

Fair Margaret



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By
H. RIDER HAGGARD

CENTENNIAL EDITION

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Revised and Edited
By
Michael J. McHugh

GREAT LIGHT PUBLICATIONS

Fair Margaret— Centennial Edition

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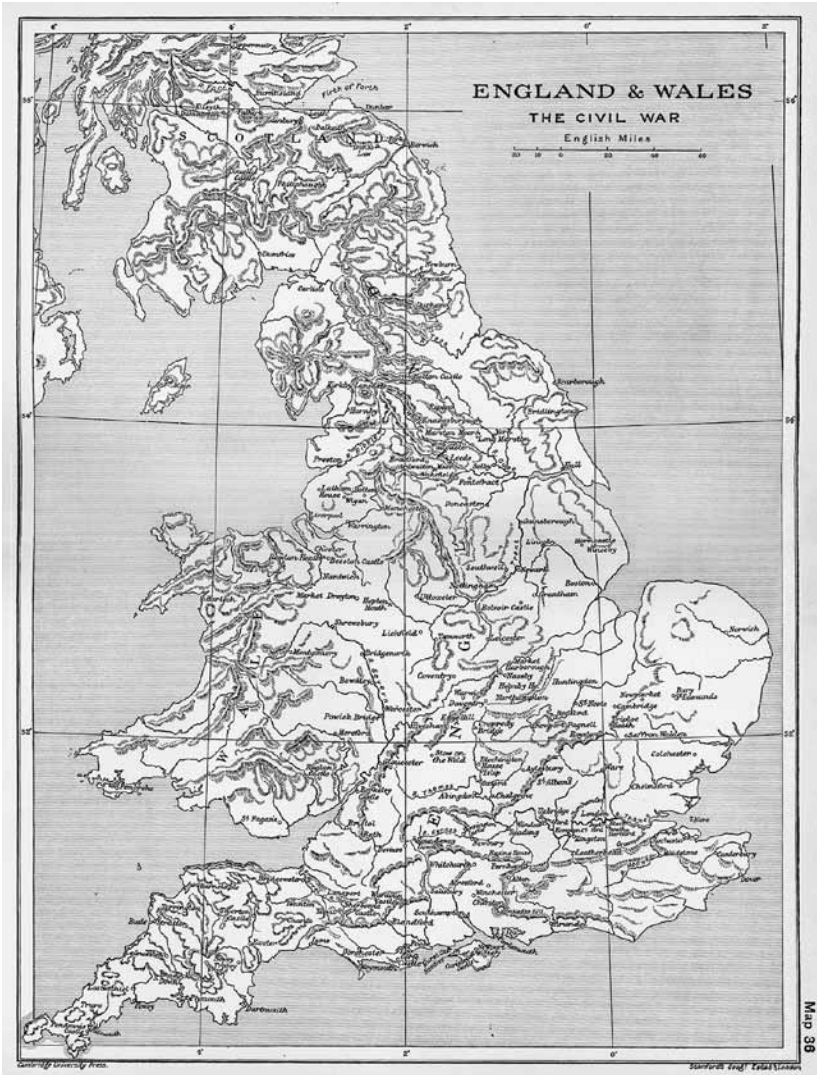
Fair Margaret was published slightly over one century ago, yet it has received relatively little recognition over the years compared to Haggard's more celebrated works; among them, *King Solomon's Mines*. Now, through this new Centennial Edition, the publisher hopes to introduce this little known classic to a whole new generation of readers.

About The Author

Sir Henry Rider Haggard was born in England on June 22, 1856. He was the eighth of ten children, and received most of his primary and elementary education at home through private tutors and occasionally at a local grammar school. His parents took him on frequent trips to mainland Europe during his childhood days. In 1875, when Haggard was nineteen, he traveled to South Africa to work as a secretary for the newly appointed governor of Natal. Three years later, the young Englishman resigned his post at the high court of Pretoria to take up ostrich farming in Natal. Haggard visited England in 1880 and was married on August 11 to Mariana L. Margitson.

