...der track, steep and rough as it is, ... that ye might gain the valley be... Then on to the prince, and tell ...w we fare."

"...y fair lord, how can we hope to ...the horses?" asked Norbury.

"...cannot go round to them, for they ...be upon ye ere ye could come ...m. Think ye that ye have heart ... to clamber down this cliff?"

"...f we but a rope."

"...re is one here. It is but one hun...et long, and for the rest ye must ... to God and to your fingers. Can ...y it, Alleyne?"

"...th all my heart, my dear lord, but ...n I leave you in such a strait?"

"...y, it is to serve me that ye go. And ...Norbury?"

The silent squire said nothing, but he ...up the rope, and, having examined ...tied one end firmly round a project...ock. Then he cast off his breast... thigh pieces, and greaves, while Al... followed his example.

"...l Chandos, or Calverley, or Knolles, ...the prince have gone forward," ... Sir Nigel. "Now may God speed ...re ye are brave and worthy men."

...ss, indeed, a task which might make ...part of the bravest sink within him. ...thin cord dangling down the face ... brown cliff seemed from above to ... little more than half-way down it. ...d stretched the rugged rock, wet and ..., with a green tuft here and there ...ing out from it, but little sign of ...or foothold. Far below the jagged ... of the boulders bristled up, dark ...menacing. Norbury tugged thrice ...all his strength upon the cord, and ...owered himself over the edge, while ...dred anxious faces peered over at ... he slowly clambered downwards to ...d of the rope. Twice he stretched ...s foot, and twice he failed to reach ...ot at which he aimed, but even as ...ung himself for a third effort a stone ... sling buzzed like a wasp from ...the rocks and struck him full upon ...de of his head. His grasp relaxed, ...et slipped, and in an instant he was ...shed and mangled corpse upon the ... ridges beneath him.

"...I have no better fortune," said Al... leading Sir Nigel aside. "I pray ...my dear lord, that you will give my ...e service to the Lady Maude, and say ... that I was ever her true servant ...ost unworthy cavalier."

...old knight said no word, but he put ...d on either shoulder, and kissed his ..., with the tears shining in his eyes. ...e sprang to the rope, and sliding ...y down, soon found himself at its ...ity. From above it seemed as ... rope and cliff were well-nigh touch...ut now, when swinging a hundred feet ... the squire found that he could scarce ... the face of the rock with his foot, ...hat it was as smooth as glass, with ...sting-place where a mouse could ... Some three feet lower, however, ...e lit upon a long jagged crack which ...d downwards, and this he must reach ... would save not only his own poor ...ut that of the eight-score men above ... Yet it were madness to spring for ...arrow slit with nought but the wet, ...h rock to cling to. He swung for a ...nt, full of thought, and even as he ... there another of the hellish stones ...through his curls, and struck a clip ...the face of the cliff. Up he clambered ... feet, drew up the loose end after ...ensuing his belt, held on with knee ...ith elbow while he spliced the long ... leathern belt to the end of the cord: ...owering himself as far as he could ... swung backwards and forwards un... hand reached the crack, then he ...e rope and clung to the face of the ... Another stone struck him on the ...and he heard a sound like a breaking ... with a keen stabbing pain which shot ...gh his chest. Yet it was no time now ...nk of pain or ache. There was his ...nd his eight-score comrades, and they ...e plucked from the jaws of death. On ...mbered, with his hand shuffling down ...ng sloping crack, sometimes bearing ...s weight upon his arms, at others ... some small shelf or tuft on which ...t his foot. Would he never pass over ...fifty feet? He dared not look down, ...ould but grope slowly onwards, his ...to the cliff, his fingers clutching, his ...scraping and feeling for a support. ... vein and crack and mottling of that ...of rock remained forever stamped ... his memory. At last, however, his ...ame upon a broad resting-place and ...ntured to cast a glance downwards. ...k God! he had reached the highest ...ose fatal pinnacles upon which his ...de had fallen. Quickly now he ...k from rock to rock until his feet ... on the ground, and he had his hand ...hed out for the horse's rein, when ...g-stone struck him on the head, and ...ropped senseless upon the ground.

