ADELICIA OF LOUVAIN

THE ROSE OF BRABANT

M. D. HUGER
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ARUNDEL CASTLE

THE BARBICAN

BY MOONLIGHT
ADELICIA OF LOUVAIN
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BY
M. D. HUGER

WITH A FRONTISPIECE

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DEDICATION

TO THE BELGIANS

May we dwellers beyond the deep waters offer you our homage? It is to-day a proud title to be called a Belgian. It means not only to be brave, unselfish, true, to prize honour above life—it means more, that, come what may, unterrified by Might, you cling to Right.

Go, little Book. Bear with you into this difficult age, the spirit of the Louvaine Princess. Show how great Nations are moulded by men and women, who, in the supreme crises of life, before they act, ask themselves but one question,

SI DIEU LE VEULT.
INTRODUCTION

Queen Adelicia of Louvaine, second wife of Henry the First of England, and daughter of Godfrey of Louvaine, Duke of Brabant, is no fancy sketch, but a historic personage.

Her father married Ida, Countess of Namur, both descendants of Charlemagne, both scions of the Lorraine branch of the Carolingian line, distinguished by personal beauty, intellect, and character. Many of them attained pre-eminence in Church and State. Pope Calixtus II (Guido of Lorraine) was an uncle of Queen Adelicia, and died in 1124, when she was on the English throne.

Tasso, in the Jerusalem Delivered, has immortalised another of her kinsmen, Godfrey de Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine, the leader of the First Crusade and first King of Jerusalem. Godfrey’s successor as king was his brother, Baldwin of Flanders, Count of Edessa. William of Malmesbury, in describing his victory over the Turks in a Syrian defile, adds this encomium: “Baldwin fell little short of being the best soldier that ever existed.”

Adelicia’s eldest brother, Duke Henry of Brabant, like his father, was a born leader of men. Their successes having secured for their country
the blessing of peace, the court became brilliant. Himself no mean poet, Duke Henry welcomed and protected the troubadours. In return, they polished and perfected the tongue of the people. Moreover, they preserved many historic facts and not a few of those touches of nature which prove the whole world kin. Ballads and folk-songs mark the continuity of race ideals. The tooth of Time has not spared those productions, and oftentimes we have them in varying versions. The “Ballad of Strong Arm,” for instance, tells the wondrous tale of this Samson of the Middle Ages until it almost assumes the dignity of history, as narrated in Dugdale’s Baronage.

“The old order changeth,” alas! The jar must give us pause, as, with a wrench, the twentieth century moves on apace. We who are passing hence humbly acknowledge that if the generation committed to our guidance has deteriorated socially, morally, religiously, it must, in great part, be our fault.

In many points, naturally, our views must be at variance; still you are the work of our hands; still you are the hope of the world. Craving forgiveness for sins of omission and commission, to you we appeal. Listen to this last message from one who believes that there is Divine force bestowed upon each consecrated life. Thus: God set men in families. Therein lies the strength of the human fagot. The family is the citadel of the State. “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord”—this is the solemn covenant of manhood assuming the headship of the family. It binds him to guard it from evil; by vigilance, by judgment, by labour, with life. The woman is the heart of the home. “The man is formed upon his mother’s knee.” Can there be a loftier, a holier office? Surely it is mortal sin to trifle with these relationships which God Himself has fixed as He has the courses of the stars. Come back to the Rock, which is higher than we. Stand in your lot till the end of your days. Hold each other to your Heaven-appointed duties.

Men and women of to-day, holding in your hands the welfare of the rising generation, for you this true story has been written. It is a labour of love, that deathless love, which they who have known each other here in Time believe will continue throughout Eternity.

Would that Queen Adelicia herself could be set before you in her habit as she lived. Her womanliness was her abiding charm. Her gentleness was the wand with which she performed miracles of grace. Her heart was pure, therefore she has seen—she still sees—the Beatific Vision.

Let us rejoice that such as these have lived and died, and that their influence still continues. Having done good in their day and generation, their piety and their energy formed the character, and therefore the destiny, of a people whose
native land has been the battle-field of Europe. Often crushed to earth, they have as often risen again. With indomitable patience in well-doing, with "infinite capacity for taking pains," they have climbed to the uppermost position in industry and art.

In the Louvaine University, perchance, they "builded wiser than they knew," since it has trained so many intellects to become cynosures to youth. The Louvaine Library, rich in old historic rolls, garnered varied treasures, from the "quaerers" of troubadours and trouvères to the precious parchments whereon Thomas à Kempis with his own saintly hands wrote down fervid words of inspiration. He was, indeed, a chosen vessel, bringing hither the Light of the World to roll back its millennial darkness.

More than two years ago, this manuscript having long lain completed but unprinted, a valued friend found for it the publisher of our choice, and offered to add to whatever interest the text possesses by contributing some illustrations to help the reader to realise the surroundings in which Adelicia spent her happiest years. By kind permission of the Duke of Norfolk, who now owns the castle of his ancestress, the artist friend referred to, Mrs. Hamel Calder, spent some time at Arundel making studies and sketches for a number of illustrations to the poem, but circumstances have prevented these, with a single exception, from being reproduced.

I desire to express my warm gratitude to Mrs. Calder for her work, of which the specimen appearing as a frontispiece speaks for itself and needs no praise of mine. I leave others to judge how much the book would have gained had it been possible to carry out the original intention and complete the series of illustrations.

I had thought with pleasure of inscribing the book to my artist friend, adding two other names honoured as widely as they are known. Permission had not been asked, and they belong to that order "who do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame." Suddenly a flaming sword was swung between our two worlds. Since that dread day in August we, our friends, and our people, are with the Belgians heart and soul. We seize the opportunity to offer them such solace as our sympathy can bring.

War burst on their devoted heads. Having counted the cost, and knowing well on whom the brunt of battle must fall, King and people kept faith. May God bless and reward them. Wherever His will is done, assuredly there will be laurels for your heroes, balm for your bereaved, food for your famishing, and for your woes beyond words, petition to the King of kings.

Since then, deed after deed of dreadful note has shocked humanity. That a "petty people" should so have thwarted his mighty purposes infuriated the conqueror who had not conquered Paris, but who could raze temple and
tower in undefended towns. When a Vandal torch was set to the Louvaine Library indignation thrilled round the civilised, the Christian world: it mourned over your ancient and priceless possessions destroyed. The wrath of man had wreaked itself upon them to the utmost. Your loss is our loss, O Belgians—your glory is all your own.

In this agony has your imitation of Christ enabled you to say, like Him, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do”? Then, it may be, that it was permitted that à Kempis’s manuscripts should be reduced to ashes, since their teachings are graven on the tablets of your hearts. We, who look on at the tragedy, crying out, “How long, O Lord, how long!” may not yet have practised this counsel of perfection, yet have we learned from you one world-lesson, how the little become great: “It is Righteousness which exalteth a Nation.”

August 1, 1915.
CANTO THE FIRST
THE ROSE OF BRABANT

RONDEAU

Rose of Brabant, Alix la belle! . . .
Hither, ye roses, ope and swell
To greet her in her earliest Spring;
Forthwith your lavish fragrance fling
From garden plot and dewy dell.
Blow, breezes, bear the tale they tell.
Blush not to hear thou dost excel,
'Neath whose light feet strown petals cling,
Rose of Brabant,
From rosebud wreath, to asphodel,
A crown that brow befiteth well. . . .
Cease, minstrels, cease, in vain ye sing.
Meet bride is she for mightiest king,
In ivory palaces to dwell,
Rose of Brabant.
ADELICIA OF LOUVAINÉ
THE ROSE OF BRABANT

This is a broken fragment
From the great human story.

CANTO THE FIRST

Dark gloomed the English shore in cloud and fog;
Its white cliffs caught no gleam of winter's sun
To glint a smiling welcome to the realm
When Adelicia came from far Louvaine
To be its queen. A maiden passing fair,
Gentle and mild and loving in her home,
Heartsick to-day, for those she loved so well.
Royal in strain, twice drew she in her veins
The blood of Charlemagne; royal in heart,
Withholding tears which one of lesser mould
Would have let flow. Not hers to choose a mate
As women lowlier born speak yea or nay.

