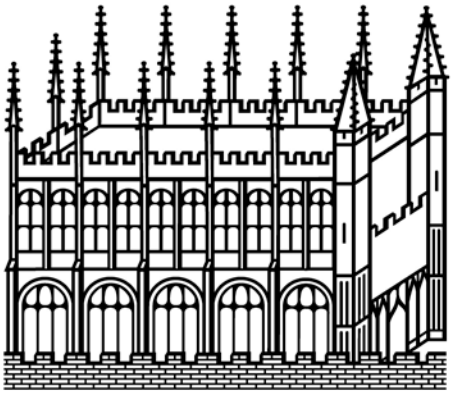
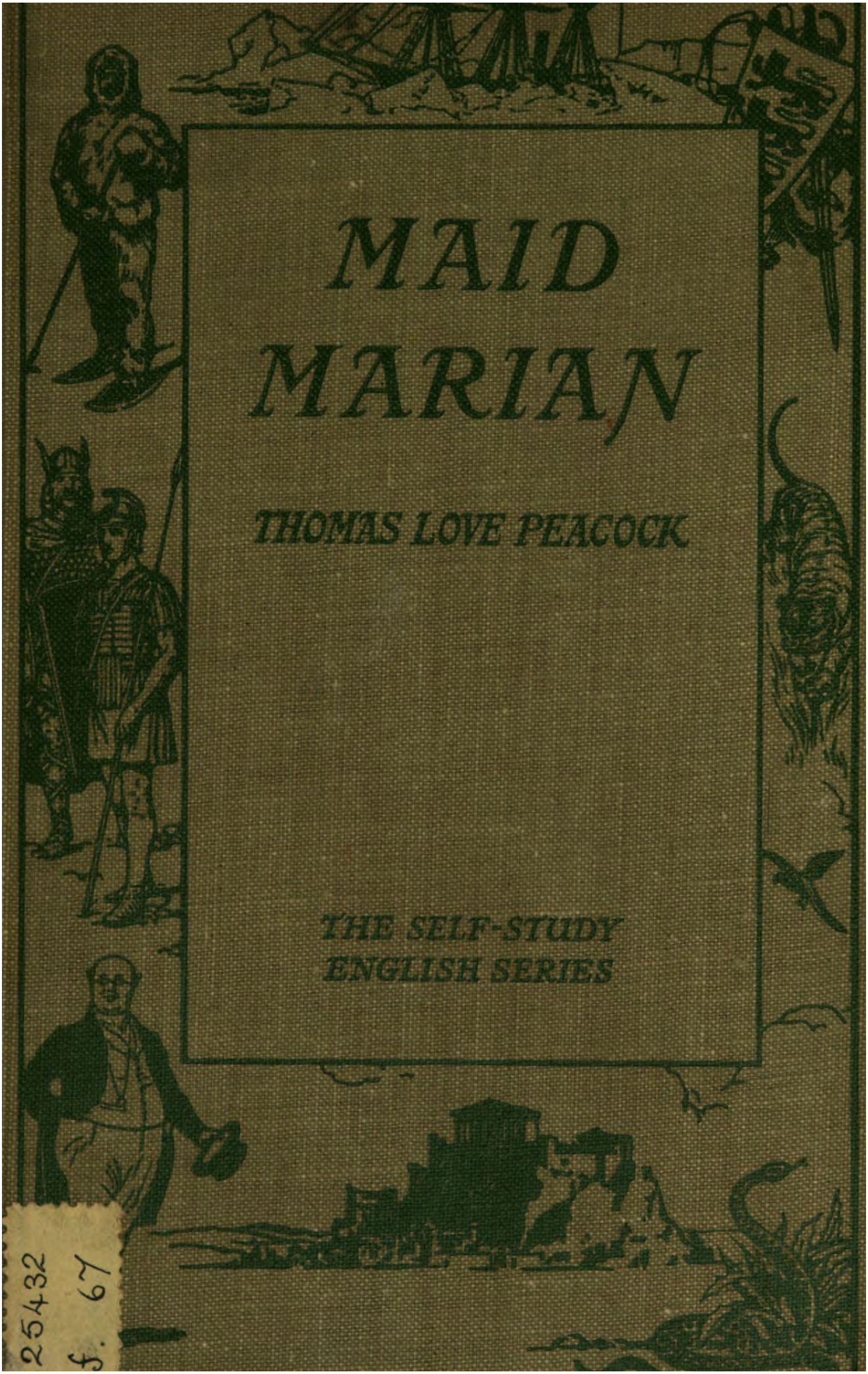
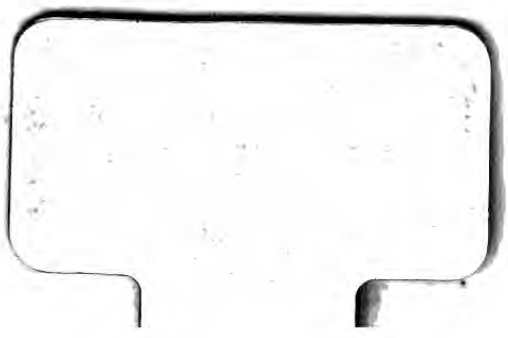




MAID MARIAN

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

THE SELF-STUDY ENGLISH SERIES



THE SELF-STUDY ENGLISH SERIES

MAID MARIAN

" The friar groaned, turned up the whites of his eyes, tossed up his arms in the air, and said ' *Dominus vobiscum.*' " [p. 55]

MAID MARIAN

BY

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

EDITED BY

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INTRODUCTION

BORN in 1785, Thomas Love Peacock passed his earliest years in London, where his father was a glass-merchant. His mother, Sarah Love, was left a widow three years later, and went to live with her father, a retired Devon sailor, at Chertsey, a village higher up the Thames. Here Peacock spent his boyhood. He was sent to the village school, and proved an apt scholar. He left, at the age of twelve, with some knowledge of Greek, Latin, and French, to which he afterwards added Italian. His real education, however, was acquired in the country-side and in his home. Roaming at will through the neighbouring Windsor Forest, he learned to know and love the country and to dislike the city ; under another name Windsor Forest is the Sherwood of *Maid Marian.* His grandfather, a real old " salt " with a fund of anecdote and practical good sense, taught him his own humorous disrespect for all shams and romantic follies. His mother, the strongest influence in his life, was a highly educated woman, from whom he inherited a love of good literature and a turn for writing.