"...evil blow it was for Alleyne, but a ... one still for him who struck it. ...Spanish slinger, seeing the youth lie ... and judging from his dress that he ...no common man, rushed forward to ...er him, knowing well that the bow...above him had expended their last ... He was still three paces, however, ... his victim's side when John upon ...liff above plucked up a huge boulder, ...poising it for an instant, dropped it ... fatal aim upon the slinger beneath ... It stuck upon his shoulder, and ...d him, crushing and screaming, to ...round, while Alleyne, recalled to his ...s by these shrill cries in his very ...staggered on to his feet, and gazed ... about him. His eyes fell upon the ..., grazing upon the scanty pasture, ...n an instant all had come back to ...his mission, his comrades, the need ...aste. He was dizzy, sick, faint, but ...ust not die, and he must not tarry, ...his life meant many lives that day. ...n instant he was in his saddle and ...g down the valley. Loud rang the ... charger's hoofs over rock and reef, ... the fire flew from the stroke of iron, ...the loose stones showered up behind ... But his head was whirling round, ...blood was gushing from his brow, his ...de, his mouth. Ever keener and ...er was the deadly pain which shot ...red-hot arrow through his side. He ...that his eye was glazing, his senses ...ing from him, his grasp upon the reins ...ing. Then with one mighty effort, he ...d up all his strength for a single ...te. Stooping down, he loosened the ...p-straps, bound his knees tightly to ...addle flaps, twisted his hands in the ..., and then, putting the gallant ...'s head for the mountain path, he ...d the spurs in and fell forward faint...with his face buried in the coarse, ... mane.

"...tie could be ever remember of that ...ride. Half conscious, but ever with ...one thought beating in his mind, he ...d the horse onwards, rushing swift...wn steep ravines, over huge boulders, ... the edges of black abysses. Dim ...ories he had of beetling cliffs, of a ... of huts with wondering faces at the ..., of foaming, clattering water, and ... bristle of mountain beeches. Once, ...e had ridden far, he heard behind ...three deep, sullen shouts, which told ...that his comrades had set their faces ...e foe once more. Then all was blank, ... he woke to find kindly blue English ... peering down upon him and to hear ...blessed sound of his country's speech. ... were but a foraging party—a hun... archers and as many men at-arms—...their leader was Sir Hugh Calverley, ...he was not a man to bide idle when ... blows were to be had not three ...es from him. A scout was sent fly...with a message to the camp, and Sir ..., with his two hundred men, thun... off to the rescue. With them went ...ne, still bound to his saddle, still ...ing with blood, and swooning and ...vering, and swooning once again. On ... rode, and on, until, at last, topping ...ge, they looked down upon the fate...alley. Alas! and alas! for the sight ...met their eyes.

"...re, beneath them, was the blood...d hill, and from the highest pinnacle ... flaunted the yellow and white ban...with the lions and the towers of the ...

royal house of Castile. Up the long slope rushed ranks and ranks of men—exultant, shouting, with waving pennons and brandished arms. Over the whole summit were dense throngs of knights, with no enemy that could be seen to face them, save only that at one corner of the plateau an eddy and swirl amid the crowded mass seemed to show that all resistance was not yet at an end. At the sight a deep groan of rage and of despair went up from the baffled rescuers, and, spurring on their horses, they clattered down the long and winding path which led to the valley beneath.

But they were too late to avenge, as they had been too late to save. Long ere they could gain the level ground, the Spaniards, seeing them riding swiftly amid the rocks, and being ignorant of their numbers, drew off from the captured hill, and, having secured their few prisoners, rode slowly in a long column, with drum-beating and cymbal-clashing, out of the valley. Their rear ranks were already passing out of sight ere the newcomers were urging their panting, foaming horses up the slope which had been the scene of that long-drawn and bloody fight.

