

Outline - 5th draft

VAULTING

by Ken Follett

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There are four groups of characters in this story.

1. The family of Tom Bigg, a master builder; especially his second wife Ellen and her son Jack.
2. The monks of Kingsbridge Priory, especially Philip of Gwynedd.
3. Percy Hamleigh, a small landowner; his wife Regan; and their son William. They are associated with Waleran Bigod, a priest who rises quickly in the church hierarchy.
4. Roger of Shiring, the Earl of Wiltshire, and his children, Ann and Richard.

Prologue

In a small town in Wilshire, in the year 1123, a young man is about to be hanged. Among those present are a priest, a monk and a knight, and these three are responsible for the conviction and execution of the young man. The crowd of spectators is subdued. Normally they enjoy a hanging - the victim is generally a thief and they hate thieves - but this one seems different.

The sheriff kicks away the prop, ~~the young man drops with a jerk,~~ and it is all over. Then a girl steps out of the crowd. She is about 18 and *The old woman can see that she is with child.* very beautiful. She carries a black cock under her arm. The crowd backs off superstitiously. Suddenly she pulls a knife and with one slice cuts off the head of the cock. She splashes blood on the priest, the monk and the knight, pronouncing a curse on them. Then she runs away, escaping before anyone can recover from the shock, leaving the headless cock running around in circles underneath the still-swinging body of the hanged man.

A disturbing witness mark.

BOOK ONE

Chapter 1

Twelve years later, on a building site in another part of Wiltshire, two apprentices are fighting, kicking and punching and biting one another furiously in the dust and rubble. The aggressor is Alfred, a large 13-year-old. The fight is broken up by his father, Tom Bigg, who is a master builder (a kind of architect-foreman).

Tom, who as his surname implies is a head taller than the others, is a forceful, proud and self-reliant man, a freeman (as opposed to a serf) and a natural leader. His soft spot is for his children. As well as Tom he has two younger daughters, Matilda and Martha, and his life is dedicated to bringing

them up healthy, honest and strong. (He himself was the last of 13 children and somewhat neglected.) Alfred is something of a disappointment to Tom: the boy is big and forceful like his father, but not very bright, and he is turning into into a bully.

Tom is a good craftsman somewhat down on his luck. The ideal work for a master builder is a long-term construction project such as a palace, a monastery or - best of all - a cathedral. Recently Tom has been employed building a small church and a castle, and now he is working on a modest manor house for William Hamleigh, the 19-year-old son of a knight. In between these jobs Tom has been unemployed, and his savings are gone. However, work is inevitably irregular in this line, and so far he has always managed to provide for his family. *Did he ever build a building that fell down?*

We must regret her passing.

At midday his wife Agnes, a ~~weak, dependent~~ *strong but down?* woman, brings dinner: salt herrings, black bread, and beer in a jug. While he eats she tells him she is pregnant. The baby is due in January, five months away. Tom is pleased, and hopes for a boy. This house will provide employment through the winter, then he will move on in the spring, the season when new building projects are invariably begun.

This reassuring prospect is immediately blighted. William Hamleigh arrives on horseback. He is in a rage. A handsome, well-set-up young man, he displays a casual brutality which is an ominous sign of his future character. He announces that the wedding has been called off, the house will no longer be needed, and all the workmen are dismissed forthwith. *His anger is clearly the result of humiliation.*

Tom demands that he pay everyone, and holds the horse's head in a determined fashion. William is obliged to hand over money before he can go.

Tom and his family now pack up their few possessions and take to the road.

(ii)

They get casual work helping with the harvest, but that comes to an end, and two months later they are on the march again. The youngest child, Martha, is too small to carry anything, so she drives the pig, their one possession of any value. However, she falls behind constantly. When they are in the forest a man springs out from the undergrowth, fells her with a club, snatches the pig and flees. Tom and Alfred chase him but lose him. *a distinguishing mark.*

When Tom returns (in a black rage) he finds a stranger helping Agnes tend to Martha. The stranger's name is Ellen, and although dressed in rags she is very beautiful; in fact Tom feels a sharp tug of lust as he sees her. With her is a boy of about eleven years whose name is Jack. He is an odd-looking child, with startling blue eyes, very pale skin, and orange-red hair. *Peter Arden.*

They move Martha into the shade. Ellen predicts that she will recover consciousness, throw up, then be fine. This proves right.

Ellen and Jack are obviously outlaws - forest dwellers who do not obey the law (and are not entitled to its protection). They live on game, which is plentiful for those who defy the laws against poaching, and wild fruits and nuts, supplemented by anything they steal from travellers. They normally hide from travellers, for outlaws may be robbed, raped and murdered with impunity. Ellen's evident fearlessness, combined with her medical knowledge, leads Agnes to conclude that she is a witch. Tom thinks she is high-born, and this suspicion is supported by the astonishing discovery that Jack can read and write (Tom himself is barely literate and his family not at all). *Ellen was brought up as a boy, put into a convent.*

Yet: Ellen clearly envies Agnes, with her husband and her daughters. However, there is no way Ellen can return to normal life: she has no husband, no work, no place in society. She would need a completely new identity.

Tom is left with a poignant sense of Ellen's dilemma and the certain knowledge that she has no way out of it. We recognise Ellen as the woman who uttered the curse in the Prologue. *They light a fire; Ellen tells them about herself.*

(iii)

A week later they are in Salisbury, having changed direction in the forest to follow up a rumour of building work. The rumour is unfounded, but the change of direction brings them back across the path of the pig-thief. Tom sees the pig being sold in the market and Martha identifies the thief.

Tom accuses the man but cannot prove that the pig is his. Later he waylays the thief, beats his head in with a mason's hammer, and ~~take~~ takes the money.

(iv)

By Christmas the money has run out and Tom still has not found work. Because it is the dead of winter they cannot get any kind of employment. For Tom, being unable to provide for his children is the ultimate humiliation. Thin as a rail and close to collapse, he trades their eating knives for a sack of cabbages.

Now all they have left is an iron cooking-pot and the clothes they stand up in. They camp in the forest and make cabbage soup with acorns in it.

That night Agnes gives birth to a boy and dies. The children watch while Tom digs a grave and buries her. Having no way to feed the baby he abandons it on the grave.

An hour later he goes back, repentant; but the baby has already gone.

Stricken with grief he stumbles on, a strong man brought to his knees by circumstance. The children follow, frightened and uncomprehending. At dawn Alfred begs him to stop because the girls can walk no farther.

The children lie down and fall into exhausted sleep. Tom sits in a trance, staring into space. As if in a vision, Ellen appears, carrying the abandoned baby. This breaks the spell and Tom weeps. Ellen comforts him. After a while they make love.

(v)

Ellen gives the children food and gets the baby to swallow some warm water. However, she has no milk. The only place there is any is a small monastery in the forest where the monks keep goats. Ellen and Tom take the baby there and leave it in the porch of the chapel.

Chapter 2

The prior of this little monastery is Philip of Gwynedd, 27, a brilliant young monk with high ambitions and a big heart. Philip and his younger brother Francis were orphaned at the ages of six and four, during Henry I's successful invasion of North Wales. Their parents were put to the sword before their eyes, and the two boys were rescued and brought up by monks. Philip is a complex, intriguing character, flawed but likeable. The vivid, nightmare memory of his parents' murder, combined with his inexpressible gratitude to the monks who saved him and his little brother, left him with a passionate commitment to the Church as the bastion of civilisation against the barely-controlled savagery of feudal power. This is a partisan but not entirely unjustified view of the Church. Naturally bright, the two boys benefited from the monastic education, but were temperamentally disposed to use their considerable abilities in the more practical aspects of the religious life. Both are fiercely ambitious, rationalising their personal aspirations as dedication to the Church. Francis is a secretary to Robert of Gloucester, a powerful baron (and a nonfictional character). Philip's field is estate management, which he sees as husbanding God's property, and he has rationalised the assets of this small monastery so effectively that it is now embarrassingly affluent.