The newlyweds soon returned to their farm in Natal to resume the business of farming. In his spare time, Haggard began to work on his first book project, and also began to take up the study of law. In 1882, the Haggard family sold their farm in Natal and returned to England. Henry Haggard completed his law studies in 1884 and accepted a call to the bar of attorneys in London where he worked as an assistant to a chief judge. It was during this time that he made use of what he describes as his “somewhat ample leisure time in chambers” to write his first successful novel, *King Solomon’s Mines*. This book, as he put it, “finally settled the question of whether to pursue a legal or literary career.”

Henry Haggard went on to write over sixty-six novels, as well as numerous papers, producing nearly one book for each year of his life. Haggard traveled extensively throughout the world during much of his married life. His knowledge of the culture, customs, and terrain of many parts of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East enabled him to construct a host of adventure novels set in various locations around the globe. The recognition of his contributions as a writer were crowned in the year 1912 when Henry Rider Haggard was knighted. Sir Haggard died in London on May 14, 1925, at the age of sixty-eight.



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Preface

The novel you are about to read is a work of historical fiction. It is set in the late 1400's, when Henry VII was ruling over England and seeking to curry favor with Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain. This is also the period in which these Roman Catholic monarchs were cooperating in what became known as the Spanish Inquisition (1478-1833).

Fair Margaret presents the touching story of a woman from England who gets caught up in a series of events which exposes her, and particularly her father who was living the secret life of a non-conformist Christian from Jewish ancestry, to the terrors of the Inquisition. It should come as no surprise, that the difficulties that Margaret and her family members are forced to endure cause them to face many hard choices and perilous adventures. The drama that is presented in the pages of this book, therefore, not only emphasizes the immense value of religious liberty, but also displays the uncommon courage of ordinary men and women that chose to stand against the tyrants of their age.

It is important for every reader to understand that all of the essential aspects of the original version of *Fair Margaret* were left intact during the process of revising/updating the manuscript. For those readers who wonder why it is even necessary to revise or update a literary gem, I simply submit that even the finest of gemstones need a bit of careful cutting and polishing to enhance their original luster. One century ago, Henry Haggard was regarded as one of the world's premier writers of adventure novels and historical fiction. Many of his works are now rightly regarded as classics. The book that follows, *Fair Margaret*, deserves to be counted among the best of Sir Haggard's history-based novels. It is the sincere belief of the publishers of the Centennial Edition of this stirring novel, that it is now in a state to be enjoyed to the fullest for yet another century by all those who love good literature.

Michael J. McHugh

2009



CHAPTER 1

How Peter Met the Spaniard

It was a spring afternoon in the sixth year of the reign of King Henry VII of England. There had been a great show in London, for that day his Grace opened the newly convened Parliament, and announced to his faithful followers—who received the news with much cheering, since war is ever popular at first—his intention of invading France, and of personally commanding the English armies. In Parliament itself, it is true, the general enthusiasm was somewhat more subdued when it became apparent that they would be asked to raise the needful funds; but the crowds without, formed for the most part of persons who would not be called upon to fund the enterprise, did not permit that side of the question to trouble them. So when their gracious liege appeared, surrounded by his glittering escort of nobles and men-at-arms, they threw their caps into the air, and shouted until they were hoarse.

The king himself, although still young in years, was already a weary-looking man with a slender, pinched face. After he had stood before the crowd for a brief period, he began to smile a little sarcastically at their clamor. Yet, he remembered how glad he should be to hear such ardent cheers who still sat upon a somewhat doubtful throne, and proceeded, therefore, to speak a few encouraging words to the faithful. He also sent for two or three of the leaders of the people, and gave them his royal hand. This monarch even permitted certain children to touch his royal robe that they might be endowed with a sense of his greatness. Then, having paused a while to receive petitions from poor folk, which he handed to one of his officers to be read, amidst renewed shouting he passed on to the

great feast that was being prepared for him in his palace at Westminster.

Among those who rode near to him was the ambassador, de Ayala, commissioned to the English Court by the Spanish sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella, and his following of splendidly attired lords and secretaries. That Spain was much in favor there was evident from his place in the procession. How could it be otherwise, indeed, seeing that already, four years or more before, at the age of twelve months, Prince Arthur, the eldest son of the king, had been formally affianced to little Catherine, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, who was one year and nine months old? For in those days it was thought well that the affections of princes and princesses should be directed early into such paths as their royal parents and governors considered likely to prove most profitable to themselves.

