

The Red Camp

By A. C. Benson

It was a sultry summer evening in the old days, when Walter Wyatt came to the house of his forefathers. It was in a quiet valley of Sussex, with the woods standing very steeply on the high hillsides. Among the woods were pleasant stretches of pasture, and a little stream ran hidden among hazels beside the road; here and there were pits in the woods, where the men of ancient times had dug for iron, pits with small sandstone cliffs, and full to the brim of saplings and woodland plants. Walter rode slowly along, his heart full of a happy content. Though it was the home of his family he had never even seen Restlands—that was the peaceful name of the house. Walter's father had been a younger son, and for many years the elder brother, a morose and selfish man, had lived at Restlands, often vowing that none of his kin should ever set foot in the place, and all out of a native malice and churlishness, which discharged itself upon those that were nearest to him. Walter's father was long dead, and Walter had lived a very quiet homely life with his mother. But one day his uncle had died suddenly and silently, sitting in his chair; and it was found that he had left no will. So that Restlands, with its orchards and woods and its pleasant pasture-lands, fell to Walter; and he had ridden down to take possession. He was to set the house in order, for it was much decayed in his uncle's time; and in a few weeks his mother was to follow him there.

He turned a corner of the road, and saw in a glance a house that he knew must be his; and a sudden pride and tenderness leapt up within his heart, to think how fair a place he could call his own.

An avenue of limes led from the road to the house, which was built of ancient stone, the roof tiled with the same. The front was low and many-windowed. And Walter, for he was a God-fearing youth, made a prayer in his heart, half of gratitude and half of hope.

He rode up to the front of the house, and saw at once that it was sadly neglected; the grass grew among the paving-stones, and several of the windows were broken. He knocked at the door, and an old serving-man came out, who made an obeisance. Walter sent his horse to the stable; his baggage was already come; and his first task was to visit his new home from room to room. It was a very beautiful solidly built house, finely panelled in old dry wood, and had an abundance of solid oak furniture; there were dark pictures here and there; and that night Walter sate alone at his meat, which was carefully served him by the old serving-man, his head full of pleasant plans for his new life; he slept in the great bedroom, and many times woke wondering where he was; once he crept to the window, and saw the barns, gardens, and orchards lie beneath, and the shadowy woods beyond, all bathed in a cold clear moonlight.

In the morning when he had breakfasted, the lawyer who had charge of his business rode in from the little town hard by to see him; and when Walter's happiness was a little dashed; for though the estate brought in a fair sum, yet it was crippled by a mortgage which lay upon it; and Walter saw that he would have to live sparsely for some years before he could have his estate unembarrassed; but this troubled him little, for he was used to a simple life. The lawyer indeed had advised him to sell a little of the land; but Walter was very proud of the old estate, and of the memory that he was the tenth Wyatt that had dwelt there, and he said that before he did that he would wait awhile and see if he could not arrange otherwise. When the lawyer was gone there came in the bailiff, and Walter went with him all over the estate. The garden was greatly

overgrown with weeds, and the yew hedges were sprawling all uncut; they went through the byre, where the cattle stood in the straw; they visited the stable and the barn, the granary and the dovecote; and Walter spoke pleasantly with the men that served him; then he went to the ploughland and the pastures, the orchard and the woodland; and it pleased Walter to walk in the woodpaths, among the copse and under great branching oaks, and to feel that it was all his own.

At last they came out on the brow of the hill, and saw Restlands lie beneath them, with the smoke of a chimney going up into the quiet air, and the doves wheeling about the cote. The whole valley was full of westering sunshine, and the country sounds came pleasantly up through the still air.

They stood in a wide open pasture, but in the centre of it rose a small, dark, and thickly grown square holt of wood, surrounded by a high green bank of turf, and Walter asked what that was. The old bailiff looked at him a moment without speaking and then said, "That is the Red Camp, sir." Walter said pleasantly, "And whose camp is it?" but it came suddenly into his head that long ago his father had told him a curious tale about the place, but he could not remember what the tale was. The old man answering his question said, "Ah, sir, who can say? perhaps it was the old Romans who made it, or perhaps older men still; but there was a sore battle hereabouts." And then he went on in a slow and serious way to tell him an old tale of how a few warriors had held the place against an army, and that they had all been put to the sword there; he said that in former days strange rusted weapons and bones had been ploughed up in the field, and then he added that the Camp had ever since been left desolate and that no one cared to set foot within it; yet for all that it was said that a great treasure lay buried within it, for that was what the men were guarding, though those that took the place and slew them could never find it; "and that was all long ago," he said.