This is a branch or "cell" of the large and important Kingsbridge Priory, attached to Kingsbridge Cathedral. The Priory has for years been badly run

by an elderly prior and his incompetent deputy. Slack management of God's asset's infuriates Philip beyond reason. It is his burning ambition to take charge of Kingsbridge and turn it into the biggest, best-run, wealthiest and most influential monastery in England, a stronghold of decency and compassion in the feudal badlands.

Now the prior is dying. Philip has proved his managerial ability, but he is very young to take over such an important post, and clerics are conservative. The new prior will be elected by the Kingsbridge monks, with the Bishop having rights of nomination, veto and confirmation (a situation which leads to power struggles). The problem of how to manage his own election is on Philip's mind the day the baby is found.

*

Philip completely melts at the sight of the baby. (This surprises the monks, who do not normally see his big-hearted side and think of him as a hard taskmaster.) The little mite is obviously starving and he calls for goat's milk and figures out a way to feed it. The monastery is in the heart of the forest and there is no possibility of finding a wet-nurse in time. Against the odds, the baby survives. The monks anticipate that it will be fostered as soon as possible, and Philip surprises them again by saying No: the child has been given to God and he intends to raise it himself, the way he was raised.

While the monastery is still buzzing with this news, a messenger arrives with a letter.

*

It is from Philip's brother, Francis, who is in France with his boss Robert of Gloucester. Francis has made a specialty of organising fast communications for Robert and this enables him to send his own mail. He writes about a sudden political development which gravely threatens the interests of the Church. Following the death of Henry I (1 December 1135), Stephen of Blois has become king, with the help of the Church which obtained from him important promises

about Church rights. But Francis' boss Robert is planning to rebel against Stephen and put his half-sister Maud on the throne. The rebellion will be ignited by Roger of Shiring, the Earl of Wiltshire.

Francis' ultimate loyalty is to the Church, but he cannot openly rebel against his employer (and he is useful to the Church where he is); so he begs Philip to find a way to warn King Stephen without betraying the source of his information.

Philip finds an excuse to visit Kingsbridge Priory; and on the way he goes to see the Bishop.

(ii)

The Bishop of Kingsbridge lives, like the feudal lord he is, in some splendour, with a mistress and a troop of knights, in a castle many miles from his cathedral. Philip approaches the castle with trepidation: he has never been involved in high politics before and the possession of this dangerous secret makes him nervous. The Bishop may put him on the Rack and torture him to learn the source of his information. But he must go through with this, for the conspiracy could do lasting damage to the Church, and Philip is the only one who can stop it.

On the road Philip (who is on horseback) passes and chats briefly to a travelling builder and his family. He tells them about the abandoned baby....

*

At the castle he is received not by the Bishop but by his deputy, Archdeacon Waleran Bigod. Waleran is a cold, ruthless man driven by lust for power. He believes that God has destined him for greatness and this justifies any cruelty or barbarism. He intends one day to be Archbishop if not Pope. However, Philip (who is not yet as worldly-wise as he will be) completely misjudges Waleran and sees him as a young man like himself, dedicated to advancing the cause of the Church.

Philip tells Waleran a prepared tale: a knight who was beaten and robbed

by outlaws in the forest confessed the conspiracy before dying in Philip's arms. Waleran raises an eyebrow at this romantic tale but chooses not to challenge it. He promises to warn the king of the conspiracy. Philip has a feeling that Waleran will make sure that Waleran gets the credit for uncovering the plot, but he sees this as reasonable self-advancement.

As he is saying goodbye, the builder and his family enter the compound, presumably hoping to be employed repairing the stonework of the castle. Waleran appears shocked by the sight of the woman who is with the builder. "That woman!" he says involuntarily. Philip solemnly warns him against the sin of lust. On later reflection Philip has a feeling that it was not lust, but some other emotion that disturbed the ambitious archdeacon.

(iii)

When Philip arrives at Kingsbridge the old Prior is dead. Philip must now make his bid for election. If he fails, he will have to wait until the new prior dies, and that could be decades.

His determination is redoubled when he sees how the monastery is being run under Remigius, the sub-prior and favourite candidate for the top job. Remigius has been acting as prior since the old prior fell ill. The school is depleted, the parish churches are being neglected, prayers are sloppy and the whole place is just looking a little grubby. There is also financial mismanagement, with lands neglected and money spent on jewelled ornaments for the cathedral.

Philip tells Remigium that the little cell in the forest has too much food, and asks permission to serve meat twice a day. He takes care to make this request in the presence of a young monk. It is refused, but in no time at all the whole place has heard about it, and Philip has confirmed his reputation as a good manager and a generous provider.

In a large house such as this, which also has charge of a cathedral, the

prior and sub-prior have a management team working under them: some in charge of branches of the spiritual work, such as the sacrist and the cantor; some involved in practical work, such as the novice master and the guest master; and some pure administrators, such as the cellarer and the kitchener. Inevitably these are influential people, and Philip takes care to spend a little time with each of them. With one he renews an old friendship; another he reminds of an obligation; he commiserates with the grievances of a third, hinting that all would be different if he, Philip, were prior.

In the kitchen the subject comes up of the prior's right to transfer monks from one house to another (a perennial bone of contention). Philip gives the impression that he is against this practice.

Within 24 hours a group of officers asks him if he would consent to stand for election.

*

Remigius' supporters now fight back. They point out that if the monks are divided, the Bishop may use this as an excuse to impose his own candidate, and they say there is a rumour that the Bishop has someone in mind, a crony of his called Brother Osbert. This scares the monks and support swings back to Remigius, who is at least the devil they know.

*

The following day is Epiphany (6 January 1136) and according to custom the Bishop comes to conduct the service in the cathedral. He is accompanied by Brother Osbert and Archdeacon Waleran. Waleran says the Bishop has asked him for his recommendation, and he proposes to nominate Philip. However, he asks in exchange that Philip promise that, when the Bishop dies, Philip will help Waleran get appointed as the new Bishop. Suppressing a twinge of conscience, Philip gives this promise; and he is elected Prior of Kingsbridge.

He anxiously asks Waleran whether King Stephen has been warned of the conspiracy. Waleran says he is about to deal with that, and he intends to

make use of someone who is in the cathedral today for the service. He points out the man: one Percy Hamleigh. Philip hopes Waleran knows what he is doing.

Chapter 3

Percy Hamleigh is a landowning knight, the feudal lord of five villages in Wiltshire centred on his manor of Hamleigh. With him is his son William, age 20, whom we met in Chapter 1. But the real power in the family is William's mother Regan, 40. Grasping, conniving, and borderline crazy, she is also hideous, her face covered with sores that she picks at constantly.

Regan hoped to add substantially to her husband's estate by marrying their son to Ann, 17, the beautiful, wilful and spoilt daughter of Roger of Shiring, the Earl of Wiltshire. Earl Roger agreed to the match, but Ann hated William on sight, and refused point-blank to go through with the marriage. Earl Roger could perhaps have coerced her but he chose not to try. This slight has enraged Regan and she still cannot think about it without trembling.

William is cruel and avaricious like his mother but also fearful and superstitious. In later life he will commit many murders out of greed but he will always be tormented by fear of divine retribution.

The Hamleighs are approached after the service by Archdeacon Waleran. He commiserates with them about their humiliation at the hands of Earl Roger, and says that Roger should have horsewhipped his daughter into submission. The Hamleighs wonder why Waleran is raising this subject six months after the event. They soon find out. Waleran tells them that the same Earl Roger is suspected of plotting against King Stephen - a monarch who has the support of the Church. Whoever gets rid of Roger and nips the rebellion in the bud will have earned the eternal gratitude of the king and of the holy mother church.

Percy and William are all for going after Roger and hanging him from the nearest tree. Regan calls them both fools. Why, she asks, is Waleran not going after this traitor himself? Why have they been approached in this informal way? Why is the whole thing couched in hints? Clearly, Waleran is not sure of his facts, and he wants someone else to do the dirty work just in case his information is wrong. If the Hamleights are to be sure of being rewarded they must get proof of Roger's treachery.

