

# **THE APOSTLE OF THE ARDENNES**

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The Apostle of the Ardennes by Lady Lindsay

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**LADY LINDSAY**

**THE APOSTLE OF  
THE ARDENNES**



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LADY LINDSAY  
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# I

*How the pleasure of the chase was above all else to Hubert the Hunter, so that he would not forego it, not even upon Good Friday.*

IX.685





## I

"The prince will hunt to-morrow," ran the word,  
Pass'd on, as in some village game a ring  
Is slipt from touch to touch.

"His grace will hunt."

"Yea, but to-morrow?"

"Ay, just as to-day."

And through the castle hall, down winding stairs,  
Out by the courtyard, and beyond the gate,  
That echo, "yea, to-morrow," flitted on,  
Like to a spectre, scattering nameless fear.

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O godless ruler ! might he not forego  
For one scant solemn day within the year—  
The solemnest of all our Christian year—  
His boisterous raid of hunting, with its greed  
Of creatures' pulse, its lust of butchery  
Wove into pageant, regally decked out—  
Earth's wanton holocaust spread out ablaze  
To hide the angels' sorrowful pale brows ?  
Not one short morn, nay, not that clouded hour  
When Christ for us hung on the shameful rood,  
A stainless sacrifice for our dark deeds ?  
What ! This fierce hunter—Esau among men—  
Would so forsake fast, vigil, penance, prayer,  
And all the genuflexions of the just,  
And all the sorrowed sighings of the meek,  
To plunder forests wild and isolate  
Where leaves bud tremulous green, to scare and slay  
The peaceful inmates in their deep retreat,  
To sully tepid winds with bugle blare,  
Trampling the virgin sward with horses' hoofs,

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Scarring pure grass with slaughtered innocence,  
Reddening the bushes by rough hurtful hands  
And tracks of murderous desolating pain—  
On such a day, O Christ, on such a day !

Thus sped that saying fleetly through the gate,  
Unchallenged by the watch, adown the steep,  
Past track of brushwood and pale bursting thorn,  
And rugged crags where ivy garlands clung  
Or holly bushes crowded, and dusk yew  
Made here and there a blot that showed the rest  
More golden in the flickering afternoon.

Deep down, the hamlet lay amid green fields,  
Crouched by the castle's fastness as a kid,  
Half tame, half wild, lies at the goat-herd's feet,  
Knowing there's safety. But, across the plain,  
Drawn as a silver braid to mark the page  
Of some great tome, a little river wound,  
Skirting the mystic darkness of the forest