And a fearsome sight it was that met their eyes! Across the lower end lay the dense heap of men and horses where the first arrow-storm had burst. Above, the bodies of the dead and the dying—French, Spanish, and Aragonese—lay thick and thicker, until they covered the cold ground two and three deep in one dreadful tangle of slaughter. Above them lay the Englishmen in their lines, even as they had stood, and higher yet upon the plateau a wild medley of the dead of all nations, where the last deadly grapple had left them. In the further corner, under the shadow of a great rock, there crouched seven bowmen, with great John in the centre of them—all wounded, weary, and in sorry case, but still unconquered, with their blood-stained weapons waving and their voices ringing a welcome to their countrymen. Alleyne rode across to John, while Sir Hugh Calverley followed close behind him.

"By Saint George!" cried Sir Hugh, "I have never seen signs of so stern a fight, and I am right glad that we have been in time to save you."

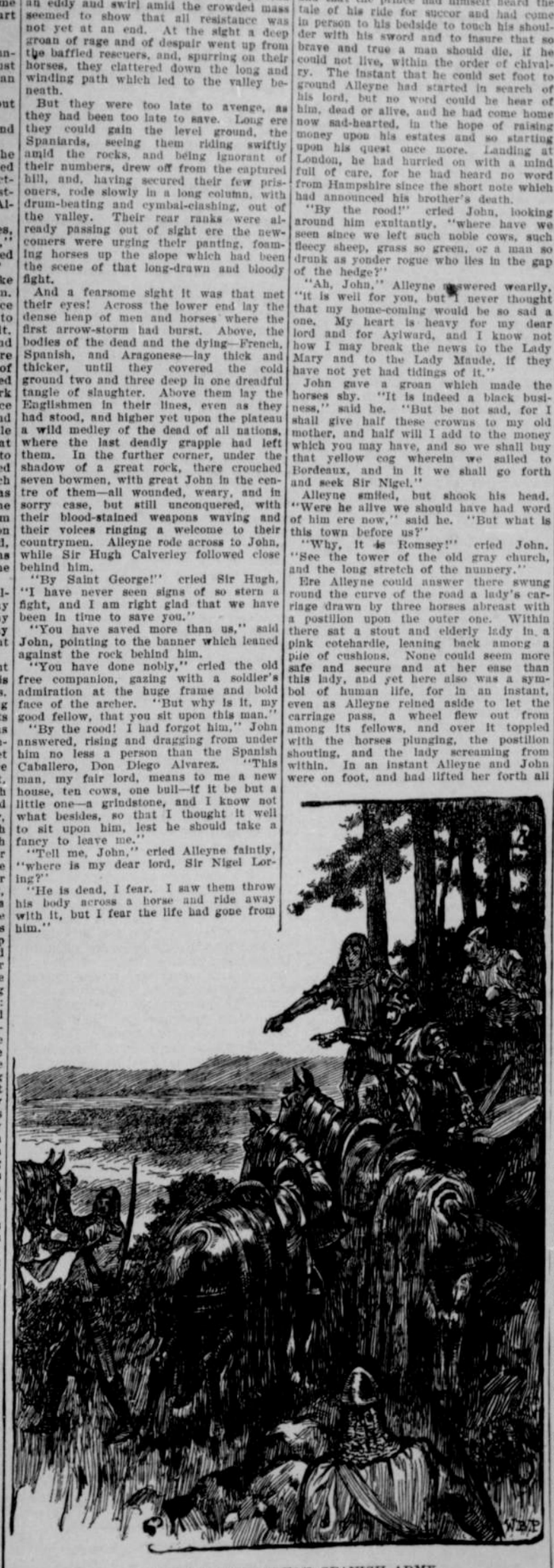
"You have saved more than us," said John, pointing to the banner which leaned against the rock behind him.

"You have done nobly," cried the old free companion, gazing with a soldier's admiration at the huge frame and bold face of the archer. "But why is it, my good fellow, that you sit upon this man."