(ii)

William goes to Roger's castle at Shiring, pretending to renew his courtship of Ann. Seeing her again rekindles his desire: she is not just beautiful but fiery, spirited and magnetic. Even though she is spoiled, her servants adore her. She rejects William again, of course - but not before he has had a chance to see what is going on; and what he sees is a busy coming-and-going of messengers.

*

With a band of henchmen he lies in wait a couple of miles away, and when a messenger comes along they waylay him. They tie him up, suspend him from a bough, take off his boots and light a fire beneath him. When his feet start to burn he tells them that his mission is to muster Roger's knights in a distant manor and prepare them for an insurrection. William has the proof he needs.

* *tormenting*

On his way home William has a little fun tormenting a destitute builder and his starving family. William recognises the man as the one who insisted, six months ago, that the craftsmen should be paid. But although Tom Bigg is half dead of hunger he still looks dangerous and again William is faced down.

(iii)

Next day at dawn William, Percy and a small army attack Roger's castle. There

is a battle, but the attackers have the advantage of surprise and Roger is captured and the conspiracy foiled.

(Roger will be imprisoned but his co-conspirator, Robert of Gloucester, will swear loyalty to King Stephen, escape punishment, and live in peace - for a while.)

At the end of the battle William renews his offer of marriage to Ann. For a third time he is haughtily refused.

Chapter 4

Tom Bigg and his family are still scraping along on the edge of starvation. To make matters worse the two sons, Alfred and Jack, hate one another.

Alfred asks Jack what happened to his father. Jack says he never had a father. Alfred realises that Jack does not know about the role men play in reproduction. Alfred and the girls tease Jack mercilessly about this. Alfred overhears Ellen telling Tom that she was actually never married to Jack's father, and he begins to call him Jack Bastard. Jack demands to know his father's name. Ellen, who is always reluctant to talk about Jack's father, finally tells him his name was Henry Shareburg.

They head for a quarry owned by the Earl of Wiltshire, but when they arrive they find it closed. Jack learns why when he goes off alone to investigate a ruined castle nearby. He meets Ann, who is living there with her 12-year-old brother Richard and a few loyal servants. (Their mother is dead.) Ann explains that the quarry is closed because she has no money to pay the workmen.

It is clear even to Jack that this girl is living in a dream world. She talks and acts as if her father is briefly, inadvertently absent, whereas it is pretty clear that he is never coming back.

Nevertheless Jack falls in love with her.

Meanwhile, Tom has learned that there is a new young prior at Kingsbridge who may want to mke repairs to the dilapidated old cathedral. The family heads for Kingsbridge.

(ii)

There is indeed a new prior at Kingsbridge - Philip - but he is not repairing the cathedral. He has spent all the monastery's money on flocks of sheep and has instituted an austerity drive. The monks, living on salt fish and weak beer, are regretting their choice and are mutinous.

Nevertheless Tom and his family are given a meal and a place to sleep for a night. While they are in the kitchen the new prior walks in with a baby in his arms. Tom realises that this is his child. They have named him Geoffrey.

The prior remembers meeting this family on the road and talks to them. He is sorry he cannot employ Tom. He explains that he is planning to build a new cathedral, but first he has to sort out the monastery's finances, which he estimates will take ten years.

When he has gone Tom says: "I wish the cathedral would be struck by a thunderbolt - then he would have to build a new one." // * That night, when all are asleep, ^{Ellen} Jack gets up, goes into the church, takes a candle from the altar, and sets fire to the ancient timber roof.

The monks and the villagers struggle to put out the blaze but their efforts are in vain. They give up and watch, superstitiously awestruck, as the great old cathedral is completely destroyed.

* Philip will now have to build a new cathedral and this will completely wreck his long-term plan. However he has no alternative, and he starts right away by asking Tom to prepare the site for rebuilding. He can offer only board and lodging by way of payment at first, but of course Tom accepts this gladly.

Waleran didn't know that Remigius knew. Yes, she did know who she was.

The Bigg family is saved.

Remigius is horrified when he learns that they are to live here. "That woman?" he says. Philip remembers Archdeacon Waleran's peculiar reaction to Ellen, and he questions Remigius. Remigius says Ellen is a witch. Philip suspects there is more to it than that.

Remigius tells Waleran. Can the woman be killed? Remigius must try to get rid of her. (iii) Remigius: Why did that guy mean harm to die? Waleran: How you don't know - or you must have to die.

Tom and Alfred begin clearing the ruins, stacking the stones for re-use and repairing the underground crypt, which is relatively undamaged and will form part of the foundations of the new building.

Tom tries to lord it over Jack the way he does over his sisters, but Jack - an only child - does not submit. Alfred is deeply threatened by the intrusion into the family of this lovable rival. He reacts by mistreating and tormenting Jack at every opportunity. But Jack is clever and spunky and sometimes gets the better of Alfred. Their fights cause friction between Tom and Ellen.

One such incident begins when Alfred, weary after a day's work, imperiously orders Jack to fetch him a drink. Jack refuses and Alfred hits him. Jack then writes in the soot on the wall "Alfred is an ox". The fact that Alfred recognises his own name but cannot read the insult somehow makes it worse. He starts to beat Jack up. Tom separates them.

Tom and Ellen now quarrel over this. Tom says that Jack does no work so he ought to serve Alfred. Ellen says she will not sanction Alfred beating Jack for any reason. They speak harsh words.

But there is worse to come. Living within the monastery, they have to go to confession. Ellen tells lies (she has no time for the Church) but Tom admits they are not married. Remigius carries this news to Philip, who of course decrees that they must live apart until they are married.

This causes Ellen to review her situation. Her association with Tom has led her into destitution. Her son is bruised and bleeding, and now she is to be denied even the consolation of Tom's bed while the banns are called. Does she want to marry this man? There is no guarantee that the crazy young prior will ever raise the money to rebuild the cathedral, so they could all be starving again next winter. She leaves, returning to the forest.

Tom is devastated. Slowly he evolves a plan for getting her back. He will take Jack as an apprentice, and teach him to be a stonemason. In return he will ask Ellen to teach Alfred to read and write, so that the boys will be more equal. But he must be able to offer her security. He decides that when the rebuilding starts in earnest he will seek Ellen out and ask her to come back to him.

BOOK TWO

Chapter 5

A year later Philip still does not have enough money to start rebuilding. Then the Bishop dies, and with Philip's help Waleran Bigod becomes Bishop. During the election, Remigius asks Philip whether Waleran is a godly man. Philip realises he has not seriously considered this. However, he is bound by a promise. If he had any inkling of how much he is going to regret supporting Waleran he would break the promise.

Philip asks the new Bishop for a contribution to the building fund. To his astonishment Waleran makes only a token contribution, saying he needs money to build himself a new castle. However, he proposes that he and Philip should go to see the king.

King Stephen is a decisive, strong-willed and fast-moving monarch but

he suffers from a romantic, impulsive streak and he lacks the ruthless follow-through required to rule medieval England. It is his way, according to a contemporary chronicler, to begin many things vigorously and pursue them slothfully. His reign will go down in history as The anarchy.

Bishop Waleran asks the king to give the estates of the disgraced Earl of Wiltshire to the diocese to finance the building of the new cathedral. But Percy Hamleigh is also at court, with his hideous wife Regan and their brutish son William, claiming the same estates (plus the title) as his reward for preventing the rebellion. Percy's request is rather more reasonable but Waleran plays on the king's piety. [Some William felt here: his need to both screw and humiliate Ann

Regan now contrives to run into Philip. How can you let yourself be used like this, you stupid monk? she says. Philip, who thinks himself pretty smart, is flabbergasted. Regan points out that if Stephen grants Waleran's request the Wiltshire estates will go to the Bishop, not to the Prior, and the Bishop will be able to dole out just as much or as little as he likes to the cathedral builders.