At fourteen, Peacock was back in London as a merchant's clerk. He must have been—in spite of his grandfather—a serious, rather romantic youth. In those years he won a prize in an essay competition ; in his spare time read hard at the British Museum ; and occasionally turned out a few verses, of no great value, on such themes as *The Monks of St Mark* and (later) *The Philosophy of Melancholy.*

In 1805 his grandfather died, and Peacock seems to have given up his work in London to return to

Chertsey. In the next few years, completely at leisure, he went on walking-tours in various parts of the country—in Wales, up the Thames, and probably, in Scotland. It was while he was staying, during such a tour, at Maentwrog, in Merionethshire, that he met Jane Gryffydh, whom he afterwards married. It was here in Wales, too, that he picked up the fund of folk-lore that he afterwards used to good purpose in *The Misfortunes of Elphin.*

It was an important day in Peacock's life when he first met Shelley, in 1812. Shelley, almost seven years his junior, admired him as a poet and a scholar, and their common interests—poetry, Greek, and solitary walks—soon cemented their acquaintance into life-long friendship. For the next few years they saw a good deal of each other. After Shelley left for Italy they corresponded regularly, and on Shelley's early death Peacock found himself appointed his executor, jointly with Lord Byron. Afterwards he wrote his friend's biography. But the real importance of his early acquaintance with Shelley seems clearly to lie in the fact that he learned from him the folly of being romantic. In the spirit of his grandfather, he saw the humour of it, and, giving up his attempts to write melancholy romantic poetry, turned to prose satire in which the extravagance of Shelley, and Shelley's friends, and many others, was held up to ridicule.

It was in his novels (*Headlong Hall*, 1815 ; *Melincourt*, 1817 ; *Nightmare Abbey*, 1818) that Peacock thus struck his true vein,—satire. In all, the same plan is adopted : a loose scheme, in which a number of faddists are collected, on any suitable pretext, and talk. Peacock had little power of inventing a story, but he could create conversation that exposed brilliantly the follies of all types of men.

In 1818 Peacock was appointed Assistant Examiner

to the East India Company, and moved to London. His work for the Company called out his great practical ability. He was entrusted, for example, with the problem of shortening the mail journey to India. At that time the mails from this country reached India only every six months. Peacock collected expert evidence, and finally decided on a route by the Mediterranean and the Euphrates, in place of the customary route round the Cape of Good Hope. He decided also to employ the newly invented steam-ships instead of sailing-ships, and himself carried out tests with these vessels, and supervised their construction. As a result, mails arrived every month, and the company's affairs were correspondingly speeded up.

During the India House period, Peacock continued to publish : *The Four Ages of Poetry* in 1820, and, two years later, *Maid Marian.* The latter was almost immediately turned into an opera, and made a great hit, especially with the songs. After an interval of seven years, he published *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829), and followed this with *Crochet Castle* (1831). A longer interval followed, caused chiefly by the death of his mother and the illness of his wife, but partly also by his habit of writing only when he wished to ; then, at last, in 1862, appeared *Gryll Grange.* Peacock, now an old man, yet seemed to have altered hardly at all in style or outlook, so little difference is there between this novel and his earlier work. He died in 1866.

Maid Marian differs somewhat from Peacock's other novels in that its main effect springs from the story, not from the satire. Yet the satire is an obvious enough part of the book, and is quite effective. It was natural for Peacock to be satirical. He was a "Liberal"—a lover of freedom—in a time when harsh and tyrannical measures were the order of the

day. With the well-directed shafts of his satire he reaches kings, priests, officials of all kinds—everyone, in short, with the shadow of a claim to authority. Richard I, the Crusades, and the Sheriff of Nottingham, are, however, only a cloak that thinly disguises George III and the England of 1819.

In the midst of satire, however, the action captures his interest, and carries him along. He was a man of action himself, and he was still boy enough to delight in the rough-and-tumble of a fray, especially if it could be set in the greenwood. It is a pity that he did not oftener find—for he lacked the power to invent—a story so akin to this side of his genius. For then we should almost certainly have had not one but many tales of the type of *Maid Marian.*

In this edition it has been thought advisable to omit several passages not essential to the main story and some obsolete or difficult phrases that might impede the young reader.

CHAPTER I

"THE abbot, in his alb arrayed," stood at the altar in the abbey-chapel of Rubygill, with all his plump, sleek, rosy friars, in goodly lines disposed, to solemnise the nuptials of the beautiful Matilda Fitzwater, daughter of the Baron of Arlingford, with the noble Robert Fitz-Ooth, Earl of Locksley and Huntingdon. The abbey of Rubygill stood in a picturesque valley, at a little distance from the western boundary of Sherwood Forest, on the banks of a fine trout-stream, and in the midst of woodland coverts, abounding with excellent game. The bride, with her father and attendant maidens, entered the chapel; but the earl had not arrived. The baron was amazed, and the bridemaidens were disconcerted. Matilda feared that some evil had befallen her lover, but felt no diminution of her confidence in his honour and love. Through the open gates of the chapel she looked down the narrow road that wound along the side of the hill; and her ear was the first that heard the distant trampling of horses, and her eye was the first that caught the glitter of snowy plumes and the light of polished spears. "It is strange," thought the baron, "that the earl should come in this martial array to his wedding"; but he had not long to meditate, for the foaming steeds swept up to the gate like a whirlwind, and the earl, breathless with speed, and followed by a few of his yeomen, advanced to his smiling bride. It was then no time to ask questions, for the organ was in full peal, and the choristers were in full voice.

The abbot began to intone the ceremony through a very musical nose newly tuned for the occasion.

But he had not proceeded far when a noise was heard at the gate, and a party of armed men entered the chapel. The song of the choristers died away. The voice of the abbot subsided into silence through a descending scale of long-drawn melody, like the sound of the ebbing sea to the explorers of the cave. In a few moments all was silence, interrupted only by the iron tread of the armed intruders, as it rang on the marble floor and echoed from the vaulted aisles.

The leader strode up to the altar ; and placing himself opposite to the abbot, and between the earl and Matilda, in such a manner that the four together seemed to stand on the four points of a diamond, exclaimed, " In the name of King Henry, I forbid the ceremony, and attach Robert Earl of Huntingdon as a traitor ! " and at the same time he held his drawn sword between the lovers. The earl drew his own sword instantly, and struck down the interposing weapon ; then clasped his left arm round Matilda, who sprang into his embrace, and held his sword before her with his right hand. His yeomen ranged themselves at his side, and stood with their swords drawn, still and prepared, like men determined to die in his defence. The soldiers, confident in superiority of numbers, paused. The abbot took advantage of the pause to introduce a word of exhortation. " My children," said he, " if you are going to cut each others' throats, I entreat you, in the name of peace and charity, to do it out of the chapel."