"By the rood! I had forgot him," John answered, rising and dragging from under him no less a person than the Spanish Caballero, Don Diego Alvarez. "This man, my fair lord, means to me a new house, ten cows, one bull—if it be but a little one—a grindstone, and I know not what besides, so that I thought it well to sit upon him, lest he should take a fancy to leave me."

"Tell me, John," cried Alleyne faintly, "where is my dear lord, Sir Nigel Loring?"

"He is dead, I fear. I saw them throw his body across a horse and ride away with it, but I fear the life had gone from him."



BELOW LAY THE GREAT SPANISH ARMY.

"Now woe worth me! And where is Aylward?"

"He sprang upon a riderless horse and rode after Sir Nigel to save him. I saw them throng around him, and he is either taken or slain."

"Blow the bugles!" cried Sir Hugh, with a scowling brow.

"We must back to camp, and ere three days I trust that we may see these Spaniards again. I would fain have ye all in my company."

"We are of the White Company, my fair lord," said John.

"Nay, the White Company is here disbanded," answered Sir Hugh solemnly, looking round him at the lines of silent figures. "Look to the brave squire, for I fear he will never see the sun rise again."

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was a bright morning four months after that fatal fight in the Spanish barranca. The sun was yet low in the heavens, and the red cows stood in the long shadow of the elms, chewing the cud and gazing with great vacant eyes at two horsemen who were spurring it down the long white road which dipped and curved away back to where the towers and pinnacles beneath the flat-topped hill marked the old town of Winchester.

Of the riders, one was young, graceful and fair, clad in plain doublet and hosen of blue Brussels cloth, which served to show his active and well-knit figure. He rode with lips compressed and anxious face, as one who has much care upon his mind. Young as he was, and peaceful as was his dress, the dainty golden spurs which twinkled upon his heels proclaimed his knighthood, while a long seam upon his brow and a scar upon his temple gave a manly grace to his refined and delicate countenance. His comrade was a large, red-headed man upon a great black horse, with a huge canvas bag slung from his saddle-bow. His broad, brown face was lighted by a continual smile, and he looked slowly from side to side with eyes which twinkled and shone with delight. Well might John rejoice, for was he not back in his native Hamoshire, had he not Don Diego's five thousand crowns rasping against his knee, and above all was he not himself squire now to Sir Alleyne Edrickson, the young Sorman of Minstead, lately knighted by the sword of the Black Prince himself, and esteemed by the whole army as one of the most rising of the soldiers of England.

For the last stand of the Company had been told throughout Christendom wherever a brave deed of arms was loved, and honors had flowed in upon the few who had survived it. For two months Alleyne had wavered betwixt death and life, with a broken rib and a shattered head; yet youth and strength and a cleanly life were all upon his side, and he awoke from his long delirium to find that the war was over, that the Spaniards and their allies had been crushed at Navaretta, and that the prince had himself heard the tale of his ride for succor and had come in person to his bedside to touch his shoulder with his sword and to insure that so brave and true a man should die, if he could not live, within the order of chivalry. The instant that he could set foot to ground Alleyne had started in search of his lord, but no word could he hear of him, dead or alive, and he had come home now sad-hearted, in the hope of raising money upon his estates and so starting upon his quest once more. Landing at London, he had hurried on with a mind full of care, for he had heard no word from Hampshire since the short note which had announced his brother's death.

"By the rood!" cried John, looking around him exultantly, "where have we seen since we left such noble cows, such fleecy sheep, grass so green, or a man so drunk as yonder rogue who lies in the gap of the hedge?"

"Ah, John," Alleyne answered wearily, "it is well for you, but I never thought that my home-coming would be so sad a one. My heart is heavy for my dear lord and for Aylward, and I know not how I may break the news to the Lady Mary and to the Lady Maude, if they have not yet had tidings of it."