At the ambassador's left hand, mounted on a fine black horse, rode a tall cavalier. He was dressed richly, but simply, in black velvet, with a cap made from the same material in which was fastened a single pearl. He was about thirty-five years of age, and very handsome, having piercing dark eyes and a stern, clean-cut face.

In every man, it is said, there can be found a resemblance, often vague and fanciful to be sure, to some beast or bird or other creature. In the case of this cavalier, it was not hard to imagine what animal he looked like. The man resembled an eagle, which, whether by chance or design, was the crest he bore upon his servants' livery, as well as upon the trappings of his horse. The unflinching eyes, the hooked nose, the air of pride and mastery, the thin, long hand, the quick grace of movement, all suggested that king of birds. It suggested also, as his motto said, that what he sought he would find, and what he found he would keep. Just now he was watching the interview between the English king and the leaders of the crowd whom his Grace had been pleased to summon, with an air of mingled amusement and contempt.

"You find the scene strange, Marquis," said the ambassador, glancing at him shrewdly.

“My title is Senor, here in England, if it pleases your Excellency,” he answered sternly. “Senor d’Aguilar, as I trust you will remember, a marquis is one who lives in Spain and functions as an accredited envoy to the Moors of Granada. I see myself as one who is seeking to be a humble servant of the Holy Church,” and he crossed himself, “and to that end travels abroad—upon the Church’s business, and that of their Majesties’.”

“And his own too, sometimes, I believe,” responded the ambassador without hesitation. “But to be frank, what I do not understand about you, Senor d’Aguilar, as I know that you have abandoned political ambitions, is why you do not enter my profession, and put on the black robe once and for all. What did I say—black? With your opportunities and connections it might well be red by now, with a hat to match.”

The Senor d’Aguilar smiled a little as he replied.

“You said, I think, that sometimes I travel on my own business. Well, there is your answer. You are right, I have abandoned worldly ambitions—most of them. They are troublesome, and for some people, if they be born too high and yet not altogether rightly, very dangerous. The acorn of ambition often grows into an oak from which men hang.”

“Or into a log upon which men’s heads can be cut off. Senor, I congratulate you. You have the wisdom that grasps the substance and lets the shadows flit. It is really very rare.”

“You asked why I do not change the nature of my garments,” went on the agitated cavalier, without noticing the interruption. “Excellency, to be frank, because of my own passions. I have failings like other men. For instance, wealth is that substance of which you spoke, rule is the shadow; he who has the wealth has the real rule. At this stage in my life, bright eyes too easily draw me away, or a hate may prompt me to avenge, and these things do not suit robes, black or red.”

“Yet many such things have been done by those who wore them,” replied the ambassador with meaning.

“Aye, Excellency, to the discredit of Holy Church, as you, a priest, know better than most men. Let the earth be evil as it must; but let the Church be like heaven above, pure, unstained,

the vault of prayer, the house of mercy and of righteous judgment, wherein walks no sinner such as I," and again he crossed himself.

There was a ring of earnestness in the speaker's voice that caused de Ayala, who knew something of his private reputation, to look at him curiously.

"A true fanatic, and therefore to us a useful man," he thought to himself, "though one who knows how to make the best of both the sacred and the secular world;" but aloud he said, "No wonder that our Church rejoices in such a son, and that her enemies tremble when he lifts her sword. But, Senor, you have not told me what you think of all this ceremony and people."

"The people I know well, Excellency, for I dwelt among them in past years and speak their language; and that is why I have left Granada to look after itself for a while, and am here today, to watch and make report...." He checked himself, then added, "As for the ceremony, were I a king I would have it otherwise. Why, in that house just now those vulgar Commons—for so they call them, do they not?—almost threatened their royal master when he humbly craved a tithe of the country's wealth to fight the country's war. Yes, and I saw him turn pale and tremble at the rough voices, as though their echoes shook his throne. I tell you, Excellency, that the time will come in this land when those Commons will be king. Look now at that fellow whom his Grace holds by the hand, calling him 'sir' and 'master.' The King knows, as I do, that this man is a heretic, a Jew in disguise, whose sins are worthy to be purged by fire. Why, to my knowledge, that reprobate Israelite said things last night against the Church—"

"Whereof the Church, or its servant, doubtless made notes to be used when the time comes," broke in de Ayala. "But the audience now before us is done, and his Highness beckons us forward to the feast, where there will be no heretics to vex us, and, as it is Lent, not much to eat. Come, Senor! for we but delay the procession."