" Sweet Matilda," said the earl, " did you give your love to the Earl of Huntingdon, whose lands touch the Ouse and the Trent, or to Robert Fitz-Ooth, the son of his mother ? "

" Neither to the earl nor his earldom," answered Matilda firmly, " but to Robert Fitz-Ooth and his love."

" That I well knew," said the earl ; " and though the ceremony be incomplete, we are not the less married in the eye of my only saint, our Lady, who will yet bring us together. Lord Fitzwater, to your care, for the present, I commit your daughter.—Nay, sweet Matilda, part we must for a while ; but we will soon meet under brighter skies, and be this the seal of our faith."

He kissed Matilda's lips, and consigned her to the baron, who glowered about him with an expression of countenance that showed he was mortally wroth with somebody ; but whatever he thought or felt he kept to himself. The earl, with a sign to his followers, made a sudden charge on the soldiers, with the intention of cutting his way through. The soldiers were prepared for such an occurrence, and a desperate skirmish succeeded. Some of the women screamed, but none of them fainted ; for fainting was not so much the fashion in those days. Matilda seemed disposed to fly again to her lover, but the baron forced her from the chapel. The earl's bowmen at the door sent in among the assailants a volley of arrows, one of which whizzed past the ear of the abbot, who, in mortal fear of being suddenly translated from a ghostly friar into a friarly ghost, began to roll out of the chapel as fast as his bulk and his holy robes would permit, roaring " Sacrilege ! " with all his monks at his heels, who were, like himself, more intent to go at once than to stand upon the order of their going. The abbot, thus pressed from behind, and stumbling over his own drapery before, fell suddenly prostrate in the doorway that connected the chapel with the abbey, and was instantaneously buried under a pyramid of ghostly carcasses, that fell over him and each other, and lay sprawling and bawling in unseemly disarray, and sending forth the names of all the saints in and out of heaven,

amidst the clashing of swords, the ringing of bucklers, the clattering of helmets, the twanging of bow-strings, the whizzing of arrows, the screams of women, the shouts of the warriors, and the vociferations of the peasantry, who had been assembled to the intended nuptials, and who, seeing a fair set-to, contrived to pick a quarrel among themselves on the occasion, and proceeded, with staff and cudgel, to crack each others' skulls for the good of the king and the earl. One tall friar alone was untouched by the panic of his brethren, and stood steadfastly watching the combat with his arms a-kembo.

At length, through the midst of the confusion, the earl, by the help of his good sword, the staunch valour of his men, and the blessing of the Virgin, fought his way to the chapel-gate—his bowmen closed him in—he vaulted into his saddle, clapped spurs to his horse, rallied his men on the first eminence, and exchanged his sword for a bow and arrow, with which he did old execution among the pursuers, who at last thought it most expedient to desist from offensive warfare, and to retreat into the abbey, where, in the king's name, they broached a pipe of the best wine, and attached all the venison in the larder, having first carefully unpacked the tuft of friars, and set the fallen abbot on his legs.

The friars, it may be well supposed, and such of the king's men as escaped unhurt from the affray, found their spirits a cup too low, and kept the flask moving from noon till night. The peaceful brethren, unused to the tumult of war, had undergone, from fear and discomposure, an exhaustion that required extraordinary refection. During the repast, they interrogated Sir Ralph Montfaucon, the leader of the soldiers, respecting the nature of the earl's offence.

"A complication of offences," replied Sir Ralph. "He began with hunting the king's deer, in despite

of all remonstrance ; followed it up by contempt of the king's mandates, and by armed resistance to his power, in defiance of all authority ; and combined with it the resolute withholding of payment of certain moneys to the abbot of Doncaster, in denial of all law ; and has thus made himself the declared enemy of church and state, and all for being too fond of venison." And the knight helped himself to half a pasty.

" A heinous offender," said a little round oily friar, appropriating the portion of pasty which Sir Ralph had left.

" The earl is a worthy peer," said the tall friar whom we have already mentioned in the chapel scene, " and the best marksman in England."

" Why this is flat treason, brother Michael," said the little round friar, " to call a traitor a worthy peer."

" I pledge you," said brother Michael. The little friar smiled and filled his cup. " He will draw the long-bow," pursued brother Michael, " with any bold yeoman among them all."

" Don't talk of the long-bow," said the abbot, who had the sound of the arrow still whizzing in his ear : " what have we pillars of the faith to do with the long-bow ? "

" Be that as it may," said Sir Ralph, " he is an outlaw from this moment."

" So much the worse for the law then," said brother Michael. " The law will have a heavier miss of him than he will have of the law. He will strike as much venison as ever, and more of other game. I know what I say ; but *basta :* Let us drink."

" What other game ? " said the little friar. " I hope he won't poach among our partridges."

" Poach ! not he," said brother Michael : " if he wants your partridges, he will strike them under

your nose (here's to you), and drag your trout-stream for you on a Thursday evening."

" Monstrous ! and starve us on fast-day," said the little friar.

" But that is not the game I mean," said brother Michael.

" Surely, son Michael," said the abbot, " you do not mean to insinuate that the noble earl will turn freebooter ? "

" A man must live," said brother Michael, " earl or no. If the law takes his rents and beeves without his consent, he must take beeves and rents where he can get them without the consent of the law."

" Truly," said Sir Ralph, " I am sorry for the damsel : she seems fond of this wild runagate."

" A mad girl, a mad girl," said the little friar.