Walter, as the old man spoke, walked softly to the wood and peered at it over the mound; it was all grown up within, close and thick, an evil tangle of plants and briars. It was dark and even cold looking within the wood, though the air lay warm all about it. The mound was about breast high, and there was a grass-grown trench all round out of which the earth had been thrown up. It came into Walter's head that the place had seen strange things. He thought of it as all rough and newly made, with a palisade round the mound, with spears and helmets showing over, and a fierce wild multitude of warriors surging all round; the Romans, if they had been Romans, within, grave and anxious, waiting for help that never came. All this came into his mind with a pleasant sense of security, as a man who is at ease looks on a picture of old and sad things, and finds it minister to his content. Yet the place kept a secret of its own, Walter felt sure of that. And the treasure, was that there all the time? buried in some corner of the wood, money lying idle that might do good things if it could but get forth? So he mused, tapping the bank with his stick. And presently they went on together. Walter said as they turned away, "I should like to cut the trees down, and throw the place into the pasture," but the old bailiff said, "Nay, it is better left alone."

The weeks passed very pleasantly at first; the neighbours came to see him, and he found that an old name wins friends easily; he spent much of the day abroad, and he liked to go up to the Red Camp and see it stand so solitary and dark, with the pleasant valley beneath it. His mother soon came, and they found that with her small jointure they could indeed live at the place, but that they would have to live very sparsely at first; there must be no horses in the stable, nor coach to drive abroad; there must be no company at Restlands for many a year, and Walter saw too that he must not think awhile of marriage, but that he must give all his savings to feed the estate.

After awhile, when the first happy sense of possession had gone off, and then life had settled down into common and familiar ways, this began to be very irksome to Walter; and what made him feel even more keenly his fortune was that he made acquaintance with a squire that lived hard by, who had a daughter Marjory, who seemed to Walter the fairest and sweetest maiden he had ever seen; and he began to carry her image about with him; and his heart beat very sharply in his breast if he set eyes on her unexpectedly; and she too, seemed to have delight in seeing Walter, and to understand even the thoughts that lay beneath his lightest word. But the squire was a poor man, and Walter felt bound to crush the thought of love and marriage down in his heart, until he began to grow silent and moody; and his mother saw all that was in his heart and pitied him, but knew not what to do; and Walter began even to talk of going into the world to seek his fortune; but it was little more than talk, for he already loved Restlands very deeply.

Now one day when Walter had been dining with the Vicar of the parish, he met at his table an old and fond man, full of curious wisdom, who took great delight in all that showed the history of the old races that had inhabited the land; and he told Walter a long tale of the digging open of a great barrow or mound upon the downs, which it seemed had been the grave of a great prince, and in which they had found a great treasure of gold, cups and plates and pitchers all of gold, with bars of the same, and many other curious things. He said that a third of such things by rights belonged to the King; but that the King's Grace had been contented to take a rich cup or two, and had left the rest in the hands of him whose land it was. Then the old scholar asked Walter if it were not true that he had in his own land an ancient fort or stronghold, and Walter told him of the Red Camp and the story, and the old man heard him with great attention saying, "Ay, ay," and "Ay, so it would be," and at the last he said that the story of the treasure was most likely a true one, for he did not see how it could have grown up otherwise; and that he did not doubt that it was a great Roman treasure, perhaps a tribute, gathered in from the people of the land, who would doubtless have been enraged to lose so much and would have striven to recover it. "Ay, it is there, sure enough," he said.

Walter offered to go with him to the place; but the old Vicar, seeing Walter's bright eye, and knowing something of the difficulties, said that the legend was that it would be ill to disturb a thing that had cost so many warriors their lives; and that a curse would rest upon one that did disturb it. The old scholar laughed and said that the curses of the dead, and especially of the heathen dead, would break no bones—and he went on to say that doubtless there was a whole hen-roost of curses hidden away in the mound upon the downs; but that they had hurt not his friend who had opened it; for he lived very delicately and plentifully off the treasure of the old prince, who seemed to bear him no grudge for it. "Nay, doubtless," he said, "if we but knew the truth, I dare say that the old heathen man, pining in some dark room in hell, is glad enough that his treasure should be richly spent by a good Christian gentleman."

They walked together to the place; and the old gentleman talked very learnedly and showed him where the gates and towers of the fort had been—adding to Walter, "And If I were you, Mr. Wyatt, I would have the place cleared and trenched, and would dig the gold out; for it is there as sure as I am a Christian man and a lover of the old days."

Then Walter told his mother of all that had been said; and she had heard of the old tales, and shook her head; indeed when Walter spoke to the old bailiff of his wish to open the place, the old man almost wept; and then, seeing that he prevailed nothing, said suddenly that neither he nor any of the men that dwelt in the village would put out a hand to help for all the gold of England. So Walter rested for awhile; and still his impatience and his hunger grew.