Philip realises she is right. What can he do? Whether Percy gets the estate or Waleran, either way Philip loses. Philip may be inexperienced but he is nothing if not ingenious. Now he figures a way out. With some trepidation he goes behind Waleran's back to the King and proposes a compromise: let Percy have the villages and farms, but give the monastery the hills to graze sheep, the forests for timber and - most importantly - the quarry for stone.

King Stephen buys this basic idea, but Regan talks him into a last-minute amendment: as the quarry is in the middle of the estate, it should remain Percy's property, but the monastery should have the right to take stone for the cathedral.

The Hamleighs jubilant.
Despite this qualification (which will cause more trouble than he can foresee) Philip is jubilant, for he can now start building, albeit on a shoestring.

The king orders that the news be communicated to Roger of Shiring, in his jail; and for the first time Philip wonders what will happen to Roger's family in all this.

Chapter 6

Roger's daughter Ann is independent and headstrong, and she has her father's inflexible will. She is still playing the spoilt child of the manor but the role is wearing thin and she is due to grow up any minute now. Her major soft spot is for her 13-year-old brother Richard. He is lazy, passive and foolish, but she is blind to his faults and fiercely protective of him.

She is still acting and talking as if her father is about to return home when William Hamleigh rides up with a troop of men-at-arms. They throw out the servants. William tells Ann that his father is now the Earl. Then he rapes her.

(ii)

Ann's spirit is not yet broken. She and her brother escape with two horses. Ann says she is going to tell the king of this. She is sure he will then hang William and reinstate her father. She and Richard set out for Winchester. Richard wears a sword that is too big for him. Ann has a very sharp dagger concealed in her sleeve.

On the first night in the forest their horses are stolen. Next day on the road they are threatened by two thieves. But when one of them knocks Richard down, Ann - who has been building up a head of steam - blows her top. She pulls out the dagger and without warning stabs the man who hit Richard. It is a lucky stroke and he dies instantly. The other thief runs away. Ann, still crazy with rage, foolishly chases him; but fortunately he outruns her.

(iii)

In Winchester they have great trouble getting in to see their imprisoned father. Eventually they are befriended by a woman whose husband is also incarcerated. The husband is a wool merchant and the wife is carrying on the business, buying fleeces from peasants and selling sacks of raw wool to larger merchants or to cloth manufacturers. She helps Ann and Richard get into the jail.

They find their father dying in a stinking dungeon. He tells them there is a priest here in Winchester who has a little of Roger's money and instructions to hand it over to Ann. They must get the money then go to the home of their late mother's sister, where Richard will become a squire (an apprentice knight) and Ann will be a lady-in-waiting.

He makes Richard swear to regain the family estates; then he makes Ann swear to take care of Richard until he comes into his rightful inheritance. The children have been brought up to take oaths seriously, and these deathbed promises will shape their lives.

They leave, knowing they will never see their father again. They go to the priest, who claims to have no knowledge of the money. But since her transformation in the forest Ann is an extremely formidable young woman, She now threatens to kill the priest unless he hands over the money. He is thoroughly scared and gives her a purse. He has spent most of the money but there is a pound left, about eight week's wages for a well-paid craftsman.

(iv)

Their aunt takes them in, but puts Richard to work in the fields and Ann in the laundry. Ann accepts this stoically, but draws the line when her uncle tries to seduce her; and they run away again.

They are now totally alone in the ^{world}owrld but Ann has wisely kept hold of the money. Richard despairs but she is made of sterner stuff. She remembers

the woman wool merchant in Winchester. Many peasants keep a few sheep and sell the fleeces for two or three pennies at the market. For a lot of people the journey to market loses them a whole day's work, making the operation highly marginal; and for others it may not be worth going to market at all. Ann conceives the idea of touring outlying villages, buying the peasants' fleeces, and selling them in the market at a profit.

Richard thinks the idea is crazy but he cannot think of a better one.

(v)

Six weeks later (spring 1138) they come to Winchester market with a sack of raw wool, 250 fleeces which they have bought for a penny each. Unfortunately the woman wool merchant - to whom they hoped to sell - has gone. Another merchant has taken her place, and he offers them a pound, even though he is paying two pounds, because, he says, no one pays a child what they would pay a man.

A monk watches this exchange and then negotiates a price of two pounds and a shilling for a sack of wool. Then he buys Ann's wool for two pounds and sells it to the merchant for two pounds and a shilling, keeping the shilling, as he says, for God.

Ann tells him who she is and he seems much moved by her story. He will always buy her wool, he says. He tells them his name is Philip, and he is the prior of Kingsbridge.

Philip ain't guilty.

Chapter 7

Philip's own sheep are shorn and he sells the wool at the annual Shiring Fleece Fair to Flemish buyers. (The cloth-manufacturing industry of Flanders is booming and there is a European shortage of cloth.) Philip is encouraged to buy more sheep. In the long term he will convert all of the monastery's marginal land

to sheep farming, but this will be a slow process, not just because of the capital outlay, but also because under the previous slack management many farms were let to tenants under long leases at fixed rents. Philip however has a fistful of money-raising schemes all going on together.

His close-to-the-wind dealings are watched anxiously by Ann, who is doing famously under his protection but fears what would happen to her without it, and by Tom, who ^{waits} ~~waits~~ impatiently for the time when he can offer Ellen a secure future.

Tom has prepared a design for the new cathedral and presented it, drawn on two sheets of plaster in wooden frames - one a floor plan and the other an elevation. They show a conventional cathedral in the round-arched Norman style. Philip suppresses a wish that it could be the longest, highest and most richly decorated church in Christendom, and gets on with making it happen.

Tom lays out the floor plan of the east end with wooden stakes, helped by Alfred. (The east end will be built first, and will be in use as a church while the rest is being built.) Now the first craftsmen begin to arrive: a master forester and a master quarryman with their apprentices and labourers, plus a carpenter and a blacksmith to make tools. But when the quarrymen arrive at the quarry they find it occupied by workmen employed by Percy Hamleigh and guarded by armed men who refuse them admission.

Without free stone the whole project is impossible. The monks discuss what to do. Remigius (who is still sub-prior) characteristically proposes sending a delegation to protest to the king. Philip, equally characteristically, pours scorn on this passive-aggressive response, which would take months if not years. Instead he takes all the monks to the quarry in the middle of the night. At daybreak Percy's men find monks saying prayers all over the site. The armed guards are not prepared to do violence to the monks and they

give up. Philip consolidates this victory by hiring Percy's quarrymen.

(Having hired extra quarrymen, he will have to economise somewhere else, probably on masons; which means that he will be ^{cutting} ~~cutting~~ stone faster than he can use it and will therefore build a stockpile. Although this is bad for his cash flow it will at least insure against the likelihood that at some future date Percy will again close the quarry.)

(ii)

The scheming Regan Hamleigh, now Countess of Wiltshire, who of course was behind the closing of the quarry, now comes up with a new plan. She and Percy and William go to Bishop Waleran and suggest that the new cathedral be built at Shiring, which is after all the most important town in Wiltshire. The building would greatly benefit the town, which is part of their estate. The new cathedral would be looked after by a new chapter of monks or canons, a chapter which would be much more under Waleran's control than Philip is; and Waleran would regain the pastures and forest which the king gave to the monastery.

Waleran puts this scheme to the archbishop, arguing that Philip does not have the resources to build a cathedral. The archbishop decides to come and see for himself. Waleran welcomes this idea, confident that the poverty and run-down appearance of Kingsbridge will bear his argument out.

(iii)

Philip is forewarned of this visit by a monk at Canterbury. He racks his brains for a way of convincing the archbishop that he can pull it off. Finally he has a brainwave.

He sends all his monks out to visit parish churches throughout the county and announce that forgiveness for sins may be obtained by voluntary work on the cathedral building site, beginning on Whit Sunday, the day of the

archbishop's visit. He waits anxiously to see the result.

The response is overwhelming. Hundreds of people of all social classes come from far and wide, in holiday mood, to dig foundations, fell trees and cart stones. Quick-witted entrepreneurs set up stalls selling food, beer, hats and knives. When the archbishop comes he is delighted to see such a multitude of people enthusiastically doing God's work, and Regan's scheme is not mentioned again.