" How a mad girl ? " said brother Michael. " Has she not beauty, grace, wit, sense, discretion, dexterity, learning and valour ? "

" Learning ! " exclaimed the little friar ; " what has a woman to do with learning ? And valour ! who ever heard a woman commended for valour ? Meekness and mildness, and softness, and gentleness, and tenderness, and humility, and obedience to her husband, and faith in her confessor, and domesticity, or, as learned doctors call it, the faculty of stay-athomeitiveness, and embroidery, and music, and pickling, and preserving, and the whole complex and multiplex detail of the noble science of dinner, as well in preparation for the table, as in arrangement over it, and in distribution around it to knights, and squires, and ghostly friars,—these are female virtues : but valour—why who ever heard—— ? "

" She is the all in all," said brother Michael, " gentle as a ring-dove, yet high-soaring as a falcon : humble below her deserving, yet deserving beyond the estimate of panegyric : an exact economist in all

superfluity, yet a most bountiful dispenser in all liberality : the chief regulator of her household, the fairest pillar of her hall, and the sweetest blossom of her bower : having, in all opposite proposings, sense to understand, judgment to weigh, discretion to choose, firmness to undertake, diligence to conduct, perseverance to accomplish, and resolution to maintain. For obedience to her husband, that is not to be tried till she has one : for faith in her confessor, she has as much as the law prescribes : for embroidery an Arachne : for music a Siren : and for pickling and preserving, did not one of her jars of sugared apricots give you your last surfeit at Arlingford Castle ? "

" Call you that preserving ? " said the little friar ; " I call it destroying. Call you it pickling ? Truly it pickled me. My life was saved by miracle."

" By canary," said brother Michael. " Canary is the only life preserver, the universal panacea for all diseases, thirst, and short life. Your life was saved by canary."

" Indeed, reverend father," said Sir Ralph, " if the young lady be half what you describe, she must be a paragon : but your commending her for valour does somewhat amaze me."

" She can fence," said the little friar, " and draw the long-bow and play at single-stick and quarter-staff."

" Yet mark you," said brother Michael, " not like a virago or a hoyden, or one that would crack a serving-man's head for spilling gravy on her ruff, but with such womanly grace and temperate self-command as if those manly exercises belonged to her only, and were become for her sake feminine."

" You incite me," said Sir Ralph, " to view her more nearly. That madcap earl found me other employment than to remark her in the chapel."

" The earl is a worthy peer," said brother Michael ; " he is worth any fourteen earls on this side Trent, and any seven on the other." (The reader will please to remember that Rubygill Abbey was *north* of Trent.)

" His mettle will be tried," said Sir Ralph. " There is many a courtier will swear to King Henry to bring him in dead or alive."

" They must look to the brambles then," said brother Michael.

" The bramble, the bramble, the bonny forest bramble,
Doth make a jest
Of silken vest,
That will through greenwood scramble :
The bramble, the bramble, the bonny forest bramble."

" Plague on your lungs, son Michael," said the abbot ; " this is your old coil ; always roaring in your cups."

" I know what I say," said brother Michael : " there is often more sense in an old song than in a new homily.

" The courtly pad doth amble,
When his gay lord would ramble :
But both may catch
An awkward scratch
If they ride among the bramble :
The bramble, the bramble, the bonny forest bramble."

" Tall friar," said Sir Ralph, " either you shoot the shafts of your merriment at random, or you know more of the earl's designs than beseems your frock."

" Let my frock," said brother Michael, " answer for its own sins. It is worn past covering mine. It is too weak for a shield, too transparent for a screen, too thin for a shelter, too light for gravity,

and too threadbare for a jest. The wearer would be naught indeed who should misbeseem such a wedding garment.

" But wherefore doth the sheep wear wool ?
That he in season sheared may be,
And the shepherd be warm though his flock be cool :
So I'll have a new cloak about me."

CHAPTER II

THE Earl of Huntingdon, living in the vicinity of a royal forest, and passionately attached to the chase from his infancy, had long made as free with the king's deer as Lord Percy proposed to do with those of Lord Douglas in the memorable hunting of Cheviot. King Henry (the Second) swore by Saint Botolph to make him rue his sport, and, having caused him to be duly and formally accused, summoned him to London to answer the charge. The earl, deeming himself safer among his own vassals than among King Henry's courtiers, took no notice of the mandate. King Henry sent a force to bring him to court. The earl made a resolute resistance, and put the king's force to flight under a shower of arrows : an act which the courtiers declared to be treason. Still the king did not think it advisable to assail the earl in his own stronghold, but caused a diligent watch to be kept over his motions, till at length his rumoured marriage with the heiress of Arlingford seemed to point out an easy method of laying violent hands on the offender. Sir Ralph Montfaucon, a young man of good lineage and of an aspiring temper, who readily seized the first opportunity that offered of recommending himself to King Henry's favour by manifesting his

zeal in his service, undertook the charge : and how he succeeded we have seen.

Sir Ralph's curiosity was strongly excited by the friar's description of the young lady of Arlingford ; and he prepared in the morning to visit the castle, under the very plausible pretext of giving the baron an explanation of his intervention at the nuptials. Brother Michael and the little fat friar proposed to be his guides. The proposal was courteously accepted, and they set out together, leaving Sir Ralph's followers at the abbey. The knight was mounted on a spirited charger ; brother Michael on a large heavy-trotting horse ; and the little fat friar on a plump soft-paced galloway, so correspondent with himself in size, rotundity, and sleekness.

" Yonder are the towers of Arlingford," said brother Michael.

The little friar stopped. He seemed suddenly struck with an awful thought, which caused a momentary palescence in his rosy complexion ; and after a brief hesitation, he turned his galloway, and told his companions he should give them good day.

" Why, what is in the wind now, brother Peter ? " said Friar Michael.

" The lady Matilda," said the little friar, " can draw the long-bow. She must bear no goodwill to Sir Ralph ; and if she should espy him from her tower, she may testify her recognition with a cloth-yard shaft. She is not so infallible a markswoman but that she might shoot at a crow and kill a pigeon. She might peradventure miss the knight, and hit me, who never did her any harm."

" Tut, tut, man," said brother Michael, " there is no such fear."

" Mass," said the little friar, " but there is such a fear, and very strong too. You who have it not may keep your way, and I who have it shall take mine.

I am not just now in the vein for being picked off at a long shot." And saying these words, he spurred up his fourfooted better half, and galloped off as nimbly as if he had had an arrow singing behind him.

"Is this lady Matilda, then, so very terrible a damsel?" said Sir Ralph to brother Michael.

"By no means," said the friar. "She has certainly a high spirit; but it is the wing of the eagle, without his beak or his claw."

"But there must surely be some reason," said Sir Ralph, "for father Peter's apprehension."

"None," said brother Michael, "but the apprehension itself. The lady did, it is true, once signalise her displeasure against our little brother, for reprimanding her in that she would go hunting a-mornings instead of attending matins. She cut short the thread of his eloquence by sportively drawing her bow-string and loosing an arrow over his head; he waddled off with singular speed, and was in much awe of her for many months. I thought he had forgotten it: but let that pass. In truth, she would have had little of her lover's company, if she had liked the chaunt of the choristers better than the cry of the hounds: yet I know not; for they were companions from the cradle, and fashioned each other to the love of the fern and the fox-glove. They are twin plants of the forest, and are identified with its growth.

