in playing Pope Joan, the eight of diamonds being omitted. The nine of diamonds is named Pope Joan.

The Board

A special board is used for the betting, containing eight compartments. This may be a round board with eight segments; or a round board with seven segments, the eighth one, Pope Joan, being in the center.

These eight compartments are named Pope Joan, Matrimony, Intrigue, Ace, King, Queen, Knave, and Game.

The compartments King, Queen, and Jack are sometimes omitted.

The Players

Any number of players, from two up, may take part.

Dressing the Board

Each player contributes a stake, of which one counter is put in each compartment.

At times one counter from each player is put into the divisions Ace, King, Queen, Knave, and Game; two counters from each player into Matrimony and Intrigue; and the rest into Pope Joan.

The Deal

One more hand is dealt, than the total number of players. Thus, with two players, three hands are dealt; with four players, five hands. The extra hand is called Stops.

Cards in excess may be dealt to Stops; or an agreed number may be left to Stops, so that all players have an equal number of cards.

The last card is turned up for Trumps.

If an honor (ace, king, queen or jack of trumps) is turned up, the dealer takes the counters in the compartment so named.

If Pope Joan (the nine of diamonds) is turned up, this settles the hand, the dealer taking the whole pool, or all the counters on the board. At times the turning up of Pope Joan merely entitles the dealer to the cards in the compartment so named.

Stops

A stop is a card which stops, by its absence from play, the completion of a suit. Thus the absence of the nine of spades stops the playing of the ten. This absence may be due to the fact, that the missing nine of spades is in the hand called Stops; or that it has already been played, which thereby makes it a stop after the eight of spades has been reached.

All kings are of course stops. So is the seven of

diamonds, since the eight of diamonds is missing from the deck. The card next below the card dealt for trumps stops the play. Any card played, where the next highest card in that suit has already been led and played, stops the play.

The Play

In the play, the ace is the lowest card, and the king the highest.

The player on the dealer's left opens the game by playing a card and names it. The player who has the next highest card then plays it. This is continued until a stop is reached—that is, a card of which no one holds the next highest in the same suit.

After a stop the played cards are turned over, and the player of the stop—that is, of the last card played—leads again.

The player who gets rid of all his cards first ends the hand. He is entitled to take all the counters in Game; and to receive one counter from each player for every card left in the player's hand, except from the player who holds Pope Joan (the nine of diamonds) and has not been able to play it, who owes nothing to the winner of the hand.

The player of ace, king, queen, or knave (jack) of trumps takes the counters from the compartment respectively so named. If a player is left with one or more of these cards unplayed in his hand, he does not get the counters in the compartment so named.

If king and queen of trumps are in one hand, the holder takes the counters in Matrimony, when he plays them. If queen and knave of trumps are in one hand,

and are played, the holder takes the counters in Intrigue. The card dealt by the dealer to establish the trumps is regarded as in his hand, and as played, purely for purposes of claiming Matrimony and Intrigue.

Unclaimed stakes are left for the next pool.

The playing of Pope Joan (the nine of diamonds) is sometimes considered a universal stop. This has the disadvantage of permitting a player to end the game at once, if he holds Pope Joan, and it is better to regard Pope Joan as a universal stop only if dealt as trump.

When the last hand has been dealt, or the time for ending the game has come, the best way to dispose of the counters remaining is as follows: Let the cards be dealt slowly, face up, one to each player, and so around the board, until the nine of diamonds, Pope Joan, is dealt. The player receiving it takes all the remaining counters.