Ellen and Jack are in the crowd. Tom asks Ellen to marry him. She says yes.

Percy Hamleigh sees Ellen and goes pale. He points her out to Waleran, saying: "Isn't she that woman?" Yes, Waleran says grimly, it is her, but don't worry - she knows nothing.

Jack, now 14 and becoming a man, sees Ann again. They speak briefly. Ann, too, has changed. (She is now 20.) Jack falls completely in love with her. But this is not a case of worshipping the unattainable from a distance: he is determined to have her.

BOOK THREE

Chapter 8

Robert of Gloucester rebels again, promoting his half-sister Maud as queen. The Church switches its support to Maud after King Stephen reneges on his promises. The two sides are evenly matched and England is in for a long civil war. The Hamleighs support Stephen. Ann's brother Richard joins the rebels and is promised that he will be made Earl of Wiltshire when Maud is queen.

Percy Hamleigh dies in 1140 and his son William becomes the Earl. William

A big moment: Ann sends Richard off, mounted and armed.

is brutal and greedily like his father, but also sadistic. He is still nursing a passion for Ann. He would also like to kill her brother Richard to eliminate his claim to the title. William's main weakness is that he is terrified of divine retribution for his sins, and this is exploited by Bishop Waleran, who can make William do anything in exchange for absolution.

When Percy dies, William returns home from the fighting to find his inheritance in a financial crisis. The town of Shiring, centrepiece of the estate, is in decline: its population is shrinking and its markets bring in ever-lower revenues despite increases in the rents and taxes charged by the Earl as landlord. The quarry, once a major source of revenue, is now in the hands of the cathedral builders. Some farms are in trouble and many tenants are in arrears.

William makes a tour of his proerty, accompanied by the six knights who have become his henchmen. This are not the courtly rescuers in shining armour of Arthurian legend, but a bunch of young thugs, and they cut a bloody swathe through the county. Coming across an unlicensed mill they demolish it with the miller inside. They burn the crops on illegitimate assarts (clearings) in the forest. A serf's daughter who has married without paying the customary fee (in lieu of droit de seigneur) is ravished. Tenants in arrears are beaten up.

William keeps hearing the complaint that the young men are leaving the farms to work as labourers and apprentices on the new cathedral, so he decides to pay a visit to Kingsbridge.

(ii)

He arrives on a Sunday. Everywhere else, his coming has struck fear into people's hearts, but here - to his chagrin - he is hardly noticed. And this is not all that surprises him. The sleepy village of Kingsbridge has become a thriving small town. The number of dwellings has trebled, the monastery is bigger, and there is a cookshop and an alehouse. Most importantly, there

is a busy market on the building site.

Clearly, William thinks, Prior Philip is drawing people and business away from Shiring and the Wiltshire villages, and this is why the estate is in financial trouble. (This assessment is partly right - sheer bad management is also a factor.)

William and his men push through the crowd and confront Philip in the half-built choir of the new cathedral. William accuses Philip of holding an illegal market. (Philip is guilty, but this is a technicality.) Philip replies that a man who has committed assault, rape and probably murder in the past week has no business coming into a church for any purpose other than to beg forgiveness. The realisation that he is in a church (albeit half-built) frightens William and he leaves.

Philip watches him go with scarcely-controlled loathing. William's tour has sickened the whole county, but nobody is able to do anything about it. William stands for everything Philip hates most: unrestrained power, government by ^asvagery, the brute law of the jungle. He symbolises the barbaric soldiers who slaughtered Philip's parents. Remembering that traumatic childhood scene, Philip realises that one day he will have to destroy William.

(iii)

William assembles a troop of men-at-arms and they ride to the quarry, where twenty or thirty workmen are living with their families. Arriving at dawn, William's men set fire to the huts, drive the people away, fence the quarry and set a permanent guard.

That same day, Philip receives a writ from the Sheriff warning him to desist from holding an unlicensed market. Apart from the money it brings in, the market is mainly responsible for attracting the continuing flow of volunteer labourers who do so much of the unskilled work on the building. Despite his

improved financial situation, Philip cannot build if he loses free stone and free labour. There is nothing for it but to go and see the king.

(iv)

Philip finds Kings Stephen besieging Lincoln, which is occupied by the rebels. Philip persuades Stephen of the justice of his case, and Stephen seems ready to give him market rights and force William to reopen the quarry when William himself arrives with reinforcements for Stephen's army; and to reward him Stephen refuses Philip. This is a terrible disappointment.

Then Robert of Gloucester and his army arrive to raise the siege. The loyalists lose the ensuing battle, and both King Stephen and Prior Philip are captured. (2 February 1141)

(v)

Philip is released by his brother Francis, who is still working for Robert of Gloucester, and the brothers are reunited after many years.

Maud enters into negotiations with the Church and is swiftly recognised as queen. Francis is able to arrange for Philip to plead his case to her. She grants him "market rights as at Shiring".

Philip returns to Kingsbridge triumphant. He solves his immediate cash flow problem by selling next year's crop of wool in advance to Ann at a discount (a way of borrowing which does not involve the sin of usury). Then he announces that he will not only hold a weekly market but an annual Fleece Fair to rival the one at Shiring.

William vows that this will never come to pass.

Chapter 9

Jack at 16 is something of a misfit. Growing up in the forest he never learned

discipline, deference or conformity, and now he never will. He also has a fierce temper. However, he is tremendously charming. People find him likeable and ^{amusing} amusing, but he makes them nervous, like a large puppy dog that will not be a puppy much longer. Because of his education, Philip wants Jack to become a monk, despite his indiscipline, because the Church needs intelligent youngsters; but Ellen, who hates the Church, vetoes this proposal

Immediately upon reaching puberty Jack begins a series of uninhibited sexual experiments. He is caught fooling with his stepsister and is severely beaten by Tom (to Ellen's great distress). He tries sex with a young monk but prefers girls. He seduces one of two village girls: despite his peculiar looks - he still has that sheet-white skin, orange hair and startling blue eyes - he is a very seductive personality and he finds it easy.

But his true love is still Ann. Her combination of beauty, spirit and hauteur fascinates him (and many other people). But she is 21, a wealthy merchant and an earl's daughter, whereas he is 16, a penniless apprentice and a bastard. He tries to get to know her. Naturally she ignores him. He becomes discouraged but his love does not diminish.

Ann herself is completely caught up in the challenge of making money as a merchant. She tells herself that she is bound by the deathbed promise she made to her father, that she would take care of her brother until he can claim his rightful inheritance, and this is part of the truth; but she is also driven by nightmare memories of desitution - the rape, the thief she killed, the sight of her father dying in the stinking dungeon, the dishonest priest and the lascivious uncle - and she is fiercely determined never again to be vulnerable to such brutes. Nevertheless she daydreams of the time when Richard is safely installed in the old manor house and she can relax. (Sadly, Queen Maud has not yet consolidated her victory, and she is not in a position to fulfil her promise

Ann also reads romantic poetry.

to make Richard the Earl. Financed by Ann, Richard continues to fight in the queen's army. William would dearly like to see Ann go out of business because that would put an end to Richard's military career and therefore to his hope of regaining the title which William now enjoys.)

(ii)

Both Ann and Philip have failed to sell all their wool this year. The surplus is not vast but it represents Ann's profit. She would like to process the extra wool herself, because she could sell it as cloth. She can get peasant women and children to do the spinning and weaving but she cannot find enough men to do the fulling.

(Fulling, also called felting, is the process in which the loosely-woven cloth is shrunk and thickened by putting it into a trough of water and either pounding it with a fuller's bat ^{or} ~~and~~ tramping it. It is the heaviest work in the cloth-manufacturing process and is done by men.)