Upon the ship which bore her to her lord
Rich the pavilion spread to shelter her,
Whereon slow raindrops made an icy fringe.
Shivering, she drew her sable mantle close,
And thought upon a day when sunshine bathed
With summer's red-gold hues her fatherland;
Palace, and trees, and spires seemed all ablaze.

That morn, as wakes the lark to soar and sing,
She rose, a happy child. Ere the sun set,
She was—not child, but woman. The die was cast.
Heavy the totting crown which she must share;
No earthly paradise is hers to roam,
Brambles and thorns and pitfalls bar her way.
A pawn, a living pawn, in the great game
Which in world politics its rulers play,
Imperial maidens, marked for sacrifice,
Are offered dumb, the altar wreathed with flowers.
Fair Maid of Brabant, face to face with fate,
Alone, uncounselled, friendless, and so young
That Time seems endless as Eternity;
With poignant effort crushing down all self,
What wonder if thy heart was numbed to stone.

Fearful that fight when sun and moon stood still.—
Time, racing onward, seemeth to stand still.
We name this moment, Present. Ere the word
Is uttered, hold, 'tis gone. 'Tis backward swept,
Part of the irrevocable, firm-fixed Past.

We change. The Past remains. Out of its depths
Ghosts of dead hopes, dead joys, dead loves, arise.
Not at our call they come; yet rise they will,
And haunt the soul. Woe unto them who have
Slain these true loves, smothered these pure ideals,
Their birthright sold to buy the mess of pottage.

"God's pity fall on them, by greed enslaved,
Who feed the flesh, and let the spirit starve.
God's benison on them who bless the world,
Offering their lives, so peace and faith may live."
These are the words of one who fled the Court
With all its pomp and power, to serve his God,
Befriend his fellow-man—Prince Reynier hight,
Abbot Fulgentius of Afflighem, called
To give high wisdom on that fateful day
When his sweet sister, Adelicia, was
The prize which neighbouring princes coveted.

Blithely the Princess sang a little lay,
A minstrel's gift, breathing the joy of Spring!

Ah, the Spring-time
Is the fling time,
Floats its fragrance everywhere.
Yea, the Spring-time
Is the bring time,
List! her light step draweth near.

Ah, the Spring-time
Is the wing time,
All my thoughts to her are flown.
Yea, the Spring-time
Is the cling time,
With its tendrils round her thrown.

Ah, the Spring-time
Is the swing time
When from earth to heaven we bound.
Yea, the Spring-time
Is the ring time;
Clasp her with its golden round.

Ah, the Spring-time
Is the sing time,
Sweet its music in her voice.
Yea, the Spring-time
Is the king time,
Let me crown her and rejoice.

As from the strings the last chord ling’ring died,
The melody, with some new-wakened thrill,
Wafted her onward to far happy isles.

Dreaming, perchance, of how her web of life
Might glow with threads of gold and colours bright,
In fairer pattern than her hand could trace,
Skilled as it was in princely broderies,
Smiling, the maiden stood beside a frame
Whereon was wrought the English Henry’s arms;
These pretty stitcheries, the Princess’ gift
To one who had espoused her father’s cause
Ere he had won the name his liegemen gave,
“Godfrey the Great,” in stubborn wars which brought
Back ’neath his ducal sway broad provinces,
His ancient heritage, seized by fierce foes.
“An old debt paid, made ere Alix was born,”
Low and sweet her laugh, “The Duke will wonder.
He knows I love him . . . not this self-set task,
Else, long ago, this standard had been sent
To float above the old king’s resting-place—
If e’er he rests. Truth speaks his daughter, Maud,
Whose consort stole away from throne and wife,
Strife is our element, not stagnant peace.

Strife is our element, not stagnant peace.

Full weary seemed to her their wrathful ways.
Smoothing a skein of many mingled hues,
She idly toyed, untwining tangled threads.

Council and levee had been held that day.
The palace swarmed with envoy, knight, and page.
Across the courtyard strode the young d'Albini,
A peerless English knight, who rode away
And left a blankness.

"Goes he hence to-day?"
Whispered a merry maid, in mimic woe,
Pricking her needle in a rose's heart,
To wipe an unshed tear from sparkling eyes.

"Yea, idler," quoth a high-born ancient dame,
Who gently swayed the bevy of fair maids,
"His cavalcade was mustered o'er the bridge
Ere in St. Gertrude's Choir were matins sung.
Warriors or women, all must ready wait,
To go or come at summons of the king."

"Nay," Adelicia spake, "some English girl
Whose colours he will bear through tilt and joust
Doth draw him homeward, swifter than his king."

The clattering hoofs faint in the distance died,
But ere that martial form passed out of sight
Her dream took shape. At this she sighed and
blushed,
“My daughter, we and ours, and all we have
And all we are, are vassals to the State.
Loyal are we, and never count the cost
If we may serve its needs or give it peace
Or build its power, subdue its foes, or make
It powerful friends. We are content to die—
Yea, more,—to live and suffer for these ends.
We reck not our own rede, nor private weal,
We think but of the State.

Now, my sweet child,
Gladly thy father would have kept thee near
To brighten his old age. Gladly he would
Have seen some young lord strive to win his spurs
And claim his guerdon, laying at thy feet
Himself, and all his strength and prowess win,
So thou, and thou alone, mightst be his love,
Both of you in your prime of youth and joy.”

With wan, appealing smile she turned her gaze
Up to his deep true eyes.

“No, my child.
It may not be. Droop not. Accept thy life.
Imperial Princess, counting sixteen springs,
A king—upon whose head have fallen snows
Of more than fifty winters, battle scars,
Griefs manifold, . . . his wife, his son and heir,
All from him reft—all but his barren crown,
Asks me to give him, for his kingdom’s sake,

A fair young queen. Else, war and tumults dire
Will rend the land—a prey to civil strife,
Its hills and streams dyed with its people’s blood.
Henry of England asks thee for his bride. . . .
Start not, my child, but question thine own soul.”

“My father, canst thou find no other way?”

“Ha, if I could, I’d send a blunt, brief No,
And keep my child . . . but this is Louvaine’s will.
To bring a blessing to his island realm,
To keep for our Louvaine its best ally,
Hast thou the Carlovian spirit strong,
To bend thy wishes to the general good?”

“My Sovereign speaks.”

“For Louvaine thou wilt go?”

“Yea, father, since thy wisdom says I should,
I murmur not.”

“In that strange land, Alix,
How wilt thou bear thy lot?”

“My father, like
Thy daughter—”

“Nay, like thy sainted mother,
The Countess Ida. . . . Knows she this day’s work?”
“Yea, and approves. My father, grieve not thus. Our country asks. For Louvaine, I will go.”

“Well may the King propose the richest dower. What is it to thy worth, or...to my loss? I bear thine assent, child—the Council waits—Soon Reynier comes to soothe and bless. Alack! The Church hath claimed my son, and the State—thee.”

Prostrate before a shrine, Fulgentius found
In the dim fading light a clinging form,
And kneeling by her, uttered low the prayers
She could not voice in this her hour of need.
Then, rising, placed upon her fair young head
His priestly blessing, drew her gently on
To yield her confidence, and share her woe.

“Alix la belle, already poet-named,
Now, in the dew of youth, I dared not hope
To have thee choose, with me, the happiest lot—
Become an abbess of the blessed nuns,
Who, when our lazare-house shall ope its doors,
Will care for them, the outcasts of mankind,
Plague-spotted, lepers, fevered, houseless poor.”

She looked up wistfully and clasped her hands:
“Holy Prince Abbot, would my father heed

If, with authority, thou claim me now
The bride of Heaven, and not of earthly king?"

“Nay, nay, my sister, rather spake I then
Of mine own wish than what I thought should be.
A prince’s word is pledged; it cannot be
Retracted—lightly.”