Three hours quickly passed, and the sun began to sink, for even though it was the spring season it was still cold upon the

marshy lands of Westminster, and there was frost in the air. On the open space opposite to the banqueting-hall, in front of which were gathered squires and grooms with horses, gathered many of the citizens of London, who, after their day's work was done, had come to see the king pass by in state. Among these were a man and a lady, the latter attended by a lively young woman, who were all three sufficiently striking in appearance to attract some notice in the throng.

The man, a person of about thirty years of age, was dressed in merchant's clothing with the traditional colored cummerbund tied snugly around his waist, complimented by a sturdy knife that was tucked in his girdle. He gave the appearance of being over six feet in height, while his companion, in her flowing, hooded cloak, was, for a woman, also of unusually tall stature. He was not, strictly speaking, a handsome man, being somewhat too high of forehead and prominent of feature; moreover, one of his clean-shaven cheeks, the right, was marred by the long, red scar of a sword-cut which stretched from the temple to his strong chin. His face, however, was open and manly, if rather stern, while his gray eyes were steady and frank. It was not the face of a merchant, but rather that of one of a high ranking military officer, accustomed to camps and war. For the rest, his figure was well-built and active, and his voice when he spoke, which was seldom, was clear and distinct. It was a voice that was well cultivated and disciplined—again, not the voice of a merchant.

Of the lady's figure little could be seen because of the long cloak that hid it, but the face, which appeared within its hood when she turned and the dying sunlight filled her eyes, was lovely indeed. From the day of her birth to her death-day Margaret Castell—fair Margaret, as she was called—had the gift of a beautiful countenance to a degree that is rarely granted to woman. Rounded and flower-like was that face, most delicately tinted also, with rich and curving lips and a broad, snow-white brow. But the wonder of it, what distinguished her above everything else from other beautiful women of her time, was to be found in her eyes, for these were not blue or gray, as might have been expected from her general coloring, but large, black, and lustrous; soft, too, as the eyes

of a deer, and overhung by curling ebony lashes. The effect of these eyes of hers shining above those tinted cheeks and beneath the brow of ivory whiteness was so strange as to be almost startling. They caught the beholder and held him, as might the sudden sight of a rose in snow, or the morning star hanging luminous among the mists of dawn. Although fair Margaret carried herself in a gentle and modest manner, few women and even fewer men on the good side of fifty, could soon forget beholding her sweet eyes, especially if he were privileged to see how well they matched the hair of chestnut, shading into black, that sat above them and fell, tress upon tress, upon her shapely shoulders.

The tall man that escorted her at this hour was named Peter Brome. He looked a little anxious as he began to stare around at the crowd, then, turning, addressed Margaret in his strong, clear voice.

“There are rough folk around,” he said; “do you think you should stop here? Your father might be angered, Cousin.”

Here it may be explained that in reality their family ties were of the most distant nature, a mere dash of blood that came to her through her grandmother. Still they called each other thus, since it is a convenient title that may mean much or next to nothing.

“Oh! why not?” she answered in her rich, slow tones, that had in them some foreign quality, something soft and sweet as the caress of a gentle summer wind. “With you, Cousin,” and she glanced approvingly at his stalwart, soldier-like form, “I have nothing to fear from men, however rough, and I do greatly want to see the king up close, and so does Betty. Don’t you, Betty?” and she turned to her companion.