John gave a groan which made the horses shy. "It is indeed a black business," said he. "But be not sad, for I shall give half these crowns to my old mother, and half will I add to the money which you may have, and so we shall buy that yellow cog wherein we sailed to Bordeaux, and in it we shall go forth and seek Sir Nigel."

Alleyne smiled, but shook his head. "Were he alive we should have had word of him ere now," said he. "But what is this town before us?"

"Why, it is Romsey!" cried John. "See the tower of the old gray church, and the long stretch of the nunnery."

Ere Alleyne could answer there swung round the curve of the road a lady's carriage drawn by three horses abreast with a postilion upon the outer one. Within there sat a stout and elderly lady in a pink cotehardie, leaning back among a pile of cushions. None could seem more safe and secure and at her ease than this lady, and yet here also was a symbol of human life, for in an instant, even as Alleyne reined aside to let the carriage pass, a wheel flew out from among its fellows, and over it toppled with the horses plunging, the postilion shouting, and the lady screaming from within. In an instant Alleyne and John were on foot, and had lifted her forth all in a shake with fear, but little the worse for her mischance.

"I trust that you have taken no hurt, my fair lady," said Alleyne.

"Nay, I have had no scath, but I am much beholden to you, gentle sirs. Soldiers ye are, as one may readily see. I am myself a soldier's daughter," she added, "and my heart ever goes out to a brave man."

"We are indeed fresh from Spain," quoth Alleyne.

"From Spain, say you? Ah! it was an ill and sorry thing that so many should throw away the lives that Heaven gave them. In sooth, it is bad for those who fall, but worse for those who bide behind. I have but now bid farewell to one who hath lost all in this cruel war."

"And how that, lady?"

"She is a young damsel of these parts, and she goes now into a nunnery. Alack! it is not a year since she was the fairest maid from Avon to Itchen, and now it was more than I could abide to wait at Romsey Nunnery to see her put the white veil upon her face, for she was made for a wife and not for the cloister. Did you ever, gentle sir, hear of a body of men called "The White Company' over yonder?"

"Surely so," cried both the comrades.

"Her father was the leader of it, and her lover served under him as squire. News hath come that not one of the Company was left alive, and so, poor lamb, she hath—"

"Lady!" cried Alleyne, with catching breath, "is it the Lady Maude Loring of whom you speak?"

"It is, in sooth."

"Maude! And in a nunnery! Did then, the thought of her father's death so move her?"

"Her father!" cried the lady, smiling. "Nay; Maude is a good daughter, but I think it was this young golden-haired squire of whom I have heard who has made her turn her back upon the world."

"And I stand talking here!" cried Alleyne wildly. "Come, John, come!"

Rushing to his horse, he swung himself into the saddle, and was off down the road in a rolling cloud of dust as fast as his good steed could tear him.

Great had been the rejoicing amid the Romsey nuns when the Lady Maude Loring had craved admission into their order—for was she not sole child and heiress of the old knight, with farms and fiefs which she could bring to the great nunnery? Long and earnest had been the talks of the gaunt lady abbess, in which she had conjured the young novice to turn forever from the world, and to rest her bruised heart under the broad and peaceful shelter of the church. And now, when all was settled, and when abbess and lady superior had had their will, it was but fitting that some pomp and show should mark the glad occasion.

But alas! for plots and plans when love and youth and nature, and above all, fortune are arrayed against them. Who is this travel-stained youth who dares to ride so madly through the lines of staring burghers? Why does he fling himself from his horse and stare so strangely about him? See how he has rushed through the incense-bearers, thrust aside lay-sister Agatha, scattered the two-and-twenty damosels who sang so sweetly—and he stands before the novice with his hands outstretched, and his face shining, and the light of love in his gray eyes. Her foot is on the very lintel of the church, and yet he bars the way—and she, she thinks no more of the wise words and holy rede of the lady abbess, but she hath given a sobbing cry and hath fallen forward with his arms around her drooping body and her wet cheek upon his breast. A sorry sight this for the gaunt abbess, an ill lesson too for the stainless two-and-twenty who have ever been taught that the way of nature is the way of sin. But Maude and Alleyne cared little for this. A dank, cold air comes out from the black arch before them. Without, the sun shines bright and the birds are singing amid the ivy on the drooping beeches. Their choice is made, and they turn away hand-in-hand, with their backs to the darkness and their faces to the light.