Walter did not decide at once; he turned the matter over in his mind for a week. He spoke no more to the bailiff, who thought he had changed his mind; but all the week the desire grew; and at last it completely overmastered him. He sent for the bailiff and told him he had determined to dig out the Camp; the bailiff looked at him without speaking. Then Walter said laughing that he meant to deal very fairly; that no one should bear a hand in the work who did not do so willingly; but that he should add a little to the wages of every man who worked for him at the Camp while the work was going on. The bailiff shrugged his shoulders and made no reply. Walter went and spoke to each of his men and told them his offer. "I know," he said, "that there is a story about the place, and that you do not wish to touch it; but I will offer a larger wage to every man who works there for me; and I will force no man to do it; but done it shall be; and if my own men will not do it, then I will get strangers to help me." The end of it was that three of his men offered to do the work, and the next day a start was made.

The copse and undergrowth was first cleared, and then the big trees were felled and dragged off the place; then the roots were stubbed up. It was a difficult task, and longer than Walter had thought; and he could not disguise from himself that a strange kind of ill-luck hung about the whole affair. One of his men disabled himself by a cut from an axe; another fell ill; the third, after these two mishaps, came and begged off. Walter replaced them with other workers; and the work proceeded slowly, in spite of Walter's great impatience and haste. He himself was there early and late; the men had it in their minds that they were searching for treasure and were well-nigh as excited as himself; and Walter was for ever afraid that in his absence some rich and valuable thing might be turned up, and perhaps concealed or conveyed away secretly by the finder. But the weeks passed and nothing was found; and it was now a bare and ugly place with miry pools of dirt, great holes where the trees had been; there were cart tracks all over the field in which it lay, the great trunks lay outside the mound, and the undergrowth was piled in stacks~ The mound and ditch had all been unturfed; and the mound was daily dug down to the level, every spadeful being shaken loose; and now they came upon some few traces of human use. In the mound was found a short and dented sword of bronze, of antique shape. A mass of rusted metal was found in a corner, that looked as if it had been armour. In another corner were found some large upright and calcined stones, with abundance of wood-ashes below, that seemed to have been a rude fireplace. And in one part, in a place where there seemed to have been a pit, was a quantity of rotting stuff, that seemed like the remains of bones. Walter himself grew worn and weary, partly with the toil and still more with the deferred hope. And the men too became sullen and ill-affected. It surprised Walter too that more than one of his neighbours spoke with disfavour of what he was doing, as of a thing that was foolish or even wrong. But still he worked on savagely, slept little, and cared not what he ate or drank.

At last the work was nearly over; the place had been all trenched across, and they had come in most places to the hard sandstone, which lay very near the surface. In the afternoon had fallen a heavy drenching shower, so that the men had gone home early, wet and dispirited; and Walter stood, all splashed and stained with mud, sick at heart and heavy, on the edge of the place, and looked very gloomily at the trenches, which lay like an ugly scar on the green hilltop. The sky was full of ragged inky clouds, with fierce lights on the horizon.

As he paced about and looked at the trenches, he saw in one place that it seemed as if the earth was of a different colour at the side of the trench he stepped inside to look at this, and saw that the digging had laid bare the side of a place like a pit, that seemed to have been dug down through the ground; he bent to examine it, and then saw at the bottom of the trench, washed clear by the rain, something that looked like a stick or a root, that projected a little into the trench; he

put his hand down to it, and found it cold and hard and heavy, and in a moment saw that it was a rod of metal that ran into the bank. He took up a spade, and threw the earth away in haste; and presently uncovered the rod. It was a bar, he saw, and very heavy; but examining it closely he saw that there was a stamp of some sort upon it; and then in a moment looking upon a place where the spade had scratched it, he saw that it was a bright yellow metal. It came over him all at once, with a shock that made him faint, that he had stumbled upon some part of the treasure; he put the bar aside, and then, first looking all round to see that none observed him, he dug into the bank. In a moment his spade struck something hard; and he presently uncovered a row of bars that lay close together. He dragged them up one by one, and underneath he found another row, laid crosswise; and another row, and another, till he had uncovered seven rows, making fifty bars in all. Beneath the lowest row his spade slipped on something round and smooth; he uncovered the earth, and presently drew out a brown and sodden skull, which thus lay beneath the treasure. Below that was a mass of softer earth, but out of it came the two thigh-bones of a man.