"For the slender beech and the sapling oak,
That grow by the shadowy rill,
You may cut down both at a single stroke,
You may cut down which you will.

"But this you must know, that as long as they grow,
Whatever change may be,
You never can teach either oak or beech
To be aught but a greenwood tree."

CHAPTER III

THE knight and the friar arriving at Arlingford Castle, and leaving their horses in the care of lady Matilda's groom, with whom the friar was in great favour, were ushered into a stately apartment, where they found the baron alone, flourishing an enormous carving-knife over a brother baron—of beef—with as much vehemence of action as if he were cutting down an enemy. The baron was a gentleman of a fierce and choleric temperament: he was lineally descended from the redoubtable Fierabras of Normandy, who came over to England with the Conqueror, and who, in the battle of Hastings, killed with his own hand four-and-twenty Saxon cavaliers all on a row. On the preceding day he was so equally angry with both parties that he knew not on which to vent his wrath. He could willingly have fallen upon both parties, but he must necessarily have begun with one; and he felt that on whichever side he should strike the first blow, his retainers would immediately join battle. He had therefore contented himself with forcing away his daughter from the scene of action. In the course of the evening he had received intelligence that the earl's castle was in possession of a party of the king's men, who had been detached by Sir Ralph Montfaucon to seize on it during the earl's absence. The baron inferred from this that the earl's case was desperate; and those who have had the opportunity of seeing a rich friend fall suddenly into poverty, may easily judge by their own feelings how quickly and completely the earl was changed in the baron's estimation. The baron immediately proceeded to require in his daughter's mind the same revolution that had taken place in his own, and considered himself exceedingly

ill-used by her non-compliance. The lady had retired to her chamber, and the baron had passed a supperless and sleepless night, stalking about his apartments till an advanced hour of the morning, when hunger compelled him to summon into his presence the spoils of the buttery, which, being the intended array of an uneaten wedding feast, were more than usually abundant, and on which, when the knight and the friar entered, he was falling with desperate valour. He looked up at them fiercely, with his mouth full of beef and his eyes full of flame, and rising, as ceremony required, made an awful bow to the knight, inclining himself forward over the table and presenting his carving-knife *en militaire*, in a manner that seemed to leave it doubtful whether he meant to show respect to his visitor, or to defend his provision : but the doubt was soon cleared up by his politely motioning the knight to be seated ; on which the friar advanced to the table, saying, " For what we are going to receive," and commenced operations without further prelude by filling and drinking a goblet of wine. The baron at the same time offered one to Sir Ralph, with the look of a man in whom habitual hospitality and courtesy were struggling with the natural anger. They pledged each other in silence, and the baron, having completed a copious draught, continued working his lips and his throat, as if trying to swallow his wrath as he had done his wine. Sir Ralph, not knowing well what to make of these ambiguous signs, looked for instructions to the friar, who by significant looks and gestures seemed to advise him to follow his example and partake of the good cheer before him, without speaking till the baron should be more intelligible in his demeanour. The knight and the friar, accordingly, proceeded to refect themselves after their ride ; the baron looking first at the one

and then at the other, scrutinising alternately the serious looks of the knight and the merry face of the friar, till at length, having calmed himself sufficiently to speak, he said, " Courteous knight and ghostly father, I presume you have some other business with me than to eat my beef and drink my canary ; and if so, I patiently await your leisure to enter on the topic."

" Lord Fitzwater," said Sir Ralph, " in obedience to my royal master, King Henry, I have been the unwilling instrument of frustrating the intended nuptials of your fair daughter ; yet will you, I trust, owe me no displeasure for my agency herein, seeing that the noble maiden might otherwise by this time have been the bride of an outlaw."

" I am very much obliged to you, sir," said the baron ; " very exceedingly obliged. Your solicitude for my daughter is truly paternal, and for a young man and a stranger very singular and exemplary : and it is very kind withal to come to the relief of my insufficiency and inexperience, and concern yourself so much in that which concerns you not."

" You misconceive the knight, noble baron," said the friar. " True, he has done the lady Matilda great wrong—— "

" How, great wrong ? " said the baron. " What do you mean by great wrong ? Would you have had her married to a wild fly-by-night, that accident made an earl and nature a deer-stealer ? that has not wit enough to eat venison without picking a quarrel with monarchy ? that flings away his own lands into the clutches of rascally friars, for the sake of hunting in other men's grounds, and feasting vagabonds that wear Lincoln green, and would have flung away mine into the bargain if he had had my daughter ? What do you mean by great wrong ? "

" True," said the friar : " great right, I meant."

" Right ! " exclaimed the baron : " what right has any man to do my daughter right but myself? What right has any man to drive my daughter's bridegroom out of the chapel in the middle of the marriage ceremony, and turn all our merry faces into green wounds and bloody coxcombs, and then come and tell me he has done us great right ? "

" True," said the friar, " he has done neither right nor wrong."

" But he has," said the baron, " he has done both, and I will maintain it with my glove."

" It shall not need," said Sir Ralph ; " I will concede anything in honour."

" And I," said the baron, " will concede nothing in honour : I will concede nothing in honour to any man."

" Neither will I, Lord Fitzwater," said Sir Ralph, " in that sense : but hear me. I was commissioned by the king to apprehend the Earl of Huntingdon. I brought with me a party of soldiers, picked and tried men, knowing that he would not lightly yield. I sent my lieutenant with a detachment to surprise the earl's castle in his absence, and laid my measures for intercepting him on the way to his intended nuptials ; but he seems to have had intimation of this part of my plan, for he brought with him a large armed retinue, and took a circuitous route, which made him, I believe, somewhat later than his appointed hour. When the lapse of time showed me that he had taken another track, I pursued him to the chapel ; and I would have awaited the close of the ceremony, if I had thought that either yourself or your daughter would have felt desirous that she should have been the bride of an outlaw."

" Who said, sir," cried the baron, " that we were desirous of any such thing ? But truly, sir, if I had

a mind to the devil for a son-in-law, I would fain see the man that should venture to interfere."

"That would I," said the friar; "for I have undertaken to make her renounce the devil."

"She shall not renounce the devil," said the baron, "unless I please. You are very ready with your undertakings. Will you undertake to make her renounce the earl, who, I believe, is the devil incarnate? Will you undertake that?"

