

## Literature, &amp;c.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Graham's Magazine.

## THE COUNTESS OF MONTFORT:

OR, THE RELIEF OF HENNEBON.

By Henry William Herbert.

wish now to return to the Countess of Montfort, who possessed the courage of a man and the heart of a lion.—Froissart.

The age of knight errantry, as we read of and in some degree believe, as recited in *Morte d'Arthur*, and the other British or *eton* romances, had never any real existence more than its heroes, Lancelot du Lac, Ispan le Blanc, or Pellinant or Pellinore, any of the heroes of 'the table round'; very date of whose alledged existence centuries before chivalry or feudalism was heard precludes the possibility of their identity. The age of chivalry, however, had a realing; it was in very truth the body of a me, its form and pressure; and that was the age of Edward the Third, and the Black Prince of England, of the Captal de Buch and sire Eustache de Ribeaumont, of Bertrand de Glueselin, and Charles of Luxemburg, the aliant blind king of Bohemia, and those who won or died at Crecy and Poitiers.

That was the age, when knights shaped their conduct to the legends which they read in the old romances, which were to them the code of honor, bravery and virtue.

That was the age when *Dieu, son honneur et sa dame*, was the war cry and the creed of every noble knight, when *noblesse oblige* was a proverb not—as now—without a meaning. And of that age I have a legend, reproduced from the old chronicles of old Froissart, so dolent of the truth, the vigor, and the freshness of those old days, when manhood was still held in more esteem than money, and the person of a man something more valuable than his purse, that I think it may be held worthy to arrest attention, even in these days of sordid deference to the sovereign dollar, of stolid indifference to every thing in humanity that is of a truth good or great or noble.

'I wish now to return,' says Froissart, in a fine passage, a portion of which I have chosen as my motto, 'to the Countess of Montfort, who possessed the courage of a man and the heart of a lion.'

Previous to this, the veracious chronicler of the antique wars of France and England has related, how by the death of the Duke of Brittany, who left no issue, the ducal coronet of that province, which together with Normandy and Anjou, has always since the Norman conquest maintained relations with the crown of England, was left in dispute between John Count de Montfort, the half brother of the late duke, who married the sister of Lewis Earl of Flanders, and a daughter of the late duke's brother german who was wedded to Charles, younger son of Guy Count de Blois, by the sister of Philip of Valois, the reigning king of France.

With which of these the absolute right rested, is not a matter of much moment; as it is with the romance of feudalism, not the accuracy of heraldic genealogies, that I am now dealing. Nor, were it important, have I at hand the means of deciding certainly; since the solution of the question depends on facts not clearly presented, as regarding the seniority of the brothers, the precise degrees of consanguinity, and the local laws of the French provinces.

Both parties appear to have relied on alleged declarations, each in his own favor, by the late duke, John of Brittany.

The Bretons it would seem, almost to a man, sided with the Count de Montfort; and this would in these days go very far toward settling the question.

King Philip of France, naturally took part with his niece, the wife of a great feudatory of his crown; Edward the Third of England, as naturally favored the opposite claimant; expecting doubtless that he should receive the count's homage as his vassal for Brittany, in case of his recovering his duchy by the aid of British arms.

The Count de Montfort was summoned before the king and peers of France to answer the charge of having already done homage to the English king, as suzerain of a French province—a charge, by the way, which he absolutely denied—and to prove his title to the duchy before Parliament. To their decision he expressed his willingness to defer, and offered to abide by their judgment, but the same night, suspecting ill faith on the part of his rival and the French king, and fearing treachery, he withdrew secretly into his own duchy, of which he had already gained absolute possession, holding all its strong places with the free consent of the lords, the burgesses, the clergy and the commonality of the chief towns, and being every where addressed as Duke of Brittany.

After the departure of the count from Paris, the Parliament, almost as a matter of course, decided against him—firstly, *par contumace*, or as we should now say, *by default*—secondly, for treason, as having done homage to a foreign leige lord—and thirdly, because the Countess of Blois was the daughter of the next brother of the late duke, while the Count John de Montfort was the youngest of the family.

I may observe here, that it is more than doubtful whether the alleged homage to Edward was at this time rendered; that the fact was positively denied by Montfort him-

self and by his other historians; and furthermore, that the descent to the female line is very questionable in any French province or principality, the *Salique* law, adverse to the succession of females, prevailing in that country.

Be this, however, as it may, the princes and peers of France considering that the dispute between the rival crowns of France and England, which it virtually had, espoused to a man the party of Charles of Blois.