Betty Dene, whom she addressed, was also a cousin of Margaret, though only a distant relative to Peter Brome. She came from a good family line, but her father, a wild and dissolute man, had broken her mother’s heart, and, like that mother, died early, leaving Betty in a bad situation. This young orphan was soon placed under the care of Margaret’s mother, in whose house she was ultimately raised. She was quite physically attractive in her own way with wide, bold, blue eyes and ruby

red lips. In speech and spirit, however, Betty was often careless and prone to be head strong. For this reason, she commonly tended to be a bit too fond of the society of men that possessed questionable characters, and fonder still of their admiration. She was naive and vain in how she approached her relationships. Yet, her habits and conduct were, it should be stated, not without some genuine goodness as she approached her twenty-fifth birthday. She was, in many respects, an honest girl with no little degree of courage, and well able to take care of herself, as more than one of her admirers had discovered. Although her station in life was humble, she had great ambitions and a passionate drive to succeed. At heart she was very proud of her lineage, and so had a great desire to raise herself by marriage back to the status from which her father's folly had cast her down—no easy business for one who worked as a waiting-woman with no fortune.

For the rest, she loved and admired her cousin Margaret more than any one on earth, while Peter she liked and respected.

In answer to Margaret's question she laughed and answered:

"Of course. We are all too busy up in Holborn to get the chance of so many shows that I should wish to miss one. Still, Master Peter is very wise, and I am always counseled to obey him. Also, it will soon be dark."

"Well, well," said Margaret with a sigh and a little shrug of her shoulders, "as you are both against me, perhaps we had best be going. Next time I come out walking, cousin Peter, it shall be with some one who is more kind and understanding."

Then she turned and began to make her way as quickly as she could through the thickening crowd. Finding this difficult, before Peter could stop her, for she was very swift in her movements, Margaret bore to the right, entering the space immediately in front of the banqueting-hall. This area was occupied by the grooms with their horses, and by soldiers who were assembled awaiting their lords, for here there was more room to walk. For a few moments Peter and Betty were unable

to escape from the mob which closed in behind her, and thus it came about that Margaret found herself alone among these people, in the midst, indeed, of the guard of the Spanish ambassador de Ayala. These men were notorious for their lawlessness, for they relied upon their master's privilege to protect them. Also, for the most part, they were just then more or less intoxicated.

One of these fellows, a sturdy, red-haired Scot, whom the priest had brought with him from that country, where he had also been ambassador, suddenly noticed before him a woman who appeared to be young and pretty. He quickly determined to examine her more closely, and to this end made use of a rude stratagem. Pretending to stumble, he grasped at Margaret's cloak as though to save himself, and with a wrench tore it open, revealing her beautiful face and graceful figure.

"A dove, comrades!—a dove!" he shouted in a voice thick with drink, "who has flown here to give me a kiss." And, casting his long arms about her, he strove to draw her to him.

"Peter! Help me, Peter!" cried Margaret as she struggled fiercely in his grip.

"No, no, if you want a saint, my bonny lass," said the drunken man, "Andrew is as good as Peter," at which point those comrades who stood nearby that understood him laughed, for the man's name was Andrew.

A few moments later, however, they laughed again, as they saw the ruffian Andrew suddenly go flying into the air as if he had fallen into the power of a whirlwind. Margaret was wrenched away from him in such a manner as to cause him to fall violently upon his face.

"That's Peter!" exclaimed one of the soldiers in Spanish.

"Yes," answered another, "and a patron saint worth having"; while a third soldier pulled the recumbent Andrew to his feet.

The man looked like he had been hit by a tornado. His cap had gone, and his fiery red hair was smeared with mud. Moreover, his nose had been broken on a cobble stone, and blood from it poured all over him. As for his little red eyes, they glared out from his dirty white face, a face that was etched with

pain and rage. Howling out something in his native tongue, he suddenly drew his sword and rushed straight at his adversary, purposing to kill him.

Now, Peter had no sword, but only his short knife, which he found no time to draw. In his hand, however, he carried a stout holly staff shod with iron, and, while Margaret clasped her hands and Betty screamed, with this he caught the descending blow, and, furious as it was, parried and turned it. Then, before the man could strike again, that staff was up, and Peter let it fall with fearful force, breaking the Scotsman's shoulder and sending him reeling back.

"Shrewdly struck, Peter! Well done, Peter!" shouted the spectators.

But Peter neither saw nor heard them, for he was mad with rage at the insult that had been offered to Margaret. Up flew the iron-tipped staff again, and down it came, this time full on Andrew's head, which it shattered like an egg-shell. In a moment the brute fell backwards, dead.

