

*“O blessed King, so gracious and good,  
Thou pray to set this realm in rest  
Unto our Saviour who died on Rood  
And to His Mother, that maiden blest.  
That all-kind wrongs may be redressed  
To pleasure of the Deity,  
This I beseech, at my request;  
Now, sweet King Henry, pray for me.”*

HYMN TO KING HENRY  
(XV CENTURY)

## TO SWEET KING HARRY

Asking his indulgence for all that is fiction in this book

## Introductory Note



THE FOLLOWING story contains a mixture of history and pure invention. The reader may be anxious to know which is which. The character of Parkyn Pokeapart is entirely fictitious, save for his irresistible surname, culled from *The Book of the Miracles of King Henry VI* (edited by Father Ronald Knox and Mr. Shane Leslie), and all that relates to the King's intercourse with Parkyn is purely invention.

To avoid stodginess in the recounting of necessary history, much of it has been put into the mouth of the jongleur, Fiddlemee, to whom the reader may not need an introduction. As to the fiction, in all cases it has been made to harmonize with known facts, and on occasion to bring known facts into harmony, as in the case of the reversal of the King's peace policy before the battle of Northampton. Indeed, the writer of the story would venture to claim for some of the "pure invention" the original meaning of the word "invention," to wit, discovery. But in deference to "cold fact," all inventions in this story are either incidental or underlying. Nothing in history has been contradicted or ignored.

The two miracles recorded have their authentication in the *King's Book of Miracles*. One has been transferred to the King's lifetime. The Pilgrims' Hymn quoted in the Epilogue is also taken from *The Book of the Miracles of King Henry VI*, to whose editors the writer of the present story stands in debt.

Lastly, it may be noted that any visitor to the regalia in the Tower of London, which is kept in the Wakefield Tower, the King's

*The Three Roses*

prison,—particularly if he makes his pilgrimage on May 22nd, the date of the King's death—may see for himself a fulfilment of Dominic Pokepart's second vision.

E. M. D.

# CONTENTS

## PART ONE

| CHAPTER   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| I. OCCURS WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF ST. NICHOLAS. . . . .            | 3    |
| II. TREATS OF A PRIVY COUNCIL . . . . .                         | 9    |
| III. CONTAINS A <i>COUP D'ETAT</i> . . . . .                    | 16   |
| IV. IS CONCERNED WITH THE INVESTMENT OF A SILVER GROAT. . . . . | 24   |
| V. "IT WAS A WINTON SCHOLAR" . . . . .                          | 31   |
| VI. PLUNGES PARKYN INTO POLITICS . . . . .                      | 42   |
| VII. TREATS OF A KING'S SECRET . . . . .                        | 53   |
| VIII. PRESERVES THE SECRET INTACT. . . . .                      | 63   |
| IX. " <i>QU'ELLE EST BELLE, LA MARGUERITE!</i> " . . . . .      | 70   |

## PART TWO

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| X. CONTAINS A JONGLEUR'S HISTORY OF HIS OWN TIMES . . . . .         | 83  |
| XI. TELLS OF THE KING'S ADVENTURING, AND OF HIS RETURN . . . . .    | 93  |
| XII. INTRODUCES THE <i>JEU D'ESPRIT</i> OF THE GOLDEN ROSE. . . . . | 101 |
| XIII. DEALS WITH SOME FIGHTING AND A MASQUERADE. . . . .            | 109 |
| XIV. A KNIGHT RECEIVES MARCHING ORDERS . . . . .                    | 119 |
| XV. TELLS OF THE PERIL WHICH THREATENED THE KING. . . . .           | 128 |
| XVI. SHOWS HOW THE PERIL WAS AVERTED . . . . .                      | 137 |

## PART THREE

| CHAPTER   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| XVII. TELLS THE STORY OF THE ROSES . . . . .  | 149  |
| XVIII. IN WHICH THE ABBOT OF CANTERBURY ENGAGES A ROLLIGER. . .                           | 159  |
| XIX. ENDS IN A HOME-COMING AND A SETTING FORTH . . . . .                                  | 167  |
| XX. CONTAINS A GAME OF HARE AND HOUNDS<br>AND THE STORY OF A BARREL THAT LEAKED . . . . . | 174  |
| XXI. TELLS OF A GALLOP ON THE UPLANDS<br>AND LEAVES PARKYN IN THE PILLORY. . . . .        | 184  |
| XXII. DOMINIC SEES HIS KING . . . . .   | 192  |
| XXIII. THE KING-MAKER PLIES HIS CRAFT . . . . .   | 201  |
| XXIV. THE KING COMES INTO HIS OWN . . . . .   | 211  |
| EPILOGUE . . . . .  | 225  |