The sky was now beginning to grow dark; but he dug out the whole of the pit, working into the bank; and he saw that a round hole had been dug straight down from the top, to the sandstone. The bones lay upon the sandstone; but he found other bones at the sides of where the gold had lain; so that it seemed to him as though the gold must have been placed among dead bodies, and have rested among corruption. This was a dim thought that lurked in an ugly way in his mind. But he had now dug out the whole pit, and found nothing else, except a few large blurred copper coins which lay among the bodies. He stood awhile looking at the treasure; but together with the exultation at his discovery there mingled a dark and gloomy oppression of spirit, which he could not explain, which clouded his mind. But presently he came to himself again, and gathering the bones together, he threw them down to the bottom of the pit, as he was minded to conceal his digging from the men. While he did so, it seemed to him that, as he was bending to the pit, something came suddenly behind him and stood at his back, close to him, as though looking over his shoulder. For a moment the horror was so great that he felt the hair of his head prickle and his heart thump within his breast; but he overcame it and turned, and saw nothing but the trenches, and above them the ragged sky; yet he had the thought that something had slipped away. But he set himself doggedly to finish his task; he threw earth into the holes, working in a kind of fury; and twice as he did so, the same feeling came again that there was some one at his back; and twice turning he saw nothing; but the third time, from the West came a sharp thunder-peal; and he had hardly finished his work when the rain fell in a sheet, and splashed in the trenches.

Then he turned to the treasure which lay beside him. He found that he could not carry more than a few of the bars at a time; and he dared not leave the rest uncovered. So he covered them with earth and went stealthily down to the house; and there he got, with much precaution, a barrow from the garden. But the fear of discovery came upon him; and he determined to go into the house and sup as usual, and late at night convey the treasure to the house. For the time, his trove gave him no joy; he could not have believed it would have so weighed on him—he felt more like one who had some guilty secret to conceal, than a man to whom had befallen a great joy.

He went to the house, changed his wet clothes, and came to supper with his mother. To her accustomed questions as to what they had found, he took out the coins and showed them her, saying nothing of the gold, but with a jesting word that these would hardly repay him for his trouble. He could scarcely speak at supper for thinking of what he had found; and every now and then there came upon him a dreadful fear that he had been observed digging, and that even now some thief had stolen back there and was uncovering his hoard. His mother looked at him often,

and at last said that he looked very weary; to which he replied with some sharpness, so that she said no more.

Then all at once, near the end of the meal, he had the same dreadful fear that he had felt by the pit. It seemed to him as though some one came near him and stood close behind him, bending over his shoulder; and a kind of icy coldness fell on him. He started and looked quickly round. His mother looked anxiously at him, and said, "What is it, dear Walter?" He made some excuse; but presently feeling that he must be alone, he excused himself and went to his room, where he sate, making pretence to read, till the house should be silent.

Then when all were abed, at an hour after midnight, he forced himself to rise and put on his rough clothes, though a terror lay very sore upon him, and go out to the garden, creeping like a thief. He had with him a lantern; and he carried the barrow on his shoulders for fear that the creaking of the wheel should awake some one; and then stumbling and sweating, and in a great weariness, he went by woodpaths to the hilltop. He came to the place, and having lit his lantern he uncovered the bars, and laid them on the barrow; they were as he had left them. When he had loaded them, the same fear struck him suddenly cold again, of something near him; and he thought for a moment he would have swooned; but sitting down on the barrow in the cool air he presently came to himself. Then he essayed to wheel the barrow in the dark. But he stumbled often, and once upset the barrow and spilled his load. Thus, though fearing discovery, he was forced to light the lantern and set it upon the barrow, and so at last he came to the house; where he disposed the bars at the bottom of a chest of which he had the key, covering them with papers, and then went to bed in a kind of fever, his teeth chattering, till he fell into a wretched sleep which lasted till dawn.

In his sleep he dreamed a fearful dream; he seemed to be sitting on the ground by the Camp, holding the gold in his arms; the Camp in his dream was as it was before he had cleared it, all gown up with trees. Suddenly out from among the trees there came a man in rusty tarnished armour, with a pale wild face and a little beard, which seemed all clotted with moisture; he held in his hand a pike or spear, and he came swiftly and furiously upon Walter as though he would smite him. But it seemed as though his purpose changed; for standing aside he watched Walter with evil and piercing eyes, so that it seemed to Walter that he would sooner have been smitten. And then he woke, but in anguish, for the man still seemed to stand beside him; until he made a light and saw no one.

He arose feeling broken and ill; but he met his mother with a smile, and told her that he had determined to do what would please her, and work no more at the Camp. And he told the men that he would dig no more, but that they were to level the place and so leave it. And so they did, murmuring sore.