In her eyes hope died.

“Under thy rule, my brother, following thee,
I might have found an easy path to Heaven.”

“An easy path!—

Coals from the altar fired
Fulgentius, mighty Abbot of Afflighem.
Hot was his soul, which poured forth burning words:
“Was His an easy path up Calvary’s Hill?
Or those the martyrs trod? or pilgrim host?
Virgins like thee have faced the lion, the sword,
The stake unblenching. Would we choose our way?—
Son of man...the children of Thy people
Are talking still against Thee, Thou All-wise.
I chafe—because some earthly plan is crossed;
My sister faints in spirit, since she must
Bury some hope. Whither Thou pleasest, go...
Show us Thy way and force us to walk in it.
Where'er we be Thy presence still abides;  
Where lies our work, Lord of the Vineyard, speak?  
We will not plead our weakness, since Thou sayest,  
'Son, as thy day is, so thy strength shall be.'  
Accept me, use me, make me what Thou wilt."

"Pray for me, Reynier, . . . I—am—most—unworthy."

Versed in the human heart, he probed her soul.

"Hast thou, so young, within thee hidden aught?  
Hast thou some darling sin, yet unconfessed?  
Hold'st thou some cherished image, not thy spouse,  
To be cast out? Doubt not that it should be.  
God's wrath will blast the guilty one who kneels  
At His own altar with polluted faith."

Steadfast his gaze.

As steadfast were her eyes.

A rosy flush suffused her beauteous face,  
As low she murmured in her brother's ear:  
"This day, ere I was troth-plight to the king,  
Or knew my father's will . . . as in a dream . . .  
Within my being rose a master thought  
Of such an one as I should wish to love,  
To honour, to obey, his wedded wife

CANTO THE FIRST

To walk with him through the sweet earth to heaven.  
Not to be won unwooed, I strove, I wrought,  
I prayed. . . . At last, the image passed away.  
Absolve me, holy father, from my sin."

Faltering, with drooping eyes, she knelt.

"Lift up thy head, and know thou hast not sinned.  
An arrow by the prince of darkness hurled  
May pierce the purest spirit of earth or sky.  
Thou art the victor, he the vanquished foe,  
Since thou hast checked the wrong and he is fled . . .  
Yea, thou shouldst reign. They only who can rule  
Themselves, are fit to wield earth's sceptres.  
I recognise the overruling hand  
Which shapes our rude attempts and makes us build  
Far wiser, than we know. Sweet sister mine,  
Thy reign will be o'er human hearts—thine own,  
And myriads more. . . . I have not loved yon isle  
As now I will. Conquered and conqueror, there,  
Hateful and hating, made a hell on earth.  
Lanfranc and Anselm and the nobler sort  
Have striven to lift the fallen to their feet,  
Restrain the iron heel which grinds them down,  
The pride and passion of the Norman race.
Thy gentle influence ever near the throne
Will lend the subtlest aid. Naught do I fear
For thee. The King of kings will be thy shield."

King Henry planned himself to bring his bride
In stately progress through his Norman land,
And, when its rebel barons were subdued,
To cross together to the English shore.
But, ere his warlike task was done,
In Wales a rising he himself must quell.
Thus Adelicia gained a long reprieve.

While with her aunt, the Abbess, she sojourned,
Fulgentius trained her for her royal place
And poured strong counsel in a docile ear.
The parting day, he clasped about her neck,
Upon its golden chain, a reliquary,
Chief of his treasures, held beyond all price
By Charlemagne—a portion of the Cross,
No bigger than the thorns which pierced Christ’s brow.

On Adelicia’s heart the relic lay
Against all ill a precious talisman,
Teaching her how to suffer and be still.
She press’d it hard, looked up, and felt strange power.
No longer girl, but queen, deep chasm lay
Between her and her careless childhood years.
This was another Self, a different world.

A noble company was sent to bring
The Louvaine princess to her unquiet realm.
William d’Albini, lord of Chichester,
Kept watch and ward upon the ice-bound deck.
Noting her upturned gaze, itself a prayer,
"Madonna, guard thine own," the soldier breathed,
"Surely, our gracious lady needs thy care."
Then, as the hardy sailors with a cheer
Drew in the oars and made the vessel fast,
Kneeling, he said, "England awaits her Queen."
And offered her a missive from the King.
With inborn majesty of soul and mien
She stood aloof, to read his welcome home.
Unruly Welshmen kept him from her side,
Yet would he bring her into London town.

Spake a high earl who by her litter stood,
"Swift messengers are gone to tell the King
That through the tempest safe your grace hath passed
And without fear."

"My lord, with largess given
To these stout mariners, add thou this word,
That while such brave hearts join to bulwark her,
England and England’s Queen need feel no fear."
CANTO THE SECOND
THE SPARROW

Time was, swift-winged, it led the flock.
No merrier note rang sweet and clear,
Finding its food by rill or rock
With bounteous hand spread far and near.
Bright eyes in eyes responsive, gaze;
Circling through air with graceful motion,
Their nests they build, their broods they raise,
Filled full with rapturous emotion.
Joyous are birds and nestlings in high self-devotion.

Time fled. . . . Upon the house-top, lone,
With drooping head and weary wing,
A sparrow sat. Its plaintive moan,
Piped feebly, could no answer bring.
Fledgelings and mate and flock were flown.
Their world was wide, its circuit narrow,
Stricken and old. Then, Mercy shone.
Th’ Unerring Archer aimed the arrow.—
It falleth to the ground. . . . Ah, God’s eye
watched His sparrow.
Wedded and crowned, . . . the inevitable hour . . .

“Ah, Maiden Mother by the Mercy-seat
Pity and aid.—Why should I dread my lord?
Not for herself—but him—a wife should think.
His woes and wars hold him in cruel grasp.
’Tis I should bring him solace, balm his wounds,
His burthen share; not fear, but love—Alack!
My lord the King. Be still, my heart, be still.”

Slowly the sad King moved towards his Queen.
“My gentle lady, seem I rude to thee,
Leaving thee lonely, who hast come to me
To give thy youth, thy beauty, and thyself?
Thou couldst not thus be left unprized, unloved,
By any man, . . . except a king, . . . a slave—
Slave to his rank, his tasks, his iron fate.
Why should I draw thee too within this chain,
Thou who art made for love? . . . Wouldst thou be free?”
Silence grew tense. She shuddered and was mute;
A mob of angry thoughts within him surged.
Frowning, he nearer drew, and with harsh voice,
“Speak!... When the King asks, speak!
Wouldst thou be free?”
Straight as a lance thrust, her eyes pierced his soul,
Unquailing. Low and firm her accents fell:
“My sire, and now our God, ... make me thy wife.
I dare not wish such sacred vows unsaid;
I could not wish to choose another lord. . . .
Aid me, my King, to be thy helpmate true,
And keep the holy pact betwixt us made.”

He bent his knee, as one who homage pays,
“Scion of Charlemagne, I know thee now.
Thou art no pretty child, with whom to toy
And careless throw away within the hour:
Thou art a Queen, a Queen by right divine. . . .
I cannot, Adelicia, give to thee
A boy’s hot love, but a man’s trust is thine.”

“My King, no greater gift a man can give;
I bless thee for it.”

Her footstool, now, his throne,
Resting his weary head upon her knee,
He placed in hers a hand which showed a scar
Fresh-healed, whereon she lightly pressed her brow.
“It was a Norman arrow made that wound,
Sped by a traitor, not a Welshman’s bow.
How much base coin is current in the realm
Thou little knowest, thou who ringest so true.—
Thou blessest me? . . . Alix, reign here, supreme
Not only o’er the kingdom but the King.—
Unruly subject he—yea, and his child.
Troubled I am to bridle that wild will.
I fear me, he who left his crown and her,
Loved Death itself better than such a wife.
Save for her mother’s sake, this Empress Maud,
In convent walls should dwell in durance vile.
Say that her wrathful temper comes from me,
I am not false, nor, like her, passion’s slave.”