# PART ONE



# THE THREE ROSES

## Chapter I

*Occurs Within the Octave of St. Nicholas*



THE PEOPLE OF LONDON were having a holiday, albeit that no saint had put piety on its mettle to proclaim a festival. It was purely profane merrymaking and consequently touched with decorum. As a matter of fact, Parliament was assembling at Westminster, and it was being opened by the King in person. He, the King, was but four years old and many sizes too small for his fair courser, but he was none the less a king. Henry had been born on the feast of St. Nicholas and might be regarded as a kind of *jeu d'esprit* on the part of the patron saint of youth. Nine months later he had been proclaimed a king. St. Nicholas would be keeping a feast of many octaves before the King arrived at years of discretion. The small Henry had already been dubbed a knight and had conferred a knighthood on a number of youthful nobles, still in the nursery, and (be it admitted, by proxy) he had already petitioned the Holy Father to canonize Osmund of Salisbury. St. Nicholas was assuredly having the time of his life in the realm of England, to which, it must always be remembered, was attached the kingdom of France. The King who had just passed them—a tiny speck of splendour in the saddle of a huge white charger, chosen, it would seem, to accentuate the dimensions of the little puppet monarch—was to open in royal state the Parliament in

## *The Three Roses*

which the Protector of the realm was hoping to adjust an intricate situation, an expedient which was occasionally resorted to when the dissensions between the King's royal uncles became acute. At this particular time the dispute between the royal Bishop of Winchester and the equally royal Duke of Gloucester had overtaxed the diplomacy of the third royal uncle, my Lord of Bedford, who, as the predominant relative, had charge of the affairs of France, the primary concern of Englishmen in the year 1425. It had been found expedient that the King's Highness (St. Nicholas must, in sooth, have enjoyed that appellation,) should on sundry occasions keep his royal state in the Parliament chamber. He was doing so now whilst the crowd outside Westminster Hall waited for the return procession to the royal palace. "Poor bairn," a young friar in the crowd observed, "they bring him forth as they would bring the crown or the mace from the jewel house, to decorate the occasion. The people have a king to gaze on and wist not what the rulers are doing the whiles. They would in sooth be glad enow if the King remained a babe for ever."

"I saw him in Paul's a year since," another spectator said; "a tiny thing that could scarce toddle. They led him on his feet up the nave, but when they came to the choir they carried him to the High Altar, for the poor babe could no more find his footing."

Here a glum-faced personage joined in. "'Twas a dark portent, that," he said. "The wise woman that they call the Witch of Eye hath foretold it that the King will be one that will always have to be led or carried. 'Tis a wise woman, the Witch of Eye that can read a portent."

At this moment a gigantic yokel in a countryman's smock pressed towards the fore. Seated on his shoulder was a sturdy, shaggy-headed youngster of some three or four years old. "Sit thee there, Parkyn, and thou shalt see the King when he comes back," the father said. The shaggy infant had a woebegone countenance that told of recent tragedy. The King had passed on his way, and the

*Occurs Within the Octave of St. Nicholas*

unlucky Tom Thumb, immersed in a pudding of selfish humanity intent on getting its own glimpse, had never so much as caught sight of him. Parkyn's own father had forgotten him in the excitement of the moment; now he was endeavouring to make good his neglect. The child was hoist on his towering shoulder ready against the King's return.

A young man with a lute—one of the minstrels who had been amusing the waiting crowd—turned and surveyed the small, eager face with its eyes fixed on the spot where the procession would reappear. "At any rate, Parkyn, as thy name appeareth to be," quoth he, "thou hast a finer steed than His Grace the King's Highness. A horse is not so fine a creature as his friend the man, be he the flower of the royal stud."

"He was mad to see the King," the two-legged steed explained, "so he hid himself in the hay on the cart when I came up from the country this morning. Parkyn have always been mad to see the King; he was born on St. Nicholas's day, too."

"Aye, well, laddie, cheer up," the jongleur said. "Thou'lt see the King all right when he passes this next time, and haply the King will see thee on thy fine tall steed and dub thee a knight, 'Sir Parkyn'—What might the rest be?"