The next week was a very miserable one for Walter; he could not have believed that a man's heart should be so heavy. It seemed to him that he lay, like the poor bones that he had found beneath the treasure, crushed and broken and stifled under the weight of it. He was tempted to do wild things with the gold; to bury it again in the Camp, to drop it into the mud of the pool that lay near the house. In fevered dreams he seemed to row himself in a boat upon a dark sea, and to throw the bars one by one into the water; the reason of this was not only his fear for the treasure itself, but the dreadful sense that he had of being followed by some one, who dogged his footsteps wherever he went. If ever he sate alone, the thing would draw near him and bend above him; he often felt that if he could but look round swiftly enough he would catch a glimpse of the thing, and that nothing that he could see would be so fearful as that which was unseen; and so it came to pass that, as he sate with his mother, though he bore the presence long that he might not

startle her, yet after a time of patient agony he could bear it no more, but looked swiftly behind him; he grew pale and ill, and even the men of the place noticed how often he turned round as he walked; till at last he would not even walk abroad, except early and late when there would be few to see him.

He had sent away his labourers; but once or twice he noticed, as he went by the Camp, that some one had been digging and grubbing in the mire. Sometimes for an hour or two his terrors would leave him, till he thought that he was wholly cured; but it was like a cat with a mouse, for he suffered the worse for his respite, till at last he fell so low that he used to think of stories of men that had destroyed themselves, and though he knew it to be a terrible sin to dally with such thoughts, he could not wholly put them from him, but used to plan in his mind how he could do the deed best, that it might appear to be an accident. Sometimes he bore his trouble heavily, but at others he would rage to think that he had been so happy so short a while ago; and even the love that he bore to Marjory was darkened and destroyed by the evil thing, and he met her timid and friendly glances sullenly; his mother was nearly as miserable as himself, for she knew that something was very grievously amiss, but could not divine what it was. Indeed, she could do nothing but wish it were otherwise, and pray for her son, for she knew not where the trouble lay, but thought that he was ill or even bewitched.

At last, after a day of dreadful gloom, Walter made up his mind that he would ride to London and see to the disposing of the treasure. He had a thought often in his mind that if he replaced it in the Camp, he would cease to be troubled; but he could not bring himself to that; he seemed to himself like a man who had won a hard victory, and was asked to surrender what he had won.

His intention was to go to an old and wise friend of his father's, who was a Canon of a Collegiate Church in London, and was much about the court. So he hid the treasure in a strong cellar and padlocked the door; but he took one bar with him to show to his friend.

It was a doleful journey; his horse seemed as dispirited as himself; and his terrors came often upon him, till he was fearful that he might be thought mad; and indeed what with the load at his heart and the short and troubled nights he spent, he believed himself that he was not very far from it.

It was with a feeling of relief and safety, like a ship coming into port, that he stayed his horse at the door of the college, which stood in a quiet street of the city. He carried a valise of clothes in which the bar was secured. He had a very friendly greeting from the old Canon, who received him in a little studious parlour full of books. The court was full of pleasant sunshine, and the city outside seemed to make a pleasant and wholesome stir in the air.

But the Canon was very much amazed at Walter's looks; he was used to read the hearts of men in their faces like a wise priest, and he saw in Walter's face a certain desperate look such as he had seen, he said to himself, in the faces of those who had a deadly sin to confess. But it was not his way to make inquisition, and so he talked courteously and easily, and when he found that Walter was inclined to be silent, he filled the silence himself with little talk of the news of the town.

After the meal, which they took in the Canon's room—for Walter said that he would prefer that to dining in the Hall, when the Canon gave him the choice—Walter said that he had a strange story to tell him. The Canon felt no surprise, and being used to strange stories, addressed himself to listen carefully; for he thought that in the most difficult and sad tales of sin the words of the sufferer most often supplied the advice and the way out, if one but listened warily,

He did not interrupt Walter except to ask him a few questions to make the story clear, but his face grew very grave; and at the end he sate some time in silence. Then he said very gently that it

was a heavy judgment, but that he must ask Walter one question. "I do not ask you to tell me," he said very courteously, "what it may be; but is there no other thing in which you have displeased God? For these grievous thoughts and fears are sometimes sent as a punishment for sin, and to turn men back to the light."