Jack is intrigued by Ann's problem and his unconventional, imaginative mind comes up with a solution. One night he disappears. Next morning all the hammers have gone from the building site. Eventually Jack is found inside the water mill. He has attached the hammers to the shaft of the mill-wheel in such a way that as the wheel turns the hammers rise and fall, pounding a length of cloth in a trough of water. He has invented the fulling mill. And he has finally attracted Ann's attention.

(iii)

Philip is fond of Ann because she is an orphan as he is. She in turn will always be grateful to him for being her protector in the early days. She is sexually repressed, and does not readily form friendships with men, but Philip is an

exception, because he has no sex life and is happy that way, so he presents no threat. However, as Ann becomes a major power in the town, an element of conflict creeps in, and their friendship cools a little.

Against Philip's ^{wishes} wishes, Ann forms a parish guild, a sort of club for traders and craftsmen. Its ostensible purpose is to buy candles for the parish church. (This small Saxon building predates both the cathedral and the monastery.) However, the guild also has a social function, providing a reason for people to meet and dine together; and it can also represent the interests of citizens vis-a-vis the monastery (which is why Philip is against it).

Ann's partner in promoting the guild is Alfred. He has little intelligence and no imagination, but his personality is forceful and he is by medieval standards educated (thanks to Ellen's lessons) and now that he has completed his apprenticeship ~~is~~ is becoming one of the leading craftsmen.

Everyone of any importance in the town joins the guild except Malachi, the seller of needles and thread, who is Jewish. To Ann's surprise Alfred proposes marriage to her. She declines.

(iv)

Jack makes another breakthrough when he comes upon Ann reading a book. He astonishes her by revealing that he can read.

Her book is a chanson de geste, a verse narrative about the knights of Charlemagne, which her father brought back for her from his last trip to France. Jack realises that Ann has a suppressed romanticism. He begins to tell her a verse story of a different kind, a romance with magical elements which his mother taught him years ago when they lived in the forest. These poems are very long, sometimes 20,000 lines, and are normally told in instalments; and Jack cleverly stops at a cliffhanger. She begs to hear more and they make a date.

Ann rejects all advances from men (and she gets plenty) but because Jack is so young she (mistakenly) has not seen him as a sexual threat and he has slipped under her guard. She discovers that he is one of the few people in Kingsbridge who is on her intellectual level: he speaks French and Latin, he can read, write and draw, and he knows about philosophy, mathematics and music. (Living in the forest, Ellen had nothing to do with her spare time but educate him, and she taught him everything she knew.)

As Ann warms to Jack, she begins to like the undisciplined side of his nature - he has no concept of duty and no respect for oaths - because it is such a contrast to her own uptight personality.

Jack adapts the ongoing verse story, introducing a romance between a wealthy woman and a penniless boy. Slowly Ann's fondness for him grows. Gradually he gets physical with her, touching her more often, even kissing her occasionally. His patience is sorely tested but he persists.

Ann's sexuality is awakened and she falls in love with him - passionately.

(v)

Ann is to be one of the two great loves of Jack's life. The other will be the cathedral. He is fascinated by the plans, the materials, the construction techniques and the management problems. He watches Tom checking the masonry, making templates for the stonecutters, counting yards of timber and sacks of lime, and supervising the erection of scaffolding. Before long he has conceived a passionate ambition to be a master builder himself.

Because of Ann, the boyhood enmity between Alfred and Jack flares again. Alfred bullies and mocks Jack constantly, and sometimes sabotages his work. The conflict reaches a peak when Alfred publicly taunts Jack about his father, saying that he was hanged as a thief. They fight fiercely, spilling barrels of mortar, destroying new masonry, and setting fire to a hut. The

end of the fight is witnessed by Tom and Prior Philip. The two men agree that Alfred and Jack cannot continue to work on the same site, and as Jack is a mere apprentice he is the one who must go. But how shall he earn his keep, if not as an apprentice? He ⁿknows nothing of any other trade except poaching and he is certainly no farmer. Obviously he must be apprenticed to a mason in another town.

Jack is distraught because this means leaving Ann and his beloved cathedral. Ellen too is miserable at losing her child. Alfred is delighted.

Yet again Philip has a solution. He now renews his proposal that Jack become a monk. He could even continue to work on the cathedral, but as an administrative clerk. Ellen withdraws her opposition and Jack enters the monastery.

For the sake of the cathedral he at last learns how to conform. However, he soon contrives a way to sneak out of the place and continue his courtship of Ann. *They kiss passionately.*

Remigius takes an apparently kindly interest in him, and tells him that in fact his father was a thief and was indeed hanged for it. However, it is clear to us (but not to Jack) that Remigius is not being totally candid.

Remigius learns that he knows his father's name. Waterman says: the boy must die. Ann & Jack plan to run away after the next spring thawing.

Chapter 10

Here

William makes it an offence for any of his tenants to sell wool at the Kingsbridge Fleece Fair, but many of them find intermediaries, and there are other producers not under William's control, so the Fair shapes up to be a success.

By spring 1142 Stephen has been released from captivity and the civil war is on again. Nevertheless Philip has an unimpeachable licence to hold a Fair and he goes ahead with all ^{preparations} preparations.

A few days before the Fair, Ann takes delivery of the monastery's fleeces, sixty sacks of raw wool, the product of 15,000 sheep, worth £300 - a fortune -

if she can sell it all.

Philip calculates gleefully that if all goes well he could double the speed of building.

On the first day of the Fair William rides into Kingsbridge with a large force of men-at-arms. They wreck the market and set fire to the town. The place is packed and many people die. Everything burns to the ground except the few stone buildings - the monastery, the parish church and the half-built cathedral. All Ann's wool is burned and she is financially ruined. And Tom, the master builder, is among the dead.

(ii)

Ann goes into a deep depression. She can no longer fulfil her promise to her father, and Richard must now give up soldiering (and his prospects of regaining his inheritance). The destitution of nightmarish memory is terrifyingly close.

Alfred takes over the supervision of the cathedral building, following the death of his father, and hopes to become master builder. He renews his proposal of marriage to Ann. Richard forcefully reminds Ann that seven years ago she refused a perfectly appropriate marriage (to William) and thereby brought about the death of their father and all their subsequent misfortunes. Under this emotional blackmail Ann gives in and consents to the marriage.

Jack begs her to retract. He confesses his love for her. She tells him everything, from the rape onwards. At last they make love. But still she refuses to call it off.

Jack now pleads with Alfred, but Alfred taunts him. She loves me, not you, says Jack. They have their last and most vicious fight. Jack is beaten to a pulp. When he comes round he leaves town.

(iii)

At the wedding Jack's mother Ellen, now a widow, rises to her feet and curses both the marriage and the cathedral. Bishop Waleran and Remigius have her run out of town as a witch. She returns to her former life in the forest. Waleran, Remigius and William's mother Regan are disproportionately relieved to see the back of her.

Spooked by the curse, Alfred is unable to consummate the marriage.

Chapter 11

He builds a tower on unsteady ground.

As master builder Alfred is incompetent. He completely mishandles the making of the roof. When the lead goes on the structure cannot take the weight and there is a terrible accident. The massive columns buckle, the huge timbers snap like twigs and the entire building collapses, killing sixty people and destroying eight years' work.

Building stops altogether, all the craftsmen (including Alfred) leave, and the town goes into a slump.

(ii)

Ann is pregnant. Knowing the child is not his, Alfred throws her out. She returns to Kingsbridge and seeks Philip's protection again.

Even if she had the heart to resume business as a wool merchant - which she does not - she would be unable to, for William has taken her place: his bailiff now buys all the peasants' fleeces. She keeps herself and Richard by spinning wool for Philip.

The baby is born, with pale skin, startling blue eyes and orange hair. Ann calls him Jack.

Ellen tells Ann that Henry Sharnum was a mimer
in the monastery, etc.

33

Ann assumes, like everyone else, that Jack is living in the forest with his mother. She goes looking for them. She finds Ellen; but Jack is not there and never has been. Ann ~~finds~~ goes to find Jack.