For several seconds there was silence, for the situation had taken a tragic turn. Then one of the Spaniards said, glancing at the prostrate form:

"In the Name of God! Our brother-in-arms is stone dead. That merchant hits hard."

Instantly there arose a murmur among the dead man's comrades, and one of them cried:

"Cut him down!"

Understanding that he was to be set on, Peter sprang forward and snatched the Scotsman's sword from the ground where it had fallen, at the same time dropping his staff and drawing his dagger with the left hand. Now he was well armed, and looked so fierce and soldier-like as he faced his foes, that, although four or five blades were out, they held back. Then Peter spoke for the first time, for he knew that against so many he had no chance.

"Englishmen," he cried in ringing tones, but without shifting his head or glance, "will you see me murdered by these Spanish dogs?"

There was a moment's pause, then a voice behind cried:

"By God! not I," and a brawny man-at-arms who hailed from Kent ranged up beside him, his cloak thrown over his left arm, and his sword in his right hand.

"Nor I," said another. "Peter Brome and I have fought together before."

"Nor I," shouted a third, "for we were born in the same Essex hundred."

And so it went on, until there were as many stout Englishmen at his side as there were Spaniards and Scotsmen before him.

"That will do," said Peter, "we want no more than man to man. Any other brave men would do well to look after the women, and lead them to safety. Now, you murderers, if you would see English sword-play, come on, or, if you are afraid, let us go in peace."

"Yes, come on, you foreign cowards," shouted the mob, who had no love for these turbulent and privileged guards.

By now the Spanish blood was up, for the old hatred that existed between these people had been awakened. In broken English the sergeant of the guard shouted out some filthy insult regarding Margaret, and called upon his followers to "cut the throats of the London swine." Swords shone red in the crimson sunset light, men shifted their feet and bent forward, as a great and bloody skirmish was about to begin.

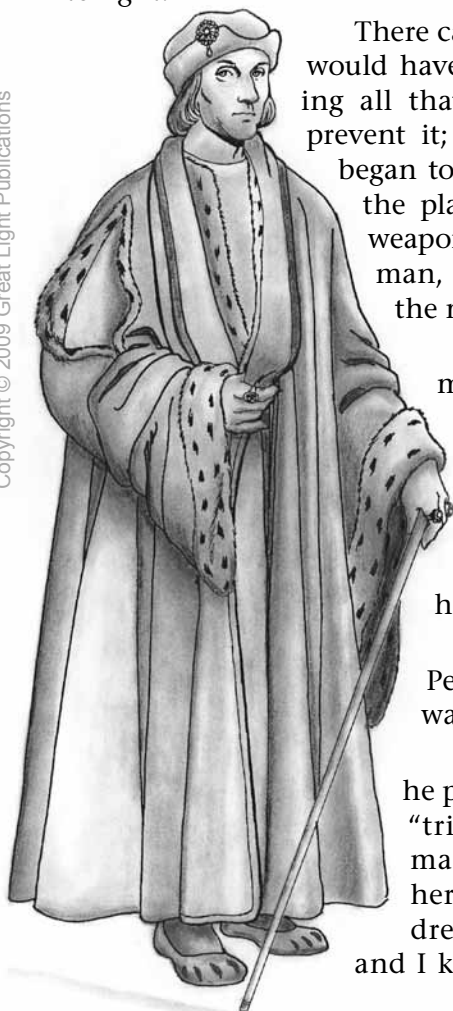
But it did not begin, for at that moment a tall senor, who had been standing in the shadow and watching all that passed, walked between the opposing lines, striking up the swords with his arm as he went.

"Have done," said d'Aguilar quietly, for it was he, speaking in Spanish. "You fools! Do you want to see every Spaniard in London torn to pieces? As for that drunken brute," and he touched the corpse of Andrew with his foot, "he brought his death upon himself. Moreover, he was not a Spaniard, so you have no blood quarrel. Come, obey me! or must I tell you who I am?"

"We know you, Marquis," said the leader in a cowed tone of voice. "Sheath your swords, comrades; after all, it is no affair of ours."

The men obeyed somewhat unwillingly; but at this moment arrived the ambassador de Ayala, in a very angry mood, for he had heard of the death of his servant. He demanded, in a loud voice, that the man who had killed him should be given up.