“—Pause, sire, thou gavest her life; destroy not thou
That without which— ”
"Plead not for her, Alix,  
Her guileful ways thy thoughts can never trace."

"Reynier, my brother, Abbot Fulgentius,  
Who knows men’s hearts and through the veil  
of flesh  
Discerns the spirit, holds Emperor Henry fled  
Not from his wife, but driven by remorse.  
Hard on an angry breach, his father died;  
The end he hastened, so the son believed. . . .  
Perhaps in pilgrim garb he sought Christ’s tomb,  
Or found repentance in a hermit’s cell."

"She had his obsequies performed in haste;  
To her, the man is dead. Let him not rise.  
Would thou couldst take her into tutelage  
To make her woman, though she’ll ne’er be saint."

"If thou desire it, yea. And if she will——"

"She? . . . will? . . . she shall.—If not, . . .  
Mort de ma vie!  
I’ll wed her to a man who holds the reins,  
And wields the lash as well—my foeman, too. . . .  
Unless thou bear a son to bless the land,  
Discord and strife will reign and red blood flow  
If Maud should wield the sceptre I lay down."

"Then live, my King, live for thy people’s good."

"Two noble women have I had to wife.  
Edith Matilda sprang from Alfred’s line.  
For her own land she would have died piecemeal.  
I married her to win the Saxon folk.  
She married me to raise them from the dust—  
Yea, and to set upon the English throne  
An Atheling—and in this hope she died.  
Righteous she died and ills to come escaped.  
She governed well and knit the people’s hearts.  
Faithful and wise and brave, I honoured her.  
She bore with me . . . almost forgave my race."

"Placed on earth’s perilous seats, may we, like her,  
Prove humble servants of the King of Heaven,  
Hear His ‘Well done,’ enter His paradise."

"Well says our Rhymer, what he writ of thee:  
‘The fairest woman on the middle earth.’—  
Sweet counsellor, who sittest patient here  
Drawing out half my pain, . . . tell me thy will.  
Thou art so gentle, so compassionate,  
’Tis . . . almost love, but I have ne’er been loved.  
Hast thou no heart’s desire I can fulfil?  
Brief is my respite; I must hasten hence  
To drive the Welshmen to their mountain lairs."
ADELICIA OF LOUVAIN

"Grant them a peace, my Lord. Why keep them foes?"

"The ancient people of this isle, they call Saxon and Norman too, marauding hordes, Bleach their Welsh bones beneath all battlefields, Chieftain and bard and boor disdain all peace. Let my Lord Marchers build their castles strong, Until the crack of doom they'll fight their fight."

"Thou art, as Reynier said, a kingly King, Yea, and a learned one, Beaucler. My King, O that the lamp of knowledge might be set Not in thy palace only, but where'er Darkness doth pall. For all let there be light. Alix prays for thy guidance and assent."

"All thy heart tells thee, do, my gentle Queen. Mine to crush down the proud, be it thine to heal; Where I must hurt, thou mayst the lowly lift. Power and dower are thine; and if they fail, Come thou, look on me with thine angel face Which draws the anger from a cankered soul, Henry will pour the treasures of the land Into thy lap, summon its fittest men To help thee build minster and lazare-house, Shelter and school, whate’er to thee seems best. A man of blood, what dare I offer Heaven? Bring thou the peace of God within the realm."

CANTO THE SECOND

Though the King knew her worth and felt her charm, His settled gloom no mortal could dispel. Seemed it to lift, it rolled in lurid clouds Which whirled him round in paths of night and death. As one who walks upon a crater’s edge And cannot view the sunshine and the sea And all the spacious landscape spread around, Marking the little rifts where sulphurous fumes Break through a crust which roofs devouring flame, So Adelicia watched her stricken lord. "Lion of Justice" was his courtiers’ name For him they feared. Yet if his barons durst But cross his will, then lion-like his rage. To curb the barons’ pride his Queen must learn: "Within their castles they are petty kings; Mutinous oft against their over-lord. Why, one who was the playmate of my boy, William d’Albini, Lord of Chichester, He frets to go and dwell in Normandy. Strong Arm would draw the King’s heart through his throat As that fierce beast’s, slain by his naked hand; Our kinsman, too, and through the rightful branch, Maintained my father’s rival, Guy of Burgundy,
From whom he springs. Like all of Rollo's race, If he is ruled at all, he rules himself."

"Thou choosest him as convoy to thy Queen."

"It was his post, yet went he grudgingly, Pleading his wish to go to Portugal, And by my leave aid its Burgundian king To drive the paynim back to Afric's shore. Why, this d'Albini is the castellan Of Arundel, a castle wholly thine. Thy castle none may enter, not the King, Unless its gracious mistress grant fair leave. Stout soldier he, who holds it for his Queen. When thou seest fit, command him to appear With thine own vassals round thee for thy guard."

"Whom need I as a guard? I am the King's."

"Mine own! Around thee hover heavenly hosts. Smiling thou bearest thy portion of the Cross, Whereon once weighed the sins of all mankind; Thou fearest no evil, since thou knowest no guile.— I have a mind to ope my heart to thee. Alas! the King's lips have forgot to smile, Nor hath passed o'er them once this fearful tale To knell in human ears. Could I, Alix, Share it with thee, it might not haunt me more."

"We'll lay it at the foot of Holy Rood, And pardoned, go our way in joy and peace."

"When I approach a joy, or dream of peace, A leaden cope crushes out heart and hope."

"Thy wife should know thy heart, uphold thy hope. Speak, my good Lord, disburthen thou thy soul."

"Thy spirit fainteth not? ... ... That day we sailed, The sun, the sea and the fair Norman coast, All smiled. And full of life and glee, we left The Atheling. He willed to take the ship Whose captain brought the Conqueror to the strand Where he took seizin of the English realm. Curse on their orgies and their revelries. The Blanche Nef struck upon a traitor rock! To save the heir, they launched a hasty boat; As he rowed safe away, his sister's cry Made him turn back—Mathilde, Countess of Perche, Fair, frail and false, she and her mother both.— At woman's touch virtue goes out of man, Our youthful vices scourge us to the grave.— This feather-weight leaped to his open arms.
Affrighted, all the rest dashed headlong in.
Then sank his boat... down—down—to lowest hell."

"Nay, nay, my King—he gave his life to save.
God will accept a brave man's sacrifice."

"Thou thinkest thus? Then deep in thy pure soul,
Pray thou for him. Unshriven, he went to death.
Thou little knowest what lives we men dare lead.
The steps unto the throne lead not to Heaven."

"The kingdoms of the world were offered Him;
Knowing the tempter's wiles, He succours us.
Unto the King of kings commit thy son."

Vainly she spake to one who heeded not,
Nor heard.

"He may not with his fathers sleep,
Deep-cradled,... tossed,... unburied,... unabsolved...."

Staring straight onward into vacancy,
Wrapped in a pall of nether gloom he seemed.
Sudden, and with a maniac laugh, outburst:
"Of what He loveth best in me, my soul,

The King can rob this God. He took my son.
Fruit of my body slain for my soul's sin,
Cut off for my transgression, my first-born."

As if to intercept an onslaught fierce
Of unseen darts, she rose and stood close by,
Clasping her hands in silent prayer for aid.

"See, how they throng and threat. Gather ye all?
Ye churls, lay down your scythes. He harmed you not.
Ha! Luke de Barré, tear not out his eyes.
Assail me, if ye will... I was your foe.—
But spare the lad. Drag him not down, ye fiends!
Here stands the King. Wreak all your wrath on him."

As if a daemon's force had hurled him thence,
Moaning "My son! My son!" he disappeared
In outer darkness, rushing blindly on.

O'erflowed her soul with pity and with prayer:
"Father, forgive our wild and wicked words.
Thou knowest the pangs beyond our strength to bear,
"A tortured brain, a father's agony,
For Christ's dear sake, heal Thou, and mercy grant."
Her dread disquietude she strove to calm.
"Where is the King?—I—whither should I turn
To succour one who is so sore beset?"