(iii)

Jack has spent a year wandering around Europe, sketching buildings and working on cathedrals. Although he never finished his apprenticeship nobody knows this, and he is such a competent craftsman that before long he is a master with his own team of craftsmen, apprentices and labourers.

Before he left Kingsbridge he thought there was only one way to build a church. Travel has educated him. On Moorish buildings in Spain he has seen pointed arches, and in France he has worked on rib vaulting: these are two of the three essential elements of the nascent Gothic style. (The third is the flying buttress.)

He is not happy. He misses Kingsbridge and he is still in love with Ann. His frustration is channelled into his work, and he produces carvings of astonishing vigour and boldness, specialising in weird and mythical figures and monsters. But what he really wants to do, still, is be a master builder; and now in his mind is forming a picture of the church he would like to build, a church that would combine the grace of Arab architecture with Norman solidity, and use the latest building techniques to create huge windows with sunlight pouring through and an arched vault so high it would seem to touch heaven.

He is working on the abbey church of St Denis, under the great Abbot Suger, when he hears on the masonic grapevine that Kingsbridge Cathedral has fallen down, all the craftsmen including the master builder have left, and the place is a ghost town. He announces that he has been appointed master builder there, and invites the craftsmen working with him to follow him back

to England in a few weeks' time.

(iv)

On his way home, in the French port of Cherbourg, people look at him as if they are seeing a ghost. It turns out that he is the double of a man who used to live here. Could it have been his father? At first it seems not, for this man died on 25 November 1120, three years before Jack was born, in a famous disaster, the wreck of the White Ship, which killed the son and heir of King Henry I together with half the royal household. Is it possible that more people survived, and that this one man in particular went on to Wiltshire and fathered Jack? My father's name was Henry Shareburg, says Jack. Then it must be the same man, says his informant, for his name was Henri, and of course he would be known as Henry Cherbourg, or Shareburg.

Chapter 12

Jack goes first to London. He has decided to bring to Kingsbridge a miracle-working relic, such as the bones of a saint or a piece of Christ's shroud. Seeing an old house being demolished he takes a piece of ancient timber. He then buys a beautiful ironbound chest lined with velvet and puts the old lump of wood in it. He hires three ruffians and disguises them, one as a crippled beggar and two as Arabs.

On Easter Sunday in 1144, Bishop Waleran is conducting a service in a temporary wooden church in the ruins of the cathedral in front of a handful of people. The service stops dead as Jack walks in followed by two beturbanned Saracens carrying a chest. Jack announces that the chest contains a fragment of the True Cross. At this, a cripple who has been begging in the town for

the last few days lurches forward, touches the box and is miraculously healed. When the uproar dies down Jack presents the relic to the cathedral.

Afterwards he tells Philip that he wants to rebuild the cathedral. Philip asks where the money will come from. Jack points out that the relic will attract pilgrims, and their donations, plus the business they will bring to the town, will provide funds. (In fact revival is a question of morale much more than of funds, but the relic will be equally effective in that area.)

Philip ponders. He suspects that the cripple and the Saracens are phoney and the relic is a fake. He has just about made up his mind to reject the relic and turn Jack down when a genuine cripple throws himself on the casket and is healed. Philip takes this as a sign that God intends to use this relic whether it is genuine or not.

Jack is astonished, and somewhat devastated, to see Ann. He thought she was still with Alfred, of course. Now he finds she has a son and he, Jack, is the father. But she is still married to Alfred. Philip agrees to help them apply for an annulment.

(ii)

Jack studies the ruined cathedral. His observation of which bits fell, what direction they fell in, and what remains, gives him a new insight into what makes buildings stand up, and he conceives the flying buttress. He then designs the first Gothic cathedral.

News of the healing power of the relic travels fast, and pilgrims start to come. Jack's craftsmen arrive from France and begin to clear the site. Once again the volunteers come on Sundays. One day Malachi returns and sets up his stall. Soon there is a Sunday market.

William decides to raid the town again.

Philip is forewarned of the raid. The day before, in a lightning operation, he gets everybody - monks, townspeople, market traders and building workers - to build a town wall, using stones from the ruins.

When William and his knights arrive, they are unable to enter the town.

(iii)

Bishop Waleran blocks the annulment, and once again Jack and Ann have to conduct their love affair surreptitiously.

Jack tries to find his mother, to ask her about the story of Henry Shareburg, but he cannot locate her. However, he is able to find and read the official record of the trial and the hanging, preserved in the Sheriff's office. He finds that his father was convicted on the evidence of three people: the prior of Kingsbridge, who is now dead; Percy Hamleigh, also dead; and Waleran Bigod.

BOOK FOUR

Chapter 13

It is Easter Sunday seven years later. Thousands of people from all over the county are walking and riding to Kingsbridge for the most important service

/over

of the church year, conducted by the bishop. There are even more people than is usual because today for the first time the service will be held in the newly-completed east end of the new cathedral, and everyone is eager to look at the building.

Kingsbridge has been an oasis of peace and prosperity during the last six years of the Anarchy. Too small to be of strategic importance, it is also too well defended (by its wall) to be easily overrun. Its pilgrims, its Sunday market and its construction programme have helped it to thrive. It has no Fleece Fair - William still controls the wool trade in the countryside - but Flemish buyers still come to the monastery every year to buy Philip's fleeces, and after thirteen years his flocks are vast. Everything is going swimmingly and there is not a cloud on the horizon. Even two poor harvests in a row have not seriously affected the wealth of the monastery.

The civil war has petered out, leaving Stephen dominant, if not quite triumphant. Home from the wars is William Hamleigh, Earl of Wiltshire, and today he is among those converging on Kingsbridge. Now 35, he is fleshy and florid but still active. He is as mean as ever but even more terrified of the punishments of the afterlife.

As he approaches the town, the new building comes into view. As its outlines become clear the crowd murmurs in astonishment. This church has wings! It looks like a flock of birds in a line all poised to take to the air.

As people get closer they see that the wings are flying buttresses supporting the highest roof any of them has ever seen.

The interior is another revelation. Nothing could be more different from old Tom's design with its stout Norman pillars, cartwheel arches and small windows. Instead there are graceful columns that look too slender to support anything, rising unbroken to a vault as high as heaven, and in between - nothing! Just huge windows through which the sunshine pours in, filling the church

with light and beauty.

William is still awestruck when he kneels to confess his sins to Bishop Waleran. He admits to a grisly list of killings, rapes, lies and treachery throughout the civil war. The bishop imposes a swingeing penance: William must found a new monastery.

later, when they discuss the details, Waleran's motive becomes clear. The ^{new} monastery is to be at Shiring, and it will be attached to an aggressively Puritan order of monks who will put Philip's easygoing ways to shame. Waleran is setting up a rival power centre.

(ii)

The harvest of 1151 is bad for the ^{third} year in a row. Yields are down by half and the price of corn rockets. William takes advantage of the famine to evict tenants and repossess their land. Some starve, some become outlaws, and some come to the monastery to beg. Philip employs as many as he can and gives everyone a meal and a bed for the night. Among them is Alfred, fallen on bad times. Jack gives him a job.

There is a slump in the cloth trade, perhaps because starving people do not buy clothes, and the price of wool slumps. In the spring of 1152 Philip has to sell his fleeces at knockdown prices. Then the harvest of 1152 is another bad one. The building workers demand a pay rise because the price of bread has gone up. But Philip cannot pay them more.

William owns no sheep, so the price of wool does not affect him. Many of his rents are payable in kind, and he sometimes gets his sack of corn or brace of geese even though the family that owes it to him is living on acorn soup. And the rising price of corn actually enriches him.

Ann of course knows his lands well, and she is enraged by the knowledge

that properly managed the estate could feed all its peasants, even in bad years.

Guided by his mother and Bishop Waleran, William now conspires with Alfred. Alfred leads the cathedral builders out on strike, and William employs them all to build a magnificent new church for his new monastery at Shiring.