"Will I undertake," said the friar, "to make Trent run westward, or to make the flame burn downward, or to make a tree grow with its head in the earth and its root in the air?"

"So then," said the baron, "a girl's mind is as hard to change as nature and the elements, and it is easier to make her renounce the devil than a lover. Are you a match for the devil, and no match for a man?"

"My warfare," said the friar, "is not of this world. I am militant not against man, but the devil, who goes about seeking what he may devour."

"Oh! does he so?" said the baron: "then I take it that makes you look for him so often in my buttery. Will you cast out the devil whose name is Legion, when you cannot cast out the imp whose name is Love?"

"Marriages," said the friar, "are made in heaven. Love is God's work, and therewith I meddle not."

"God's work, indeed!" said the baron, "when the ceremony was cut short in the church. Could men have put them asunder, if God had joined them together? And the earl is now no earl, but plain Robert Fitz-Ooth: therefore, I'll none of him."

"He may atone," said the friar, "and the king may mollify. The earl is a worthy peer, and the king is a courteous king."

"He cannot atone," said Sir Ralph. "He has

killed the king's men ; and if the baron should aid and abet, he will lose his castle and land."

" Will I ? " said the baron ; " not while I have a drop of blood in my veins. He that comes to take them shall first serve me as the friar serves my flasks of canary : he shall drain me dry as hay. Am I not disparaged ? Am I not outraged ? Is not my daughter made a mockery ? A girl half-married ? There was my butler brought home with a broken head. My butler, friar : there is that may move your sympathy. Friar, the earl-no-earl shall come no more to my daughter."

" Very good," said the friar.

" It is not very good," said the baron, " for I cannot get her to say so."

" I fear," said Sir Ralph, " the young lady must be much distressed and discomposed."

" Not a whit, sir," said the baron. " She is, as usual, in a most provoking imperturbability, and contradicts me so smilingly that it would enrage you to see her."

" I had hoped," said Sir Ralph, " that I might have seen her, to make my excuse in person for the hard necessity of my duty."

He had scarcely spoken, when the door opened, and the lady made her appearance.

CHAPTER IV

MATILDA, not dreaming of visitors, tripped into the apartment in a dress of forest green, with a small quiver by her side, and a bow and arrow in her hand. Her hair, black and glossy as the raven's wing, curled like wandering clusters of dark ripe grapes under the edge of her round bonnet ; and a plume

of black feathers fell back negligently above it, with an almost horizontal inclination, that seemed the habitual effect of rapid motion against the wind. Her black eyes sparkled like sunbeams on a river : a clear, deep, liquid radiance. Her lips were half opened to speak as she entered the apartment ; and with a smile of recognition to the friar, and a courtesy to the stranger knight, she approached the baron and said, " You are late at your breakfast, father."

" I am not at breakfast," said the baron. " I have been at supper : my last night's supper ; for I had none."

" I am sorry," said Matilda, " you should have gone to bed supperless."

" I did not go to bed supperless," said the baron : " I did not go to bed at all : and what are you doing with that green dress and that bow and arrow ? "

" I am going a-hunting," said Matilda.

" A-hunting ! " said the baron. " What, I warrant you, to meet with the earl, and slip your neck into the same noose ? "

" No," said Matilda : " I am not going out of our own woods to-day."

" How do I know that ? " said the baron. " What surety have I of that ? "

" Here is the friar," said Matilda. " He will be surety."

" Not he," said the baron : " he will undertake nothing but where the devil is a party concerned."

" Yes, I will," said the friar : " I will undertake anything for the lady Matilda."

" No matter for that," said the baron : " she shall not go hunting to-day."

" Why, father," said Matilda, " if you coop me up here in this odious castle, I shall pine and die like a lonely swan on a pool."

" No," said the baron, " the lonely swan does not

die on the pool. If there be a river at hand, she flies to the river, and finds her a mate ; and so shall not you."

" But," said Matilda, " you may send with me any, or as many, of your grooms as you will."

" My grooms," said the baron, " are all false knaves. There is not a rascal among them but loves you better than me. Villains that I feed and clothe."

" Surely," said Matilda, " it is not villainy to love me : if it be, I should be sorry my father were an honest man." The baron relaxed his muscles into a smile. " Or my lover either," added Matilda. The baron looked grim again.

" For your lover," said the baron, " you may give God thanks of him. He is as arrant a knave as ever poached."

" What, for hunting the king's deer ? " said Matilda. " Have I not heard you rail at the forest laws by the hour ? "

" Did you ever hear me," said the baron, " rail myself out of house and land ? If I had done that, then were I a knave."

" My lover," said Matilda, " is a brave man, and a true man, and a generous man, and a young man, and a handsome man ; aye, and an honest man too."

" How can he be an honest man," said the baron, " when he has neither house nor land, which are the better part of a man ? "

" They are but the husk of a man," said Matilda, " the worthless coat of the chestnut : the man himself is the kernel."

" The man is the grape stone," said the baron, " and the pulp of the melon. The house and land are the true substantial fruit, and all that give him savour and value."

" He will never want house or land," said Matilda, " while the meeting boughs weave a green roof in the wood, and the free range of the hart marks out the bounds of the forest."

" Vert and venison ! vert and venison ! " exclaimed the baron. " Treason and flat rebellion. Confound your smiling face ! what makes you look so good-humoured ? What ! you think I can't look at you, and be in a passion ? You think so, do you ? We shall see. Have you no fear in talking thus, when here is the king's liegeman come to take us all into custody, and confiscate our goods and chattels ? "

" Nay, Lord Fitzwater," said Sir Ralph, " you wrong me in your report. My visit is one of courtesy and excuse, not of menace and authority."

" There it is," said the baron : " every one takes a pleasure in contradicting me. Here is this courteous knight, who has not opened his mouth three times since he has been in my house except to take in provision, cuts me short in my story with a flat denial."

" Oh ! I cry you mercy, sir knight," said Matilda ; " I did not mark you before. I am your debtor for no slight favour, and so is my liege lord."

" Her liege lord ! " exclaimed the baron, taking large strides across the chamber.

" Pardon me, gentle lady," said Sir Ralph. " Had I known you before yesterday, I would have cut off my right hand ere it should have been raised to do you displeasure."

" Oh, sir," said Matilda, " a good man may be forced on an ill office : but I can distinguish the man from his duty." She presented to him her hand, which he kissed respectfully, and simultaneously with the contact thirty-two invisible arrows plunged at once into his heart, one from every point of the compass.