Then Walter said that he knew of no such sin by which he could have vexed God so exceedingly. "Careless," he said, "I am and have been; and, father, I would tell you anything that was in my heart; I would have no secrets from you—but though I am a sinner, and do not serve God as well as I would, yet I desire to serve Him, and have no sin that is set like a wall between Him and me." He said this so honestly and bravely, looking so full at the priest, that he did not doubt him, and said, "Then, my son, we must look elsewhere for the cause; and though I speak in haste, and without weighing my words, it seems to me that, to speak in parables, you are like a man who has come by chance to a den and carried off for his pleasure the cubs of some forest beast, who returns and finds them gone, and tracks the robber out. The souls of these poor warriors are in some mansion of God, we know not where; if they did faithfully in life they are beaten, as the Scripture says, with few stripes; but they may not enjoy His blessed rest, nor the sweet sleep of the faithful souls who lie beneath the altar and wait for His coming. And now though they cannot slay you, they can do you grievous hurt. The Holy Church hath power indeed over the spirits of evil, the devils that enter into men. But I have not heard that she hath power over the spirits of the dead, and least of all over those that lived and died outside the fold. It seems to me, though I but grope in darkness, that these poor spirits grudge the treasure that they fought and died for to the hands of a man who hath not fought for it. We may think that it is a poor and childish thing to grudge that which one cannot use; but no discourse will make a child think so; and I reckon that these poor souls are as children yet. And it seems to me, speaking foolishly, as though they would not be appeased until you either restored it to them, or used it for their undoubted benefit; but of one thing I am certain, that it must not be used to enrich yourself. But I must ponder over the story, for it is a strange one, and not such as has ever yet come before me."

Then Walter found fresh courage at these wary and wise words, and told him of his impoverished estate and the love he had to Marjory; and the priest smiled, and said that love was the best thing to win in the world. And then he said that as it was now late, they must sleep; and that the night often brought counsel; and so he took Walter to his chamber, a little precise place with a window on the court; and there he left him; but he first knelt down and prayed, and then laid his hand on Walter's head, and blessed him, and commended him to the merciful keeping of God; and Walter slept sweetly, and was scared that night by no dismal dreams; and in the morning the priest took him to the church, and Walter knelt in a little chapel while the old man said his mass, commending therein the burden of Walter's suffering into the merciful hands of God; so that Walter's heart was greatly lightened.

Then after the mass the priest asked Walter of his health, and whether he had suffered any visitation of evil that night; he said "no," and the priest then said that he had pondered long over the story, which was strange and very dark. But he had little doubt now as to what Walter should do. He did not think that the treasure should be replaced now that it was got up, because it was only flying before the evil and not meeting it, but leaving the sad inheritance for some other man. The poor spirit must be laid to rest, and the treasure used for God's glory. "And therefore," he said, "I think that a church must be built, and dedicated to All Souls; and thus your net will be wide enough to catch the sad spirit. And you must buy a little estate for the support of the chaplain thereof, and so shall all be content."

“All but one,” said Walter sadly, “for there goes my dream of setting up my own house that tumbles down.”

“My son,” said the old priest very gravely, “you must not murmur; it will be enough for you if God take away the sore chastening of your spirit; and for the rest, He will provide.”

“But there is more behind,” he said after a pause. “If you, with an impoverished estate, build a church and endow a priest, there will be questions asked; it will needs be known that you have found a treasure, and it will come, perhaps, to the ears of the King’s Grace, and inquisition will be made; so I shall go this morning to a Lord of the Court, an ancient friend of mine, a discreet man; and I will lay the story before him, if you give me leave; and he will advise.”

Walter saw that the priest’s advice was good; and so he gave him leave; and the priest departed to the Court; but while he was away, as Walter sate sadly over a book, his terrors came upon him with fresh force; the thing drew near him and stood at his shoulder, and he could not dislodge it; it seemed to Walter that it was more malign than ever, and was set upon driving him to some desperate deed; so he rose and paced in the court; but it seemed to move behind him, till he thought he would have gone distraught; but finding the church doors open, he went inside and, in a corner, knelt and prayed, and got some kind of peace; yet he felt all the while as though the presence waited for him at the door, but could not hurt him in the holy shrine; and there Walter made a vow and vowed his life into the hands of God; for he had found the world a harder place than he had thought, and it seemed to him as though he walked among unseen foes. Presently he saw the old priest come into the church, peering about; so Walter rose and came to him; the priest had a contented air, but seemed big with news, and he told Walter that he must go with him at once to the Court. For he had seen the Lord Poynings, that was his friend, who had taken him at once to the king; and the king had heard the story very curiously, and would see Walter himself that day. So Walter fetched the bar of gold and they went at once together; and Walter was full of awe and fear, and asked the priest how he should bear himself; to which the priest said smiling, “As a man, in the presence of a man.” And as they went Walter told him that he had been visited by the terror again, but had found peace in the church; and the priest said, “Ay, there is peace to be had there.”

They came down to the palace, and were at once admitted; the priest and he were led into a little room, full of books, where a man was writing, a venerable man in a furred gown, with a comely face; this was the Lord Poynings, who greeted Walter very gently but with a secret attention; Walter shewed him the bar of gold, and he looked at it long, and presently there came a page who said that the king was at leisure, and would see Mr. Wyatt.

Walter had hoped that the priest, or at least the Lord Poynings, would accompany him; but the message was for himself alone; so he was led along a high corridor with tall stands of arms. The king had been a great warrior in his manhood, and had won many trophies. They came to a great doorway, where the page knocked; a voice cried within, and the page told Walter he must enter alone.