Thereupon, the dukes of Normandy, of Alencon, of Burgundy, of Bourbon, the Lord Lewis of Spain, the Constable of France, the Count de Blois, and the Viscount de Rohan, with all the princes and barons present, undertook to maintain the rights of Charles; entered Brittany with powerful forces; and after some sharp fighting, shut the Count of Montfort up in Nantes, where he was shortly after delivered to the enemy, not without suspicion of treachery on the part of Sir Herve de Leon, his late chief adviser, whom he had blamed severely for retreating too readily into the city, before the troops of Charles de Blois.

John de Montfort hereupon nearly disappears from history; Froissart supposing that he died a prisoner in the tower of the Louvre. But it appears that, after three years' confinement, he made good his escape to England, and then, not before, did homage to Edward; who aided him with a force under William de Bohun, Earl of Northampton, to recover his duchy, which his sudden death after an unsuccessful attempt on Quimperle, finally prevented. This is, however, in anticipation of the current of history, and more especially of those events which it is my purpose to illustrate in this sketch; for, from the very moment of his capture, the affairs, both civil and military, of the duchy were administered with the most distinguished energy, ability and success by his wife, sister of Lewis Count of Flanders, a race noble and brave by descent and nature, the Countess of Montfort, who possessed the courage of a man and the heart of a lion.

'She was in the city of Rennes,' says her historian, 'when she heard of the seizure of her lord; and notwithstanding the grief she had at heart, she did all she could to reanimate her friends and soldiers. Showing them a young child, called John, after his father, she said, "Oh, gentlemen, do not be cast down for what we have suffered by the loss of my lord; he was but one man. Look at my little child here, if it please God, he shall be his restorer and shall do much service. I have plenty of wealth, which I will distribute among you, and will seek out for such a leader as may give you a proper confidence."

When the countess had, by these means, encouraged her friends and soldiers at Rennes she visited all the other towns and fortresses, taking her young son John with her. She addressed and encouraged them in the same manner as she had done at Rennes. She strengthened her garrisons both with men and provisions, paid handsomely for every thing, and gave largely wherever she thought it would have a good effect. She then went to Hennebon, near the sea, where she and her son remained all that winter, frequently visiting her garrisons, whom she encouraged and paid liberally.

Truly a noble woman—a true wife, a true mother, a true princess of her principality—she sought no woman's rights but did a woman's duty—her duty as her absent husband's representative—her duty as her orphaned son's protectress—her duty as her unsovereign people's sovereign lady. Nobility and circumstance obliged her; and nobly she discharged the obligation.

Much as I condemn women, whom a morbid craving after notoriety and excitement urges to grasp the attire, the arms, the attributes of the other sex; in the same degree do I honor, in the same degree admire and laud, the true hearted woman, the true heroine, who not forcing or assailing, but obeying the claims of her nature, compels her temper to put on strength instead of softness, steels herself to do what she shrinks from doing, not because she arrogates the power of doing it better than the man could do it, but because she has no man to whom she might confide the doing of it.

The hen fighting the sparrow hawk careless of self for her defenceless brood is a spectacle beautiful to behold, filling every heart with genuine sympathy, because her act itself is genuine; is part and parcel of her sex, her circumstances, her maternity; in a word, is the act of the God of nature. The hen gaffed and cropped the fighting mains against the males of her own family in the bestial and bloody cock pit, is a spectacle that would make the lowest frequenter of such vile arenas shudder with disgust, would wring from his lips an honest cry of shame.

Margaret of Anjou, in Hexham forest awing the bandit into submission by the undaunted royalty of her maternal eye—the Countess of Montfort, reanimating her faint hearted garrisons, even by donning on steel harness for her young child John—Elizabeth of England horse at Tilbury, for her religion and her people—Maria Theresa, waving her sabre from the guarded mount to the four quarters of heaven in the maintenance of her kingdom and her cause—Marie Antoinette of France, defying her accusers at the misnamed judgment seat, fearless of her butchers at the guillotine—these are the true types of their sex, the true heroines, mastering the weakness of their sexual nature, thro' the might of their maternal nature—these are the hens championing their broods against the falcon.

But of this day of cant and fustian, the man women, not heroines, called by no duty to the attire or the attributes of men, but panting

indelicately for the notoriety, the fierce, passionate excitement of the political, nay, for aught that appears, of the martial arena—these are the hens, if they could but see themselves as they see effeminate, unsexed men, gaffed and cropped and led to do voluntary battle in the sinks and slaughterhouses of humanity, against the gamecocks of their species.