* * * *

Very quiet was the wedding in the old priory church at Christchurch, where Father Christopher read the service, and there were few to see save Lady Loring and John, and a dozen bowmen from the castle. The Lady of Twynham had drooped and pined for weary months, so that her face was harsher and less comely than before, yet she still hoped on, for her lord had come through so many dangers that she could scarce believe that he might be stricken down at last. It had been her wish to start for Spain and to search for him, but Alleyne persuaded her to let him go in her place. There was much to look after, now that the lands of Minstead were joined to those of Twynham, and Alleyne had promised her that if she would but bide with his wife he would never come back to Hampshire again until he had gained some news, good or ill of her lord and lover.

The yellow cog had been engaged, with Goodwin Hawtayne in command, and a month after the wedding Alleyne rode down to Bucklershard to see if she had come round yet from Southampton. On the way he passed the fishing village of Pitt's Deep, and marked that a little creyer or brig was tackling off the land, as though about to anchor there. On his way back, as he rode towards the village, he saw that she had indeed anchored, and that many boats were round her, bearing cargo to the shore.

A bow-shot from Pitt's Deep there was an inn a little back from the road, very large and wide-spread, with a great green bush hung upon a pole from one of the upper windows. At this window, he marked, as he rode up, that a man was seated who appeared to be craning his neck in his direction. Alleyne was still looking up to him, when a woman came rushing from the open door of the inn, and made as though she would climb a tree, looking back the while with a laughing face. Wondering what these doings might mean, Alleyne tied his horse and was walking amid the trees toward the inn, when there shot from the entrance a second woman who made also for the trees. Close at her heels came a burly, brown-faced man, who leaned against the door post and laughed loudly with his hand to his side. "Ah, ma belles!" he cried, and is it thus you treat me? Ah, ma petites! I swear by these fingerbones that I would not hurt a hair of your pretty heads; but I have been among the black paynim, and, by my hilt! it does me good to look at your English cheeks. Come, drink a stoup of muscadine with me, mes enges, for my heart is warm to be among ye again."

At the sight of the man, Alleyne had stood staring, but at the sound of his voice such a thrill of joy bubbled up in his heart that he had to bite his lips to keep himself from shouting outright. But a deeper pleasure yet was in store. Even as he looked, the window above was pushed outwards, and the voice of the man whom he and seen there came out from it. "Aylward," cried the voice, "I have seen just now a very worthy person come down the road, though my eyes could scarce discern whether he carried coat-armor. I pray you to wait upon him and tell him that a very humble knight of England abides here, so that if he be in need of advancement, or have any small vow upon his soul, or desire to exalt his lady, I may help him to accomplish it."

Aylward at this order came forward amid the trees, and in an instant the two men were clinging in each other's arms, laughing and shouting and patting each other in their delight; while Sir Nigel came running with his sword, under the impression that some bickering had broken out, only to embrace and be embraced himself, until all three were hoarse with their questions and outcries and congratulations.

On their journey home through the woods Alleyne learnt their wondrous story: how, when Sir Nigel came to his senses, he with his fellow-captive had been hurried to the coast, and conveyed by sea to their captor's castle; how upon the way they had been taken by a Barbary rover, and how they exchanged their light captivity for a seat on a galley bench and hard labor at the pirate's oars; how, in the port at Barbary, Sir Nigel had slain the Moorish captain, and had swum with Aylward to a small coaster which they had taken, and so made their way to England with a rich cargo to reward them for their toils. All this Alleyne listened to, until the dark keep of Twynham towered above them in the gloaming, and they saw the red sun lying athwart the rippling Avon. No need to speak of the glad hearts at Twynham Castle that night, nor of the rich offerings from out that Moorish cargo which found their way to the chapel of Father Christopher.