" Well, father," added Matilda, " I must go to the woods."

" Must you ? " said the baron : " I say you must not."

" But I am going," said Matilda.

" But I will have up the drawbridge," said the baron.

" But I will swim the moat," said Matilda.

" But I will secure the gates," said the baron.

" But I will leap from the battlement," said Matilda.

" But I will lock you in an upper chamber," said the baron.

" But I will shred the tapestry," said Matilda, " and let myself down."

" But I will lock you in a turret," said the baron, " where you shall only see light through a loophole."

" But through that loophole," said Matilda, " will I take my flight, like a young eagle from its aerie : and, father, while I go out freely, I will return willingly : but if once I slip out through a loophole—— " She paused a moment, and then added, singing,—

" The love that follows fain
  Will never its faith betray :
But the faith that is held in a chain
Will never be found again,
  If a single link give way."

The melody acted irresistibly on the harmonious propensities of the friar, who accordingly sang in his turn,—

" For hark ! hark ! hark !
The dog doth bark,
  That watches the wild deer's lair.
The hunter awakes at the peep of the dawn,
But the lair it is empty, the deer it is gone,
  And the hunter knows not where."

Matilda and the friar then sang together—

" Then follow, oh follow ! the hounds do cry :
The red sun flames in the eastern sky :
The stag bounds over the hollow.
He that lingers in spirit, or loiters in hall,
Shall see us no more till the evening fall,
And no voice but the echo shall answer his call :
Then follow, oh follow, follow :
Follow, oh follow, follow ! "

During the process of this harmony, the baron's eyes wandered from his daughter to the friar, and from the friar to his daughter again, with an alternate expression of anger differently modified : when he looked on the friar, it was anger without qualification; when he looked on his daughter it was still anger, but tempered by an expression of involuntary admiration and pleasure. These rapid fluctuations of the baron's physiognomy,—the habitual, reckless, resolute merriment in the jovial face of the friar,—and the cheerful, elastic spirits that played on the lips and sparkled in the eyes of Matilda,—would have presented a very amusing combination to Sir Ralph if one of the three images in the group had not absorbed his total attention with feelings of intense delight very nearly allied to pain. The baron's wrath was somewhat counteracted by the reflection that his daughter's good spirits seemed to show that they would naturally rise triumphant over all disappointments ; and he had had sufficient experience of her humour to know that she might sometimes be led, but never could be driven. Then, too, he was always delighted to hear her sing, though he was not at all pleased in this instance with the subject of her song. Still he would have endured the subject for the sake of the melody of the treble, but his mind was not sufficiently attuned to unison

to relish the harmony of the bass. The friar's accompaniment put him out of all patience, and— "So," he exclaimed, "this is the way you teach my daughter to renounce the devil, is it? A hunting friar, truly! Who ever heard before of a hunting friar? A profane, roaring, bawling, bumper-bibbing, neck-breaking, catch-singing friar?"

"Under favour, bold baron," said the friar; but the friar was warm with canary, and in his singing vein; and he could not go on in plain unmusical prose. He therefore sang in a new tune,—

"Though I be now a grey, grey friar,
Yet I was once a hale young knight:
The cry of my dogs was the only choir
In which my spirit did take delight.

"Little I recked of matin bell,
But drowned its toll with my clanging horn:
And the only beads I loved to tell
Were the beads of dew on the spangled thorn."

The baron was going to storm, but the friar paused, and Matilda sang in repetition,—

"Little I reck of matin bell,
But drown its toll with my clanging horn:
And the only beads I love to tell
Are the beads of dew on the spangled thorn."

And then she and the friar sang the four lines together, and rang the changes upon them alternately.

"Little I reck of matin bell,"

sang the friar.

"A precious friar," said the baron.

"But drown its toll with my clanging horn,"

sang Matilda.

"More shame for you," said the baron.

"And the only beads I love to tell
Are the beads of dew on the spangled thorn,"

sang Matilda and the friar together.

"Penitent and confessor," said the baron: "a hopeful pair truly."

The friar went on,—

"An archer keen I was withal,
As ever did lean on greenwood tree;
And could make the fleetest roebuck fall,
A good three hundred yards from me.
Though changeful time, with hand severe,
Has made me now these joys forego,
Yet my heart bounds whene'er I hear
Yoicks! hark away! and tally ho!"

Matilda chimed in as before.

"Are you mad?" said the baron. "Are you insane? Are you possessed? What do you mean? What in the devil's name do you both mean?"

"Yoicks! hark away! and tally ho!"

roared the friar.

The baron now gave loose to the full torrent of his indignation by seizing a vast dish of beef more than fifty ancient yeomen could eat, and whirled it like a coit over the head of the friar, to the extremity of the apartment,

Where it on oaken floor did settle,
With mighty din of ponderous metal.

"Nay, father," said Matilda, taking the baron's hand, "do not harm the friar: he means not to offend you. My gaiety never before displeased you. Least of all should it do so now, when I have need of all my spirits to outweigh the severity of my fortune."

As she spoke the last words, tears started into her eyes, which, as if ashamed of betraying her feelings, she turned away to conceal. The baron was subdued at once. He kissed his daughter, held out his hand to the friar, and said, " Sing on, in God's name, and crack away the flasks till your voice swims in canary." Then turning to Sir Ralph, he said, " You see how it is, sir knight. Matilda is my daughter ; but she has me in leading-strings, that is the truth of it."

CHAPTER V

THE friar, having stayed long enough to see everything replaced on a friendly footing, rose, and moved to take his leave. Matilda told him he must come again on the morrow, for she had a very long confession to make to him. This the friar promised to do, and departed with the knight.

Sir Ralph, on reaching the abbey, drew his followers together, and led them to Locksley Castle, which he found in the possession of his lieutenant ; whom he again left there with a sufficient force to hold it in safe keeping in the king's name, and proceeded to London to report the results of his enterprise.

Now Henry our royal king was very wroth at the earl, and swore that he would give the castle and lands of Locksley to the man who should bring in the earl. Hereupon ensued a process of thought in the mind of the knight. The eyes of the fair huntress of Arlingford had left a wound in his heart which only she who gave could heal. He had seen that the baron was no longer very partial to the outlawed earl, but that he still retained his old affection for the lands and castle of Locksley. Now the lands

and castle were very fair things in themselves ; but they would be doubly valuable as certain passports to the father's favour, which was one step towards that of the daughter, or at least towards obtaining possession of her either quietly or perforce ; and to think of being, by any means whatever, the lord of Locksley and Arlingford, and the husband of the bewitching Matilda, was very tempting to a soldier of fortune. He set out in high spirits with a chosen band of followers, and beat up all the country far and wide around both the Ouse and the Trent ; but fortune did not seem disposed to second his diligence, for no vestige whatever could he trace of the earl. His followers, who were only paid with the wages of hope, began to murmur and fall off ; so that, one fine morning, the knight found himself sitting on a pleasant bank of the Trent, with only a solitary squire.