The lady Macbeaths of a falsar period, who fancy that by proving themselves so much less the woman, they can shine out so much more the man.

'But I wish now to return,' with my old friend Froissart, 'to the Countess of Montfort who possessed the courage of a man and the heart of a lion'—and I will add, the soul, the instincts, and the excellence of a true woman.

During the winter succeeding the seizure of her lord, and the treason of Sir Herve de Leon, who had attached himself to the Count de Blois, she remained peacefully occupied in Hennebon, in the education of her young child John; and how she educated him was seen in his after career as a knight valorous and gentle, a prince beloved and popular.

But with the summer there came strife and peril and protection became paramount to every thing beside.

During the winter, while the Countess de Montfort lay tranquil in Hennebon, the Count Charles de Blois lay as tranquilly at Nantes, which—as I have before related—had been treasonably surrendered to him by Sir Herve de Leon and the Citizens of the place. But now, that the fair weather had returned, that the swallows were sporting themselves in the summer air, the cuckoos calling by the river sides, now that armies could hold themselves in the fields with plenty of all sorts around them, he summoned to him all those great princes of the royal blood, and all the noble barons and valiant knights who had fought with him in the last campaign. And mindful of their promises, they drew all their forces to a head, and came with a great array of spears of France, and Genoese cross bowmen, and Spanish men at arms, under the leading of the Lord Lewis d'Espagne, to reconquer for him all that remained unconquered of the fair land of Brittany.

During the last year the strong Castle of Chateaucoux had been won by them by sheer dint of arms, and Nantes, the capital of the province, by the villainess of the traitor Herve de Leon; the next strongest place to these was the City of Rennes, which had been put into complete readiness for war by its late lord, and further fortified by the countess, who had entrusted it to Sir William de Cadoudal, a brave Breton knight, and in all probability an ancestor of the no less valiant George, of the same patronymic, the great Vendean chief and victim of Napoleon, co-murdered with the princely Duc d'Enghien.

This town the French lords surrounded on all sides, and assailed it with fierce and continual skirmishes at the barricades, and wrought it much damage by the persistency of their onslaughts; but still the defenders defended themselves so valiantly, resolute not to lose their liege lady's city, that the besiegers lost more than they gained—for many lives were lost on both sides, but far more on the French part; and yet more wounded—nor could they amend it any thing, nor win a tower, nor force a gate, though they made assaults daily, and plied the walls from mighty engines, with great store of artillery.

Now, when the Countess of Montfort heard how the French lords had returned into Brittany, and were laying waste the country and besieging her strong city, she sent one of the best of all her knights, Sir Amauri de Clisson who should repair straightway to King Edward, in England, to entreat his assistance, upon condition that her young son should take for his wife one of the daughters of the king, and give her the title of Duchess of Brittany.

And the king, well pleased to strengthen his claim on that fair province, readily consented, and ordered Sir Walter Manny, one of the proudest and most skilled in war of all his knights, to gather together so many men at arms, as he should with Sir Amauri's advice judge proper; and to take with him three or four thousand of the best archers of England, and to take ship immediately to the succour of the Countess of Montfort.

And Sir Walter embarked with Sir Amauri de Clisson, and the two brothers Sir Lewis and Sir John de Land Halle, the Haze of Brabant, Sir Herbert de Fresnoy, Sir Alain de Sirefonde, and many others, leaders of note; and men at arms not a few; and archers of England six thousand, the best men in the realm, whose backs no man had seen. And they took their ships, earnest to aid the Countess with all speed; but they were overtaken by a mighty storm and tempest, and forced to remain at sea forty days, so that much ill fell out, and more would have befallen, but that it was not to be otherwise in the end, but that the Countess should hold the duchy as her own, and her son's for ever.

In the meantime the Count Charles of Blois, pressed closer and closer to the town, and harassed the people sorely, so that the gentlemen and soldiers being but a few, and the rogue townsmen many, when they saw that no succors came nor seemed like to come, they grew impatient; and when Sir William de Cadoudal was determined to make no surrender, they rose on him by night and cast him into prison; and so basely and treacherously yielded up the place to the Count Charles, on condition only that the men of the Montfort party should have no let or hindrance to go whither they would, with their effects and followings, under assurance.

Then Sir William de Cadoudal joined the Countess de Montfort where she abode in Hennebon, but where she had yet no tidings

from the King Edward of England, or from Sir Amuri de Clisson, or any whom she had sent in his company.