Sir Nigel Loring lived for many years, full of honor and laden with every blessing. He rode no more to the wars, but he found his way to every jousting within thirty miles; and the Hampshire youth treasured it as the highest honor when a word of praise fell from him as to their management of their horses, or their breaking of their lances. So he lived and so he died, the most revered and the happiest man in all his native shire.

For Sir Alleyne Edricson and for his beautiful bride the future had also naught but what is good. Twice he fought in France, and came back each time laden with honors. A high place at court was given to him, and he spent many years at Windsor under the second Richard and the fourth Henry—where he received the honor of the Garter, and won the name of being a brave soldier, a true-hearted gentleman, and a great lover and patron of every art and science which refines or ennobles life.

As to John, he took unto himself a village maid and settled in Lyndhurst, where his five thousand crowns made him the richest franklin for many miles around. For many years he drank his ale every night at the "Pied Merlin," which was now kept by his friend Aylward, who had wedded the good widow to whom he had committed his plunder. The strong men and the bowmen of the country round used to drop in there of an evening to wrestle a fall with John or to shoot a round with Aylward, but, though a silver shilling was to be the prize of the victory, it has never been reported that any man earned much money in that fashion. So they lived, these men, in their own, lusty, cheery fashion—rude and rough, but honest, kindly and true. Let us thank God if we have outgrown their vices. Let us pray to God that we may ever hold their virtues.

THE END.

COOL GARMENTS FOR COMFORT.

The Shirtwaist the Leader—White the Coolest Color.

Bertha Browning.

The month of August means a good many warm days and those who stay at home as well as the more fortunate individuals who enjoy the coolness of some resort need cool apparel. It has always been true everywhere that white proved much less warm beneath a scorching sun than a darker tone and the American woman has adopted it as her summer wardrobe this year. Everything which can be of white will be found much cooler and pleasanter to look upon than other colors and this means every article of dress. It is a scientific fact that white is the coolest, as black is the warmest color.

The fashion makers have supplied womankind with real summer dress this year. No more hot collars and fitted waists for summer wear but instead, neck wear of sheerest lace or material and loose comfortable-looking blouses suitable for all ages. The shirt waist is the real monarch of the field for general wear and this takes a very wide variety of forms, from the dressy and fussy waist elaborately embroidered and inset with lace to the real negligee shirt with its low collar and half-sleeves. The latter is a new comer this season and is favored by the girl who enjoys any sort of out-of-door sport. It is made of madras, linen, lawn and silk and prettily trimmed with flat collar, cuffs and tie of the same or a contrasting color.

Beside these shirts, there are very attractive little white flannel suits which may be worn on any outing, for tennis, or driving which consist of shirt waist and skirt in simple design. White appears in everything with black as a smart contrast. Black is promised a great prominence in the early fall but it seems to have anticipated its popularity to such an extent that it is gracing all smart costumes. When a suit is of white the hat and gloves are of black as well as the footgear. Numerous black and white malinette ruches and boas are being worn and look especially well on women, not too young.

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Many very attractive negligees for house wear are quite simple to make and require but a small outlay to realize. These are of lawn and dimity which come in the most attractive designs. One pretty pattern slips on over the head. It has a square yoke cut out in square neck, and the lower portion hangs in full folds from the yoke. The sleeves are of elbow length and these too hang free from any band at the lower edge. The advantages of this are that it can be slipped on at a second's notice and no buttons remain to be fastened when it is once on. Then, too, it is immensely becoming to any wearer. The sack ends at the hipline. Others are of the loose flowing variety edged down the front and about the neck and sleeves with soft filmy ruffles. These are of white lawn and Swiss. Dotted Swiss makes up into very attractive negligees as well as blouses for nice wear.

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