Majestic Niobe, outlined she stood
Against the glowing wax-lights of the room
Whence he had fled, leaving the portal wide.
A flick’ring torch far down a corridor
Made darkness visible. Dense silence reigned
Save for the distant tramp of armed heels.

"The Tower, palace and prison, fortress, grave—
Grim bridal bower for one in May of youth . . ."
Thus thought d’Albini as he came to her,
Bringing her tidings of her lord the King.

Full well his barons knew the grievous spell
Cast o’er their King, which rent him flesh and spirit.
The boldest quailed in superstitious awe:
What must such seizure mean to his young Queen?

To shield her youth d’Albini would have laid
Life at her feet, the powers of darkness dared
With lance and sword, and battle-axe for her,
To spare her such a woe.

She came to him,
One she could trust, with low appealing words:
"The King," she urged, "wilt thou not seek and save?"

"My gracious Queen, I come from him to thee.
He is himself again, and bids me say
Never before had he such swift release,
And well he knows whose prayers availed on high.
The King doth Council hold, and when it ends,
The rest His Majesty will tell himself."

"Thou art indeed the bearer of good news;
Take the Queen’s thanks, my lord of Chichester."

Obeisance made the Earl, and turned to go,
Yet, as he bent the knee, softly he spake:
"My Sovereign, thy first bidding was not done
Because there was no need, but should there be,
William d’Albini is his Queen’s sworn knight.
He will maintain thy cause against a world."
These were the common terms of chivalry,
Gently he spake, yet with such fire and force,
That in her woman’s soul she felt the thrill.
When the heart bounds a crimson flush will rise;
Inflexible the will which quelled that tide.
When Alix answered she was wholly Queen.
"The King hath told me of thy valiant deeds
And of thy worth. Thy pledge we both accept;
'Tis good to have such kinsmen near the throne.
Loyal and true thou art! go, stand by him."
Alix was left alone.

THE CRUSADER'S CHANSON

I
I cannot ask thy love, my Queen,
Yet thank God for my own;
Eyes that thy beauty once have seen,
To wandering are not prone.
I muse through every waking hour
On what a man should be
Who once hath felt thy spirit's power
And raised his soul to thee.

II
Thine eyes reflecting its own hues
So oft to Heaven they turn,
While pity for earth's sufferers dews
Orbs where God's love doth burn.
They show thou seekest not thine own—
Life is self-sacrifice;
Thy heart's desires far from thee thrown
When once His will denies.

CANTO THE SECOND

III
I cannot find my way to thee
O'er any flower-strown road;
It must be hewed out patiently,
Though heavy be the load.
Let me not linger here, supine,
Foremost I'll seek the strife;
There, if thou claim me, Death, as thine,
The prize I win is Life.

IV
Ye may not overwhelm Christ's land—
Roll back, ye paynim host,
Who deem us but a puny band,
Your powers ye idly boast.
Ye count our helmets passing by,
Contemptuous of the few:
Behold the armies in the sky!
More fight for us than you.

V
This gift from God, the body's strength,
Is naught unless I win
The victory o'er all foes, at length,
That rage without, within.
ADELICIA OF LOUVAINÉ

It nerves this arm to know whose prayer
For our great cause ascends;
Let me ride forth to do and dare,
She at the altar bends.

When the King roused
As from a hideous dream, he found himself
Among the guards, bringing him messages
Of fierce fresh inroads by the fiery Welsh,
And worse—rebellion 'mong the Norman lords.
Then stood he every inch their warrior King.
Swift in resource and masterly in plan,
Knowing his men; posting them, right and left.
Conflict but cleared his brain and nerved his arm.
No frenzied fancies held their chieftain bound;
Only while combat raged was torture lulled;
The tug of war without checked that within.

This royal Council being much prolonged
By weighty business, the impetuous King
Sent Lupus, Earl of Chester, for his Queen,
Saluted her, and placed her by his side.
With modest dignity she took the seat
At Council board which she was long to fill.
The King closed hot debates: "Thou sayest well,
Warrenne—go, gather every craft afloat.
Who sweeps the narrow seas, keeps England's crown.

CANTO THE SECOND

We will swoop down upon our Norman foes,
Stand on their hearths and teach them who is
King.
No host we need to hold this realm in awe—
A handful, just to man its castle walls.
Besides, I leave a Regent on the throne;
One who will win all hearts and guide them too,
Her word shall be as mine. Lend her your aid.
Renew your homage to my royal spouse;
Her husband's heart doth safely trust in her.
She will the sceptre sway like Charlemagne,
And, like the Saxon Alfred, teach us all
Withouten fear to speak the simple truth
And worthy live or die."

Throughout the many wars
King Henry waged elsewhere and in France,
There shone some gleams of light amid the gloom
Between the Conquest and the Civil Strife.
Gentle but firm, alike to earl and churl,
A woman's hand for equal justice strove.
For England’s weal Queen Adelicia reigned.
Her gracious mother, Countess of Namur,
Swayed not more wisely her broad smiling lands,
Lifting men's burdens by the imperial rule:
"A Prince's glory is the People's good."
The danegelt, which oppressed the husbandmen,
ADELICIA OF LOUVAIN

Was at her prayer removed. Then heart and hope
Revived throughout the land. At Council board
'Mid doughty earls unwonted courtesy
Prevailed. Accustomed oaths died on their lips.
Serene her presence, and the barons bowed
Beneath the halo rather than the crown.

After King Henry, through the civil strife,
England looked back on Adelicia's sway
As on a happier day forever fled.

CANTO THE THIRD
CHILDREN OF LIGHT

SONNET

God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
Cosmos comes forth; while, dark and dread
and chill,
Chaos is o’er. Life throbs with new-born thrill.
Sun, moon and stars reign o’er primeval night.
God said, Let us make man, with reason bright,
A living soul; though for a time to fill
A mould of clay, lord of his own free will,
Creation’s ruler. Choosing wrong or right,
A head of gold, with feet of iron and clay,
Man fell. How low, how base, how lost his state!

Let us send the Son, God said. Heaven’s throne
Threw on the Cross the light of Love’s blest ray.
God’s threefold light—(O Man, rise up elate!) Of nature, mind and soul, for thee has shone.
CANTO THE THIRD

Though darkness through long ages palled the world,
Already did the dayspring glimmering shine
Upon its highest planes. As the youth's play
Makes strong the bones and sinews of the man,
So the old Schoolmen with their quibbles quaint
Prepared the human mind for higher flights.

"How many angels may on a needle dance?"
Argues alone the folly of the wise;
Astrology and alchemy are but
The wisdom of the fool; yet, sprang from these
(Full grown, from head of power at hammer stroke)
The sciences, the glory of the world
At flood of noontide light in modern times;
Unbiassed judgment, patient zeal for truth
Which gives a lifetime for one precious fact;
The infinite capacity to seek,
Waiting and watching, till by tireless search
A law is grasped, and pygmy man perceives
A portion of the Almighty Maker's plan.
'Tis a proud boast, of all the ages, heir,
Well may we render tribute unto them.
Who made the first steps groping in the dark,  
And to the clerics who through ages bore  
Dead tongues enshrining ever-living truth;  
Yea, and to poets, with their gentle art  
Inspiring martial ardour, softening down  
Barbarian manners into courtly grace.  
Poetic form preserved, its spirit lived  
Though it seemed dead, its precious seed brought forth  
Valour and justice, truth and tenderness.

King Henry loved discourse of learned men.  
A man of deeds, he honoured men of thought.  
"Not carven stones," he said, "but master-minds  
Set Athens as a beacon on its height."

While his Queen builded, he sought out the wise;  
The lustre of his court drew all men's eyes  
To glories fostered by his gracious Queen.  
She studied books, still more she studied him.

Though, ever and anon, the King returned  
And kept his island kingdom well in hand,  
He came not half so oft as his proud peers Desired. Whenever, weary and distraught,  
Their mighty monarch's mightier wrath uprose,  
Beneath his silver curls his eyebrows, black  
As thunderbolts, beetled into a scowl,
CANTO THE THIRD

If to Jerusalem
He marcheth now, my brother is too young. . .