And she had with her in Hennebon the Bishop of Leon, the uncle of that traitor Sir Herve de Leon, Sir Yves de Tresiquidi, the Lord of Landreman, Sir William de Cadoudal, the Governor of Gesincamp, the two brothers of Quirich, Sir Oliver, and Sir Henry de Spinefort, and many others.

Now the count de Blois well foresaw that the countess once delivered into his hand with the child John de Montfort, the war was at an end for ever; and, without tarrying at Rennes when he had taken it, he marched direct upon Hennebon, to take it if he might by assault, and if not, to sit down before it; and the numbers of his host without was, as by thousands to hundreds of those within; and there were among them many names for valor and for prowess—but there was that within which without was lacking, the indomitable heart, the immortal love of a true woman.

(To be continued)

From Dickens's Bleak House.

## MOVING ON.

It is the long vacation in the region of Chancery Lane. The good ships Law and Equity, those teak built, copper bottomed, iron fastened, brazen faced, and not by any means fast sailing Clippers, are laid up in ordinary. The Flying Dutchman, with a crew of ghostly clients imploring all whom they may encounter, to peruse their papers, has drifted, for the time being, Heaven knows where. The Courts are all shut up; the public offices lie in a hot sleep; Westminster Hall itself is a shady solitude where nightingales might sing, and a tenderer class of suitors than is usually found there, walk.

The Temple, Chancery Lane, Seigeants' Inn, and Lincoln's Inn even unto the Fields, are like tidal harbors at low water; where stranded proceedings, offices at anchor, idle clerks lounging on lop sided stools, that will not recover their perpendicular until the current Term sets in, lie high and dry upon the ooze of the long vacation. Outer doors of chambers are shut up by the score, messages and parcels are to be left at the Porter's Lodge by the bushel. A crop of grass would grow in the chinks of the stone pavement outside Lincoln's Inn Hall, but that the ticket porters, who have nothing to do beyond sitting in the shade there, with their white aprons over their heads to keep the flies off, grub it up, and eat it thoughtfully.

There is only one Judge in town. Even he only comes twice a week to sit in chambers. If the country folks of those assize towns on his circuit could only see him now! No full bottomed wig, no red petticoats, no fur, no javelin men, no white wands. Merely a close shaved gentleman in white trousers and a white hat, with sea breeze on the judicial countenance, and a strip of bark peeled by the solar rays from the judicial nose, who calls in at the shell fish shop as he comes along, and drinks iced ginger beer.

The bar of England is scattered over the face of the earth. How England can get on through four long summer months without its bar—which is its acknowledged refuge in adversity, and its only legitimate triumph in prosperity—is beside the question; assuredly that shield and buckler of Britannia are not in present wear. The learned gentleman who is always so tremendously indignant at the unprecedented outrage committed on the feelings of his client by the opposite party, that he never seems likely to recover it, is doing infinitely better than might be expected, in Switzerland. The learned gentleman who does the withering business, and who blights all opponents with his gloomy sarcasm, is as merry as a gig at a French watering place.

The learned gentleman who weeps by the pint on the smallest provocation, has not shed a tear these six weeks. The very learned gentleman who has cooled the natural heat of his gingery complexion in pools and fountains of law, until he has become great in knotty arguments for Term time, when he poses the drowsy Bench with legal 'chaff,' inexplicable to the uninitiated too, is roaming, with a characteristic delight in acidity and dust, about Constantinople. Other dispersed fragments of the same great Palladium are to be found on the canals of Venice, at the second cataract of the Nile, in the baths of Germany, and sprinkled on the sea sand all over the English coast. Scarcely one is to be encountered in the deserted region of Chancery Lane. If such a lonely member of the bar do flit across the waste, and come upon a prowling suitor who is unable to leave off haunting the scenes of his anxiety, they frighten one another and retreat into opposite shades.

It is the hottest long vacation known for many years. All the young clerks are madly in love, and according to their various degrees, pine for bliss with the beloved object, at Margate, Ramsgate, or Gravesend. All the middle aged clerks think their families too large. All the unowned dogs who stray into the Inns of Court, and pant about staircases and other dry places, seeking water give short howls of aggravation. All the blind men's dogs in the streets draw their masters against pumps or trip them over buckets. A shop with sun blind, and a watered pavement, and a bowl of gold and silver fish in the window, is a sanctuary. Temple Bar gets so hot, that it is to the adjacent Strand and Fleet Street, what a heater is to an urn, and keeps them simmering all night.

Civility is a kind of charm that attracts the love of all men.

A man may buy gold to dear.