"Pokeapart at thy service," the large father said, for the child had no ready speech. "Look, Parkyn," he added, "the King is coming."

There was a general stir in the crowd. Necks were craned, and the soldiery pressed those in front backwards with the sides of their long halberds, the points of which they were quite capable of using for a like purpose.

Parkyn Pokeapart clutched his parent's head. As the procession approached he reared himself upward. "Will he make me a knight?" he whispered loudly into his father's conveniently-placed ear. People near who heard the question laughed, and someone ended the laugh with a "Bravo!" for the candidate for honours was

## *The Three Roses*

standing upright on his steed, one foot on each shoulder, flushed and triumphant with his feat of valour—a sufficiently conspicuous object on the towering shoulders of six-foot-two Thomas Pokeapart.

The “Parliament of bats” as it came to be called, from the fact that staves had been substituted for swords, the rival parties having yielded to the arbitrament of the vote, an unusual piece of parliamentary procedure for the times—had released its royal President and he was being taken home to bed. The diminutive monarch sat in his saddle, well propped up. His eyes were no longer wide with childish wonder, but heavy with sleepiness. “Poor childkin!” a woman cried out, “thou ought to be in thy cot.” The crowd was cheering and caps were being waved and flung up, but a return journey is at the best but a twice-told tale.

The King’s little white face was unresponsive. It quivered. There were direct indications that the King of England and of France (let that not be left out) was about to burst out crying. Then suddenly something in the crowd attracted his attention. The sleepy eyes widened and lighted up. A smile, the smile of entranced childhood, dawned on the wan little countenance of the monarch who kept his state in parliamentary chambers. He had caught sight of Parkyn balanced on tip-toe, to do full justice to his stature, on the shoulders of one who himself towered above the heads of the crowd. It was, beyond denial, an acrobatic feat. The King turned to the royal duke riding at his side, and regardless of the court etiquette carefully instilled into him by Mrs. Alice Batelor, his nurse, or it might be good Father Netter, his tutor, or any other in attendance on his person, pointed in small-boy fashion at the object that had attracted his fancy. In another second they had passed by. Tom Thumb Parkyn made a clutch at his father’s stubby locks as he fell, head foremost, into the human pudding, from which he was extracted by the legs, none the worse for his method of descent.

“There now, thou hast seen the King, and the King hath seen

*Occurs Within the Octave of St. Nicholas*

thee," his father said; "but he hath ridden on and not made a knight of thee," he added, realising perhaps that young heads can swell even when there has been no contact with the hard ground. "I don't care," Parkyn said, stoutly; "he did smile at me."

"Well said!" the jongleur cried. "The King hath made thee his true henchman, for 'tis by his smile that a king makes a knight of a clown. Thou hast received the accolade, Sir Parkyn Pokeapart." Sir Parkyn rubbed his head, which was beginning to swell, as well it might. "Hath the King a King," he asked, "that can make him a knight?"

The young friar answered the question, which appeared to have completely stumped the honest yokel. "The Lord Protector made the King a knight this past Whitsuntide," he said, but the man in motley interrupted him.

"Nay, nay, holy Father, thou makest a missaying; the King was made a knight when heaven smiled on him. Belike it was at his baptism when St. Nicholas stood sponsor?"

The other looked closely at the face under the belled cap. "Who told thee that?" he asked.

"Soothly, it may have been Saint Nicholas himself," the other replied, with the licensed impudence of his fraternity.

The small boy interpolated, small-boy wise:

"I would rather the King were made a knight by his King than by the Lord Protector. Who be the King's King?"

"Shut thy mouth, Parkyn, and eat thy comfits," Thomas Pokeapart said, and then opened his own mouth wide at the mirth of the young man in the belled cap.

"That were a reasonable request, worthy of the adult state. Parkyn, if thou art wise thou wilt remain a babe and suckling. But, cheer up, those that are born on the feast of St. Nicholas may remain young enough to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." The speaker turned and bowed towards the friar, in compliment to whom he had apparently made the remark.

*The Three Roses*

“Come along, Parkyn,” the parent said; and seized his son by the hand. The latter went off reluctantly. A moment later there was a tug at the tab of the minstrel’s habit.

Parkyn stood there, craving a last word.

“I smiled back,” he said, and vanished.