Ay, and thy spouse too old. . . Long years may pass
Ere the Crusaders leave for Holy Land.
Still, when they march, foremost our kinsman goes.

Fulgentius came and the King loved him well.
He joyed to see such noble works achieved:
"Thy good works and thine influence, Alix,
Are writ on high. The half hath not been told.
Thy brother goes to follow in thy steps."

Good reason was the King should be in France,
Yet stayed he on, and when Fulgentius left
With frank regret he spake: "What ruler, yea,
What warrior, hath been marred, . . . to make a priest."

Eclipse and earthquake marked the fatal hour
King Henry left the English shore he ne'er
Again should tread.
These seemed less Nature's throes
Than portents dire, shaking all hearts with dread.
At noon no man could see his neighbour's face,
And all was doubt, distress, perplexity,
Till through the gloom rang out their monarch's voice:

64 ADELICIA OF LOUVAINE

“My King, thou knowest when I came to thee
How sore I grieved for Joscelyn of Louvaine,
The Prattling babe our mother left on earth?"

"Yea. To the regnant Duke of late we sent
Our royal greetings by d'Albini's hand.
Alix, I told them thou didst want this child.
The boy's choice with d'Albini is to dwell,
Being sworn brothers now. There would he learn.
From one so high renowned to be true knight.
Say what thou willest, . . . and it shall be done."

"Nay, my good lord, Fulgentius, our dear brother,
Comes hither by thy leave. Joscelyn he loves,
And thou and he will know what's best to do."

"There is no better and no braver man
Than is d'Albini, yet he is perverse.
When we in Rouen were to hold our court
He could not there command, but must be here;
When we would name him as Justiciar here
And Gloucester take to France . . . flat . . .
he refused.
And now, when he can ill be spared, he has
Assumed the Cross."
Ye British sailors, bend your utmost strength
To reach yon Norman coast. There duty lies.
We are immortal till our work is done.
Then if the summons of the Most High God
Be sent for us, thrice blessed is that man
Who hears that message standing at his post."

Slowly the shadows vanished. Sunset paled
Ere Henry reached his goal in Normandy.
Setting in order matters of the State,
His days were filled, his nights in Council spent.
Nor spared he either time or thought or pains,
In service of the land beneath his rule.

Yet since the toughest bow must be unbent,
From Rouen, with its weight of kingly care,
King Henry and his closest inner Court
Would often ride for rest or for the chase
To Lyons Castle with its pleasant woods.
In cheerful converse would he tell his plans
For these the halcyon years before him spread,
Now that success had crowned his deep-laid schemes
And all the duchy bowed beneath his yoke,
Quelled by resistless power of one firm will
Which through his span, from youth to ripening age,
Had yielded not a jot its single aim
To have and hold beneath unquestioned sway
All Rollo’s race had sought and seen and seized,—

Yea, and to pass these domains to an heir,
Long waited for, but every whit a king:
Like his great grandsire, born to weld in one
Divided realms and races till they mould
Into one orb, clutched in one royal hand,
A mightiest English lord o’er land and sea.

Thus of the royal child would Henry speak:
“Henry Fitz-Empress will upbuild the Church;
Guard homes, both high and low, by equal laws;
And between earl and churl the king will hold
The scales of Justice, check the barons’ pride,
Nor let the lowlier born grow covetous;
Watch lest the lowly in their hard estate
Rooted in envy nourish a blind hate,
Nor let the mighty work his tyrannous will.
No one life should consume its neighbour lives
To feed its ease and pleasure; each must have
His human right to hope and liberty:
The kingliest sceptre is the Golden Rule.
All this and more we are to teach the heir.
Our second Henry shall be wise and great.
Wait till the royal youth is ripe to rule,
Then let me pass in peace. And may he grasp
Sceptre and orb and sword and crown, and hold
The kingly power for the nation’s weal.”

But Henry might not see that fair day’s dawn.
Nay, even as he voiced his hopes and fears,
The hand of death unloosed the silver cord. Swift fell the stroke upon the dying King.

"Why lie I here? Is the chase up?" he asked.

"Yea, my good lord, alas!" the leech replied.

"Is leechcraft nought but to pronounce the doom Which thou canst not avert?... Call hither one Who with the Lord of Life communion holds."

"Here am I, King, since first I knew thy need."

"Hugo of Rouen, friend unto thy King, And servant of High God, the Judge of kings, Stand by me to the end which draweth nigh, If yonder leech speak true."

"Hence, friends, pray ye for him whose hour is come. Leave the Archbishop to his heavy task To break the linked chain which binds my soul, And whiten every stain too black for Heaven. Bethink ye that your call may quickly come. If one among you hath betrayed his King, Henry gives you his fullest pardon now, And only asks that ye will keep your oath:

"He speaketh truth. Prepare to meet thy God. He summons thee."

"Maintain the empress on her rightful throne, And guard it for the heir, the second Henry."

"Henry of England, we have kept our faith To thee and to thy throne, and with our lives We will maintain it for thy house and line."

"Good Lord Archbishop, give to them thy blessing. These are my faithful kinsmen, kinsmen and friends; Yet are we men, frail at our utmost strength. I bound them by an oath in Edward's palace To hold and keep the kingdom. If they fail, Rebellious tumults will break forth again, And our distracted land to warfare turn,— Peace... peace, I pray. God give our England peace."

With that last prayer made for his country's weal, Great Henry laid aside this mortal coil.

"God grant to him the peace he loved so well, He made a kingly and a Christian end."

So wrote the saintly Hugo to the Pope.

**ANTIPHON**

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Life (continued)

With aching breast,
With all to dread,
By vain hopes fed,
By cares oppressed,
Cast down, forlorn,
Our loved ones gone,
Our joys all flown,
Our souls upturn,
Our work is vain.

Death (continued)

In the stillled heart
Love casts out fear,
And hope draws near
As we depart.
How pure, how sweet,
Our loved ones stand,
A glorious band,
Our souls to greet.

Here all tears cease;
We pass, how blest,
Through toil to rest,
Through pain to peace.

In Reading Abbey was King Henry laid,
Which he had founded for his last long rest.
For a full year Queen Adelicia lived
In Wilton Priory, cloistered, where she made,
With prayers and alms, petitions unto Heaven
For the King's soul and for her own and all
She loved on earth or underneath its sod:
There to faint echo sunk the tumult loud
Of Maud and Stephen battling for a crown
She gladly had laid down.

When all the dues
Of widowhood were paid, at Arundel
She made her home in peace and dignity.
THE LEGEND OF STRONG ARM

"Sir Knight, the tourney’s prize is won.  
Whose colours dost thou wear?  
For whose bright eyes such deeds are done  
A Queen desires to hear.

Thy challengers in dust lie prone,  
And—what thou dost not see—  
More than thy foes are overturned—  
Aye, dames of high degree.

For thee, brave Knight, ’tis fortune’s hour,  
With all a Queen can give,  
Beauty and love and lands and power,  
No mightier prince will live.

One who hath shared the throne of France,  
Doth offer, with the ring  
(Be thou troth free by happy chance),  
To make thee more than king."

"Thou jestest, lady: I am bound  
In heart, in faith, in mind,  
To one who should indeed be crowned  
The queen of womankind."

73
"Proud Knight, her name. We fain would hear
Who is she doth outshine
All lesser princes far and near,
This paragon of thine?"

"Only in prayer I breathe her name.
For this my knees are worn
That I should keep me free from blame,
As should her servant sworn.

She is a handmaid of the Lord.
Him, too, I humbly serve.
Against His foes would draw the sword,
Nor e'er from duty swerve."

"This is some saint thou dost adore,
Limned on a missal page.
Forget this vision, take the store
Of joys that fit thine age.

Thou hast won glory on the field—
Enjoy thy well-earned ease.
No saint would give what we would yield—
Bright eyes which shine to please."