Walter would fain have asked the page how he should make his obeisance; but there was no time now, for the page opened the door, and Walter went in.

He found himself in a small room, hung with green arras. The king was sitting in a great chair, by a table spread out with parchments. Walter first bowed low and then knelt down; the king motioned him to rise, and then said in a quiet and serene voice, “So, sir, you are the gentleman that has found a treasure and would fain be rid of it again.” At these gentle words Walter felt his terrors leave him; the king looked at him with a serious attention; he was a man just passing into age; his head was nearly hairless, and he had a thin face with a long nose, and small lips drawn

together. On his head was a loose velvet cap, and he wore his gown furred; round his neck was a jewel, and he had great rings on his forefingers and thumbs.

The king, hardly pausing for an answer, said, "You look ill, Master Wyatt, and little wonder; sit here in a chair and tell me the tale in a few words."

Walter told his story as shortly as he could with the king's kind eye upon him; the king once or twice interrupted him; he took the bar from Walter's hands, and looked upon it, weighing it in his fingers, and saying, "Ay, it is a mighty treasure." Once or twice he made him repeat a few sentences, and heard the story of the thing that stood near him with a visible awe.

At last he said with a smile, "You have told your story well, sir, and plainly; are you a soldier?" When Walter said "no," he said, "It is a noble trade, nevertheless." Then he said, "Well, sir, the treasure is yours, to use as I understand you will use it for the glory of God and for the peace of the poor spirit, which I doubt not is that of a great knight. But I have no desire to be visited of him," and here he crossed himself. "So let it be thus bestowed—and I will cause a quittance to be made out for you from the Crown, which will take no part in the trove. How many bars did you say?" And when Walter said "fifty," the king said, "It is great wealth; and I wish for your sake, sir, that it were not so sad an inheritance." Then he added, "Well, sir, that is the matter; but I would hear the end of this, for I never knew the like; when your church is built and all things are in order, and let it be done speedily, you shall come and visit me again." And then the king said, with a kindly smile, "And as for the maiden of whom I have heard, be not discouraged; for yours is an ancient house, and it must not be extinguished—and so farewell; and remember that your king wishes you happiness;" and he made a sign that Walter should withdraw. So Walter knelt again and kissed the king's ring, and left the chamber.

When Walter came out he seemed to tread on air; the king's gracious kindness moved him very greatly, and loyalty filled his heart to the brim. He found the priest and the Lord Poynings waiting for him; and presently the two left the palace together, and Walter told the priest what the king had said.

The next day he rode back into Sussex; but he was very sorely beset as he rode, and reached home in great misery. But he wasted no time, but rather went to his new task with great eagerness the foundations of the church were laid, and soon the walls began to rise. Meanwhile Walter had the gold conveyed to the king's Mint; and a message came to him that it would make near upon twenty thousand pounds of gold, a fortune for an earl. So the church was built very massive and great, and a rich estate was bought which would support a college of priests. But Walter's heart was very heavy; for his terrors still came over him from day to day; and he was no nearer settling his own affairs.

Then there began to come to him a sore temptation; he could build his church, and endow his college with lands, and yet he could save something of the treasure to set him free from his own poverty; and day by day this wrought more and more in his mind.

At last one day when he was wandering through the wood, he found himself face to face in the path with Marjory herself; and there was so tender a look in her face that he could no longer resist, so he turned and walked with her, and told her all that was in his heart. "It was all for the love of you," he said, "that I have thus been punished, and now I am no nearer the end;" and then, for he saw that she wept, and that she loved him well, he opened to her his heart, and said that he would keep back part of the treasure, and would save his house, and that they would be wed; and so he kissed her on the lips.

But Marjory was a true-hearted and wise maiden, and loved Walter better than he knew; and she said to him, all trembling for pity, "Dear Walter, it cannot be; this must be given faithfully,

because you are the king's servant, and because you must give the spirit back his own, and because you are he that I love the best; and we will wait; for God tells me that it must be so; and He is truer even than love."

So Walter was ashamed; and he threw unworthy thoughts away; and with the last of the money he caused a fair screen to be made, and windows of rich glass; and the money was thus laid out.