"We will not give him up to a Spanish priest," shouted the mob. "Come and take him if you want him," and once more the tumult grew, while Peter and his companions made ready to fight.



There can be little doubt that these men would have clashed swords, notwithstanding all that d'Aguilar attempted to do to prevent it; but all of a sudden the noise began to die away, and a hush fell upon the place. Then between the uplifted weapons walked a short, richly clad man, who turned suddenly and faced the mob. It was King Henry himself.

"Who dares to draw swords in my streets, before my very palace doors?" he asked in a cold voice.

A dozen hands pointed at Peter.

"Speak," said the king to him.

"Margaret, come here," cried Peter; and the girl was thrust forward in his direction.

"Sire," he said, "that man," and he pointed to the corpse of Andrew, "tried to assault the person of this maiden, John Castell's child. I, her cousin, threw him down. He drew his sword and came at me, and I killed him with my staff. See, it

lies there. Then the Spaniards—his comrades—would have cut me down, and I called for English help. Sire, that is the whole case.”

The king looked him up and down.

“A merchant by your dress,” he said; “but a soldier by your mien. How are you named?”

“Peter Brome, Sire.”

“Ah! There was a certain Sir Peter Brome who fell at Bosworth Field—not fighting for me,” and he smiled. “Did you know him perchance?”

“He was my father, Sire, and I saw him slain—aye, and slew the slayer.”

“Well can I believe it,” answered Henry, considering him. “But how comes it that Peter Brome’s son, who wears that battle scar across his face, is clad in merchant’s clothing?”

“Sire,” said Peter coolly, “my father sold his lands, lent his all to the Crown, and I have never rendered the account. Therefore I must live as I can.”

The king laughed outright as he replied:

“I like you, Peter Brome, though doubtless you hate me.”

“Not so, Sire. While Richard lived I fought for Richard. Richard is gone; and, if need be, I would fight for Henry, and serve England’s king.”

“Well said, and I may have need of you yet, nor do I bear you any grudge. But, I forgot, is it thus that you would fight for me, by causing riot in my streets, and bringing me into trouble with my good friends the Spaniards?”

“Sire, you know the story, and I will not weary you by repeating it.”

“I know your story, but who bears witness to it? Do you, maiden, Castell the merchant’s daughter?”

“Aye, Sire. The man whom my cousin killed abused and offended me, whose only wrong was that I waited to see your Grace pass by. Look on my torn cloak.”

“Little wonder that he killed him for the sake of those eyes of yours, maiden. But this witness may be tainted.” And again he smiled, adding, “Is there no other?”

Betty advanced to speak, but d'Aguilar, stepping forward, lifted his bonnet from his head, bowed and said in English:

"Your Grace, there is; I saw it all. This gallant gentleman had no blame. It was the servants of my countryman de Ayala who were to blame, at any rate at first, and afterwards came the trouble."

Now the ambassador de Ayala broke in, claiming satisfaction for the killing of his man, for he was still very angry, and saying that if it were not given, he would report the matter to their Majesties of Spain, and let them know how their servants were treated in London.

At these words Henry grew very serious, who, above all things, wished to give no offence to Ferdinand and Isabella.

"You have done an ill day's work, Peter Brome," he said, "and one of which my attorney must consider. Meanwhile, you will be best in safe keeping," and he turned as though to order his arrest.

"Sire," exclaimed Peter, "I live at Master Castell's house in Holborn, nor shall I run away."

"Who will answer for that," asked the king, "or that you will not make more riots on your road thither?"

"I will answer, your Grace," said d'Aguilar quietly, "if this lady will permit that I escort her and her cousin home. Also," he added in a low voice, "it seems to me that to hale him to a prison would be more likely to breed a riot than to let him go."

Henry glanced round him at the great crowd who were gathered watching this scene, and saw something in their faces which caused him to agree with d'Aguilar.

"So be it, Marquis," he said. "I have your word, and that of Peter Brome, that he will be forthcoming if called upon. Let that dead man be laid in the Abbey till tomorrow, when this matter shall be investigated. Excellency, give me your arm; I have greater questions of which I wish to speak with you ere this day is done."