"She is no vision, Queen. In sooth,
A woman formed by God
To teach us men that strength and ruth
May dwell in one abode.

Her tresses long, of silky gold,
Her eyes of cornflower blue,
Are the least charms man's heart to hold,
Of one so high and true."

"I wagered" (sweet her treacherous smile)—
"Full oft too far one strays—
That I thy secret could beguile.
Now, homeward through the maze."

Just as they reached a hidden cave,
In flew her brodered veil.
A knight as courteous as brave
To seek it could not fail.

Within this lair a lion reposed,
Fierce roaring when it heard
The iron door which on them closed
And hush'd her vengeful word:

"Tear out its heart, else shalt thou learn
(To quell thine idle vaunt),
When woman's love to hate doth turn,
Thy spirit she can daunt."

Against a rock, unarmed, he stood
And watched its great eyes glare.
Nigher it crept to seek its food
And felt his hands were bare.
He wrenched the yawning jaws and rent
The lion wide apart.
Its tongue down to the pavement went
And forth he drew its heart.

The French King sought his valiant guest—
A little page had seen, . . .
They found him—'twas an easy quest—
Imprisoned by the Queen.

"Come hither, page, and bear her veil
Unto thy lady fair."
The page sped swift, with wondrous tale;
The Knight went on to prayer.

The young King spake unto his guest:
"We, too, would wend with thee.
A great deliverance didst thou wrest,
And both should bend the knee.

Although the sword none better wield,
Thy great heart guards thee more." . . .
Strong Arm, they called him, and his shield
A tongueless lion bore.

CANTO THE FOURTH

At Arundel, she wedded d'Albini,
Who, England knew, was worthy of his wife,
"Eximia Regina" though she was.
Fighting the Saracen in Portugal,
He drove them o'er the mountains and returned
To his own England, stopping first in France,
Where in a tournament he won the prize,
To lay it at Queen Adelicia's feet.

Victor in fierce fought fields, none was so hard
As mastering the true love born in him
When first he saw her in Duke Godfrey's court,
Ere his liege lord had sought her as his Queen.

"From that first glance," he told her, "there has been
No other thought. Thee only have I loved.
I fled to France—and farther would I fare,
Doubting my power to check all utterance,
Lest, in some frantic hour, I lose the right
To meet, as now I do, with unstained faith,
Thy holy eyes, my wife, my gift from God,
Mine own Alix."
“Ah, didst thou love me then?
So long? ... so well?
’Tis sweet to know it now.
Full glad am I thou’rt strong, though I am weak,
And thankful thou didst bury it in thy breast.”

“Didst thou not feel it once, that bridal night?
My fears for thee betrayed it to us both.
Gently, but firmly didst thou quench the flame
And send me to my duty, passion chilled.”

“Yea, thou wast loyal to thy King ... thy self.”

“I durst not, even in fancy, love the Queen.
Passion lay dead; I worshipped, from afar,
The Maid of Brabant merged into the saint.”

“Nay, nay, my lord of Arundel, I fear
Thou’lt find the saint is flown, ... the woman here.”

“Before all England—aye, all Christendom—
Thy life so holy, so magnanimous,
Has shone, till all men reverence thy name.”

“Heart-thirsty have I been to hear thee speak,
Craving thy praise, ... thy gift, though not my due.”

“Passerose I named thee in thine earliest bloom.
Sweeter to me than England’s symbol flower.
Passerose thou wilt be ever; thy sweet soul
Is fairer far than aught which springs from earth.”

“What happiness was kept for us in store. ...
Never, d’Albini, had I married thee,
Unless I honoured thee above all men.
Nor wouldst thou have me as thy wedded wife
Unless thou knewest in heart I kept my vows.
Not such as thou art overcome of evil.
Alas! for them who fall by Satan’s wiles,
Whose union is unblest.”

“Praise be to Him,
Who hath not suffered us to fall so low,
And in His own good hour hath joined our lives
And given me my heart’s desire, Alix.”

Keen were her trials while she graced the throne.
Without a friendship—by her rank debarred—
In crowded palaces, a lonely soul;
Nor held her kingdom one of kindred blood.
Serene the years she passed at Arundel,
Where all a woman’s loves and hopes were hers.
As wife and mother Adelicia shone;
Her sons and daughters crowned her life with joy.
ADELICIA OF LOUVAINE

Her youngest brother, Joscelyn of Louvaine,
Formed by d'Albini made a world-famed knight.
The lord of Petworth and its broad domains,
(d'Albini's gift when they to England came),
The heiress of the Percies was his bride.
Stoutly he held her castles and his own.
The mother of a mighty race was she;
And his fair Agnes Adelicia loved.

Dear were their princely offspring as her own.
While brave Earl Percy hied him to the wars,
Oft did they refuge find at Arundel.

Yet even thither, in the Civil Strife
Fierce combatants would march with clash of arms.
Stephen pursued the Empress Maud so close
That to the Queen she fled at Arundel,
A perilous guest, kept safe within its walls.
Before its ancient Saxon barbican
King Stephen threatened an assault unless
The Queen deliver him his enemy.

"I shelter her," she wrote, "not as thy foe,
But as King Henry's child, my late dear lord.
Well hope I that thou wilt not bring thy host
Against thine uncle's Queen and his sole child.
Yet if this be thy will, and thou persist,
I will defend her to extremity.
Rather I pray thee of thy courtesy,

CANTO THE FOURTH

To grant safe-conduct into Bristol town
Unto the Empress and her bodyguard.
So shalt thou act as chivalry demands,
And this I ask of thee, as a true knight."

Stephen withdrew his force, granted her prayer—
A tribute to her virtues, not to Maud's.
Thus, by her wisdom and her firmness too,
She builded her own house and kept it safe;
Taking no side, since immemorial use
Let England choose her King by her, "Yea, Yea."
If Stephen reverenced aught it was the Queen,
Yet was it prudence to respect her wish.
More powerful by far than this new King
The Earls of Arundel and Percy, each
Was highly honoured of the English folk.
Crusaders both, to Council called abroad,
Had they returned this quarrel to espouse,
His ill-poised throne had soon been overset.
"Their names are our defence," well said the Queen.

Such halcyon days must end while earth is earth.
So long the purposed Crusade had endured
Desertions, difficulties, doubts, delays,
She lost all dread, while smooth the years rolled on.
The summons came, ... a knell, and joy was dead.
“Arm me, Alix, the soldier of the Lord.”
Laying her head upon the Cross he wore,
She pleaded hard. With an unwavering soul
Within himself he murmured, “Dieu le veult.”

Closer he drew her to his own firm breast
While she poured out a woman’s bitter plaint.
“Dost thou not serve Him here? What seest thou?
An empty tomb. . . He is not there, but risen. . .
Thou canst not stay? Then take me too, my lord.

Mine hour of peril near . . . and thou . . . afar.
I do not fear the hardships of the way—
Only this parting, which may be for aye. . .
Sunder’d so long, alas! so brief our bliss,
Put not this great wide world between us twain,
Leave me not.”

Slowly his arms unclasped,
Tenderness infinite welled in his eyes,
All his lips uttered was but “Dieu le veult”:
The soldier of the Cross marched forth to war.

Weary the years lagged on, her warrior gone.
Again was it her office to assume
The reins of government, so gladly left

In the strong hands of him who ruled so well.
For her four sons she had a perfect mould
Whereby to shape them for the noblest use
To God and man. There nested to her heart
Twin girls, who brought her solace sweet;
Yet lived they not to win a father’s smile.
Whatever came or went, still “Dieu le veult,”
Re-echoing in her breast, subdued her soul.

Queen Adelicia rose to utmost height.
Her prayers, her alms, her service, all were given—
Lofty or lowly, let the office be.
The wretched she relieved, the hungry fed.
Who for the stranger spreads the board, she knew,
Entertains angels oftimes unawares;
But when a palmer came from Palestine,
Gently she ministered to every need,
Hasting to glean some tidings of her lord.
For the third time since he had marched away
On Maundy Thursday in the Abbey porch
She knelt and washed the feet of twelve poor men;
Thus humbly following Him who died for us.