Now while the church was in building—and they made all the haste they could—Walter had days when he was very grievously troubled; but it seemed to him a different sort of trouble. In the first place he looked forward confidently to the day when the dark presence would be withdrawn; and a man who can look forward to a certain ending to his pain can stay himself on that; but, besides that, it seemed to him that he was not now beset by a foe, but guarded as it were by a sentinel. There were days when the horror was very great, and when the thing was always near him whether he sate or walked, whether he was alone or in company; and on those days he withdrew himself from men, and there was a dark shadow on his brow. So that there grew up a kind of mystery about him; but, besides that, he learnt things in those bitter hours that are not taught in any school. He learnt to suffer with all the great company of those who bear heavy and unseen burdens, who move in the grip of fears and stumble under the load of dark necessities. He grew more tender and more strong. He found in his hand the key to many hearts. Before this he had cared little about the thoughts of other men; but now he found himself for ever wondering what the inner thoughts of the hearts of others were, and ready if need were to help to lift their load; he had lived before in careless fellowship with light-hearted persons, but now he was rather drawn to the old and wise and sad; and there fell on him some touch of the holy priesthood that falls on all whose sadness is a fruitful sadness, and who instead of yielding to bitter repining would try to make others happier. If he heard of a sorrow or a distress, his thought was no longer how to put it out of his mind as soon as he might, but of how he might lighten it. So his heart grew wider day by day.

And at last the day came when the church was done; it stood, a fair white shrine with a seemly tower, on the hill-top, and a little way from it was the college for the priests. The Bishop came to consecrate it, and the old Canon came from London, and there was a little gathering of neighbours to see the holy work accomplished.

The Bishop blessed the church very tenderly; he was an old infirm man, but he bore his weakness lightly and serenely. He made Walter the night before tell him the story of the treasure, and found much to wonder at in it.

There was no part of the church or its furniture that he did not solemnly bless; and Walter from his place felt a grave joy to see all so fair and seemly. The priests moved from end to end with the Bishop, in their stiff embroidered robes, and there was a holy smell of incense which strove with the sharp scent of the newly-chiselled wood. The Bishop made them a little sermon and spoke much of the gathering into the fold of spirits that had done their work bravely, even if they had not known the Lord Christ on earth.

After all was over, and the guests were departed, the old Canon said that he must return on the morrow to London, and that he had a message for Walter from the king,—who had not failed to ask him how the work went on,—that Walter was to return with him and tell the king of the fulfilment of the design.

That night Walter had a strange dream; he seemed to stand in a dark place all vaulted over, like a cave that stretched far into the earth; he himself stood in the shadow of a rock, and he was aware of some one passing by him. He looked at him, and saw that he was the warrior that he had seen before in his dream, a small pale man, with a short beard, with rusty armour much

dinted; he held a spear in his hand, and walked restlessly like a man little content. But while Walter watched him, there seemed to be another person drawing near in the opposite direction. This was a tall man, all in white, who brought with him as he came a strange freshness in the dark place, as of air and light, and the scent of flowers; this one came along in a different fashion, with an assured and yet tender air, as though he was making search for some one to whom his coming would be welcome; so the two met and words passed between them; the warrior stood with his hands clasped upon his spear seeming to drink in what was said—he could not hear the words at first, for they were spoken softly, but the last words he heard were, “And you too are of the number.” Then the warrior kneeled down and laid his spear aside, and the other seemed to stoop and bless him, and then went on his way; and the warrior knelt and watched him going with a look in his face as though he had heard wonderful and beautiful news, and could hardly yet believe it; and so holy was the look that Walter felt as though he intruded upon some deep mystery, and moved further into the shadow of the rock; but the warrior rose and came to him where he stood, and looked at him with a half-doubting look, as though he asked pardon, stretching out his hands; and Walter smiled at him, and the other smiled; and at the moment Walter woke in the dawn with a strange joy in his heart, and rising in haste, drew the window curtain aside, and saw the fresh dawn beginning to come in over the woods, and he knew that the burden was lifted from him and that he was free.

In the morning as the old Canon and Walter rode to London, Walter told him the dream; and when he had done, he saw that the old priest was smiling at him with his eyes full of tears, and that he could not speak; so they rode together in that sweet silence which is worth more than many words.

The next day Walter came to see the king: he carried with him a paper to show the king how all had been expended; but he went with no fear, but as though to see a true friend.

The king received him very gladly, and bade Walter tell him all that had been done; so Walter told him, and then speaking very softly told the king the dream; the king mused over the story, and then said, “So he has his heart’s desire.”

Then there was a silence; and then the king, as though breaking out of a pleasant thought, drew from the table a parchment, and said to Walter that he had done well and wisely, and therefore for the trust that he had in him he made him his Sheriff for the County of Sussex, to which was added a large revenue; and there was more to come, for the king bade Walter unhook a sword from the wall, his own sword that he had borne in battle; and therewith he dubbed him knight, and said to him, “Rise up, Sir Walter Wyatt.” Then before he dismissed him, he said to him that he would see him every year at the Court; and then with a smile he added, “And when you next come, I charge you to bring with you my Lady Wyatt.”

And Walter promised this, and kept his word.