(iii)

In the terrible winter of 1152-3, when hundreds die of hunger and cold, the swollen bands of outlaws in Wilshire are united under a mysterious leader known as Just John, actually Jack's mother Ellen. They raid William's flocks and storehouses. Richard joins them and the outlaws hail him as the rightful Earl. William expends every effort to hunt Richard down. Philip writes to his brother Francis, who is now working for Maud's son, Henry of Anjou. Philip describes the chaos and famine in England and begs his brother to influence Henry to invade. In fact Henry has been waiting for the right moment and he invades in January 1153.

A traitor gives William the location of Just John's hideout in the forest. William goes there with an army, ready to wipe out forever the outlaws, Just John, and especially Richard. But he finds only Ellen. Richard and the outlaws have gone to join Henry of Anjou's invading army.

Chapter 14

The following year Henry becomes king. Richard is rewarded with the Earldom, and Ann has the satisfaction of throwing William out of the house he threw her out of eighteen years ago.

Unfortunately Richard is almost as bad a landlord as William was. Life has not prepared him for estate management: the only thing he is good for is fighting. And with stupefying ingratitude he refuses to hand over the quarry to Philip.

The accession of Henry II and a good harvest in 1154 end the depression and Philip starts building again. William is reduced to the status of knight, with a handful of manors centred on the village of Hamleigh. Funds for his fancy new monastery dry up and the builders drift back to Kingsbridge.

William may be down but he is not out. He borrows a large sum of money from (a reluctant) Malachi and buys for himself the office of Sheriff. He uses this position to enrich himself and oppress the monastery.

For years the leading townsmen have been pressing for Borough status, which would make the town independent of the Sheriff. It would also make them independent of Philip, and for that reason he has always opposed it. Now he backs the idea, but to no avail: King Henry refuses it.

One day Richard kills a man in a drunken brawl. Sheriff William gleefully proposes to arrest him. Richard takes sanctuary in the monastery.

This puts Philip in an awkward position. He is not going to hand Richard over to William, but he cannot indefinitely shelter a murderer. He solves the problem by persuading Richard to join the Knights Templar and go to Jerusalem, where he will find plenty of fighting.

Ann takes over the management of the estate - and immediately opens the quarry to Philip. Cathedral building goes on at double speed.

(ii)

The office of Sheriff does not bring in as much money as William anticipated, and he cannot repay Malachi. He tries to liquidate the creditor instead of paying the debt. He spreads a rumour that Malachi murdered a Christian child at Easter (a common medieval scare story). Philip protects Malachi from the threatened lynching, but at great cost to his standing in the town. He realises that the town he created has grown, like a son, into something he can no longer control.

Chapter 15

Geoffrey, the abandoned baby from Chapter 1, is now in his twenties and Philip makes him kitchener of the priory, an important post. Waleran now alleges that Geoffrey is Philip's illegitimate son. Philip is arraigned before an ecclesiastical court, accused of both fornication and nepotism.

Ellen comes out of hiding to tell the true story of Geoffrey. Hearing this is a deeply emotional event for Philip, who has treated Geoffrey as a son.

Jack turns the tables on Waleran by persuading his mother to tell the court about the death of Henry Shareburg. She says that Henry was innocent. She does not know why the prior of Kingsbridge testified against him, but she does know that the other two witnesses were rewarded for their perjury: Percy Hamleigh became lord of Hamleigh and the surrounding villages, and Waleran Bigod became an archdeacon.

Remigius, the crony of the previous prior, now confesses that the old prior knew perfectly well that Henry was innocent, and the knowledge that he had helped to hang an honest man haunted him for the rest of his life, and was the reason he became totally lethargic and allowed the monastery to decline into the run-down state in which Philip took it over.

Waleran denies everything, but the scandal is enough to force the archbishop to move him to another post, and he becomes Bishop of Shrewsbury. And still Jack does not know why they killed his father.

Chapter 16

The honeymoon between Henry II and the Church soon ends, and once again crown and clergy are in conflict. Bishop Waleran swiftly establishes himself with the king as a cleric willing to compromise his religion for personal advancement.

Now Waleran persuades King Henry to nominate William Hamleigh as Bishop of Kingsbridge. This proposal is of course outrageous and the monks refuse

point-blank to elect William. Henry then tells William to "compel their obedience". William assembles a force of knights.

Philip is warned of this by his brother Francis, who is still working for Henry. Philip slips away. The rest of the monks barricade themselves inside the monastery. William besieges them but stops short of actual violence.

Philip goes to see Archbishop Thomas, who is in exile in France after quarrelling with the king. Then Philip and Francis negotiate a compromise deal which enables Thomas to return to England.

Archbishop Thomas then nominates Philip as Bishop of Kingsbridge.

When Waleran hears of this he foments a conspiracy to murder the Archbishop. *He makes William his agent, giving him absolution in advance.*

(ii)

By chance Philip is at Canterbury Cathedral when the assassins come and kill Archbishop Thomas (29 December 1172), and he witnesses the murder. It seems to him that all the progress made in his lifetime by the Church and by England has been wiped out by this act of barbarism.

Then, in the depths of his despair, with the corpse of Thomas in front of him, he recalls how in previous crises he has won through by calling on the help of ordinary people: such as when it seemed the cathedral would be built at Shiring, until he raised volunteers from all over the county to begin building at Kingsbridge; and such as when William was about to attack them and they built a town wall in a day. Even this murder could be turned into a triumph, he realises.

He pulls a bloody sword out of the still-warm body and carries it out into the street, crying the crime aloud. In no time at all Canterbury is in a ferment. In the following days and weeks Philip carries the sword from town to town, retelling the story of the murder. All England, and eventually all

Christendom, is horrified, and King Henry is completely humbled by public opinion.

(iii)

Philip is confirmed as Bishop of Kinsbridge. Geoffrey, the abandoned baby, becomes prior in Philip's place.

Jack's son, who has followed in his father's footsteps and studied architecture in Europe, comes home with a new concept, stained glass, and begins installing it in the cathedral.

Following the death of Archbishop Thomas, Bishop Waleran is stripped of all offices. He undergoes a genuine change of heart, and begs to be accepted as a monk at Kingsbridge Priory. Geoffrey accepts him, warning him that he will never be given even the humblest of monastic offices but will always remain a simple monk. One day in his cell, dressed in the monks' homespun habit, shaven-headed and barefoot, Waleran finally tells Jack the truth about his father. The sinking of the White Ship was perpetrated by barons who resented the strong rule of Henry I because it circumscribed their freedom to do as they pleased in their territories. Henry Shareburg survived the wreck and knew of the conspiracy. He was kept under wraps at Shiring for a while, but when it became clear that the conspirators would not be able to shake Henry I's power, the man who knew too much had to be killed. Waleran was given the job of organising it, and Percy Hamleigh actually faked the evidence.

And now the wheel comes full circle as Percy's son William is hanged for his part in the murder of Archbishop Thomas.

Finally Philip, as Bishop, grants Ann the annulment, and she and Jack are married in the finished cathedral.

Epilogue

A year later Jack dies.

He is buried in the cathedral which he spent his life building. After the service, Ann walks around, remembering the trials, the delays, the battles, the tragedies and the lives that were lost in the building of this great church. Even in her grief she feels glad that she had the privilege of knowing and loving this extraordinary man. Everywhere she looks she sees his personality - his skill, his wit, his intellect, his love of beauty and his joy in life - all embodied in stone. Even the character of his son is overlaid on the church by the stained glass. As long as this cathedral stands, Ann thinks, Jack will be alive.

Prologue: The hanging

1. How the baby was abandoned
2. How Philip became Don
3. How the Manabligos joined the rebellion
4. How Jack named the cathedral
5. How Philip won the quarry
6. How Ann became a war merchant
7. How the cathedral got started
8. How William tried to ruin Philip
9. How Ann fell in love with Jack
10. How Ann married Alfred
11. How the cathedral fell down
12. How Jack returned home.
13. How they all received the justice
14. William, Matachi and Richard
15. How Jack found out about his father
16. How Philip rescued Alfred, Ann married Jack, and the cathedral was finished

Epilogue

a master builder.