At eve arrived d’Albini’s messenger. . .
“The struggle over, forces westward turned.”
Perhaps ere Yule he might reach Arundel.
Glad was her soul that this long woe would end.
ADELICIA OF LOUVAINE

She kept her Easter with a joyful mind.
King Stephen came and craved an audience,
Praying her intercession with her lord,
To bring a waft of peace through this turmoil.
Worn-out in body and mind, the King was ill,
Nor had he any counsellor like him.

“What could he do?” she asked; “thou wouldst not heed.
Thou seekest thine own ends, not England’s good—
This tear-stain’d England he so truly loves!”

“Grant, gentle Queen, that Stephen is not wise,
Nor brave, nor true, nor upright, like thy lord:
Few of us are. Yet such his power o’er men,
That each of us goes forth more wise, more brave,
More true, after a conference with him.
’Tis said a sculptor made an image once
So godlike that the meanest human dwarf,
Perceiving as he passed what man might be,
Straightened his misshaped limbs and stood erect.
Your lord makes lesser men rise nearer Heaven.
He has the kingly temper—I, the crown.
That of Jerusalem, just proffered him,
He put aside. Homeward his force he leads—
Couriers will I despatch to tell him how
We wait for him. Much is he needed here.”

CANTO THE FOURTH

These things she pondered in a lightsome heart,
Making all ready to deliver up
Her stewardship into her lord’s own hands.
Each morn she counted one day less to wait.
Singing within herself a song of joy
When—like a levin bolt from a blue sky—
There showed a white scale on her fair soft arm.
Or ere the leech spake out the word of dread,
The smitten one had faced her fearful fate.
“Send thou swift messengers to greet my lord;
Tell him . . . the utter truth, . . . and that I go
Unto the lazar-house at Afflighem . . .
Whither he may not come. There will I pray
For him . . . and ours . . . until . . . God send release.”

The letters from King Stephen urged return.
D’Albini to Earl Percy left his host;
With utmost speed to England must he haste
Where love and duty beckoned.

Nearing home,
Queen Adelicia’s messengers arrived . . .
Heartbroken, back he turned to Afflighem.
CANTO THE FIFTH
BEYOND THE BOURNE

RONDEAU

Beyond the bourne! that veil 'twixt Here and There—
So slight the tenderest nursling cleaves it clear,
So strong, a giant, quailing, stands aghast,
His love unrescued who, Death's captive, passed
That line invisible, so far, so near.
Into that darkness human eyes may stare,
Seeking in vain the mystery to bare.
"Whither, Beloved?" who hearing the "need fare,"
Swept swiftly from our ken into the vast
Beyond the bourne.
Though we in darkness sit, sheddest thou no tear?
Is mortal life so dread, thou wouldst not dare
To cross again where thy freed spirit was last
Earth-bound? Nay, not to tell the joy thou hast
Of light and life and love we too shall share
Beyond the bourne.
CANTO THE FIFTH

“Open the iron bars and let me in.”

“Nay, mighty Prince, thou couldst not reach this gate,
Save that Fulgentius’ word is here supreme,
So far, no farther, may the living pass.
Death is the warder of the inner door,
Who enter there are counted dead to earth. . . .
In funeral rank the lepers are aligned,
And foremost one who beats his breast and wails
‘She laved my feet, ’tis I who gave the plague.’
Mass for the dying Queen has now been sung, . . .
The Abbot bids them wait till thou depart,
When the bell tolls for her.”

“Go thy way, monk.
She comes,—Alix, my queen, my love, my life.
I may not enter in, and yet . . . I will.
Nor leech, nor priest, nor prince shall part us twain.”

She pointed to the leper’s badge she wore,
“Unclean, unclean.”
ADELICIA OF LOUVAINE

"Mine own beloved,—stay—
Thou wouldst not have me harm what I love best?"

"Whom didst thou ever harm, thou blessed one?"

"In my blind passion would I harm thy soul,
Laying these impious hands on the Lord's badge.
But thou wast steadfast, faithful to the Cross.
So wast thou kept through Syrian fever safe,
Through wounds and woes and perils by thy path."

"Nay, but I fought with Death to come to thee.
Think not thy love was sin, thou angel one."

"It is forgiven—for I loved thee much,
And He, who made our hearts, He understands.
E'en while He chasteneth, He is pitiful.
What time He took my babes He sent me peace,—
With thine own tender eyes they looked on me,
And learned to lisp thy name and . . . fell asleep.
I felt His love for them. . . . I felt His scourge."

"Yea, Alix, great have been thy griefs, but now—"

"Now thou art there to rear our sons aright.
Agnes will keep our little Countess d'Eu.

CANTO THE FIFTH

A girl doth need a woman's cherishing.
Thou couldst deny her naught—as thou dost me.
Our boys . . ."

"Will Joscelyn guard. I bide with thee."

"That day I learned mine ill and hither fled,
They came from Chichester, our little lads,
So full of life and glee,—not to my arms.
Yet, from afar, I watched them at their game
Of mimic war, manning the battlements.
Perhaps they know not yet that I am lost.
But thou art there, thank God, to make them men.
Teach them, what well thou knowest—(high over men
Though they be set, yet are they under God),—
Mercy to man, humility to Him.
Thou'lt teach them faith, truth, justice, righteousness,
And for their country and their God to stand."

"Thou thinkest, Alix, that I will go to them,
And leave thee? Where thou livest, will I live;
Where thou diest, will I die . . . or there, or here.
These lepers will I tend . . . if thou be one."

"I would not let thee. . . . 'Tis a loathsome scourge."

"Passerose, the body goeth, dust to dust;
It is thy soul, beyond compare, I love."
I know thou dost; then heed thy wife's last prayer:
Live on . . . for my sake, . . . and the land we love.
What are my pains to England's agony?
Stephen hath now no other son; the crown
Be his for life . . . then Henry's. Save the State.
I told him that thou wouldst . . . with all thy might."

"I am no orator to sway men's wills."

"Thou art thyself; therein thy power lies."

"I will not leave thee here. . . . If—Dieu le veult?"

Pealed out, with heavy swing, the passing bell.
D'Albini paled. Firm, Adelicia stood.
The bearers brought her bier. She trembled not.
Fulgentius from the sanctuary came:
"My brother," spake he, low, to d'Albini,
"I prayed for healing and for life, . . . in vain.
For her the time is short and . . . Heaven is near."

She caught his words, his prophet spirit, too:
"Heaven is near. . . . Thou mighty heart, dost hear? —

CANTO THE FIFTH

I have a message,—Ere thou fiarest hence
The burthen of the flesh will fall from me."

Fulgentius raised his hands above them both,
Blessing of Holy Church on them bestowed—
The ages lay revealed before the seer:
"Soldier and handmaid of the Lord our God,
Upon you both His gracious face doth shine
And on your children's children, through all time.
Yea, never shall ye want a man to stand
Before Him, even till the day of doom."

Soft from the bier floated a dying voice
Above the dirge the monks and lepers chaunt:
"Bless him, my Brother, and our little ones.
Thou, who hast been earth's supreme happiness,
Farewell, . . . until I meet thee, soul to soul,
Before the great white Throne. Yea, Dieu le veult."

THE BRIDGE

"Life is a bridge, build not upon it."
Oriental Proverb.

The whence and whither,
How came we hither,
When go we thither,
We vainly ask.
ADELICIA OF LOUVAIN

We may not tarry;
Our foe to parry,
Our load to carry,
    Is all our task.

'Neath cares harassing,
Why bend, amassing?
We are but passing
   The bridge of life.
Build not upon it;
Ere we have done it,
Yon stream hath won it,
    With ruins rife.

Needs roof or rafter,
The soul, hereafter,
When time shall waft her
   To Heaven's dome?
Then, pass we over,
And, swift, discover
Across the river
    Love, rest, and home.

FINIS