The knight did not despair because of the desertion of his followers : he was well aware that he could easily raise recruits if he could once find trace of his game ; he, therefore, rode about indefatigably over hill and dale, to the great sharpening of his own appetite and that of his squire, living gallantly from inn to inn when his purse was full, and quartering himself in the king's name on the nearest ghostly brotherhood when it happened to be empty. An autumn and a winter had passed away, when one evening, in a beautiful sylvan valley, he found a number of young women weaving garlands of flowers, and singing over their pleasant occupation. He approached them, and courteously inquired the way to the nearest town.

" There is no town within several miles," was the answer.

" A village, then, if it be but large enough to furnish an inn ? "

"There is Gamwell just by, but there is no inn nearer than the nearest town."

"An abbey, then?"

"There is no abbey nearer than the nearest inn."

"A house then, or a cottage, where I may obtain hospitality for the night?"

"Hospitality!" said one of the young women; "you have not far to seek for that. Do you not know that you are in the neighbourhood of Gamwell Hall?"

"So far from it," said the knight, "that I never heard the name of Gamwell Hall before."

"Never heard of Gamwell Hall!" exclaimed all the young women together, who could as soon have dreamed of his never having heard of the sky.

"Indeed, no," said Sir Ralph; "but I shall be very happy to get rid of my ignorance."

"And so shall I," said his squire; "for it seems that in this case knowledge will for once be a cure for hunger, wherewith I am grievously afflicted."

"And why are you so busy, my pretty damsels, weaving these garlands?" said the knight.

"Why, do you not know, sir," said one of the young women, "that to-morrow is Gamwell feast?"

The knight was again obliged, with all humility, to confess his ignorance.

"Oh! sir," said his informant, "then you will have something to see, that I can tell you; for we shall choose a Queen of the May, and we shall crown her with flowers, and place her in a chariot of flowers, and draw it with lines of flowers, and we shall hang all the trees with flowers, and we shall strew all the ground with flowers, and we shall dance with flowers, and in flowers, and on flowers, and we shall be all flowers."

"That you will," said the knight; "and the

sweetest and brightest of all the flowers of the May, my pretty damsels." On which all the pretty damsels smiled at him and each other.

"And there will be all sorts of May-games, and there will be prizes for archery, and there will be the knight's ale, and the foresters' venison, and there will be Kit Scrapesqueak with his fiddle, and little Tom Whistlerap with his fife and tabor, and Sam Trumtwang with his harp, and Peter Muggledrone with his bagpipe, and how I shall dance with Will Whitehorn!" added the girl, clapping her hands as she spoke, and bounding from the ground with the pleasure of the anticipation.

A tall athletic young man approached, to whom the rustic maidens courtesied with great respect; and one of them informed Sir Ralph that it was young Master William Gamwell. The young gentleman invited and conducted the knight to the hall, where he introduced him to the old knight his father, and to the old lady his mother, and to the young lady his sister, and to a number of bold yeomen, who were laying siege to beef, brawn, and plum pie around a ponderous table, and taking copious draughts of old October. A motto was inscribed over the interior door,—

EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY:

an injunction which Sir Ralph and his squire showed remarkable alacrity in obeying. Old Sir Guy of Gamwell gave Sir Ralph a very cordial welcome, and entertained him during supper with several of his best stories, enforced with an occasional slap on the back, and pointed with a peg in the ribs.

CHAPTER VI

Old Sir Guy of Gamwell, and young William Gamwell, and fair Alice Gamwell, and Sir Ralph Montfaucon and his squire rode together the next morning to the scene of the feast. They arrived on a village-green, surrounded with cottages peeping from among the trees by which the green was completely encircled. The whole circle was hung round with one continuous garland of flowers, depending in irregular festoons from the branches. In the centre of the green was a May-pole hidden in boughs and garlands; and a multitude of round-faced bumpkins and cherry-cheeked lasses were dancing around it, to the quadruple melody of Scrapesqueak, Whistlerap, Trumtwang, and Muggledrone: harmony we must not call it; for, though they had agreed to a partnership in point of tune, each, like a true painstaking man, seemed determined to have his time to himself. While Muggledrone played the tune four times, Trumtwang played it five, Whistlerap six, and Scrapesqueak eight; for the latter completely distanced all his competitors, and indeed worked his elbow so nimbly that its outline was scarcely distinguishable through the mistiness of its rapid vibration.

While the knight was delighting his eyes and ears with these pleasant sights and sounds, all eyes were turned in one direction; and Sir Ralph, looking round, saw a fair lady in green and gold come riding through the trees, accompanied by a portly friar in grey, and several fair damsels and gallant grooms. On their nearer approach he recognised the lady Matilda and her ghostly adviser, brother Michael. A party of foresters arrived from another direction, and then ensued cordial inter-

changes of greeting, and collisions of hands and lips, among the Gamwells and the new-comers,—" How does my fair coz, Mawd ? " and " How does my sweet coz, Mawd ? " and " How does my wild coz, Mawd ? " And " Eh ! jolly friar, your hand, old boy " : and " Here, honest friar " : and " To me, merry friar " : and " By your favour, mistress Alice " : and " Hey ! cousin Robin " : and " Hey ! cousin Will " : and " Od's life ! merry Sir Guy, you grow younger every year,"—as the old knight shook them all in turn with one hand, and slapped them on the back with the other, in token of his affection. A number of young men and women advanced, some drawing, and others dancing round, a floral car ; and having placed a crown of flowers on Matilda's head, they saluted her Queen of the May, and drew her to the place appointed for the rural sports.

A hogshead of ale was abroach under an oak, and a fire was blazing in an open space before the trees to roast the fat deer which the foresters brought. The sports commenced ; and, after an agreeable series of bowling, coiting, pitching, hurling, racing, leaping, grinning, wrestling, or friendly dislocation of joints, and cudgel-playing or amicable cracking of skulls, the trial of archery ensued. The conqueror was to be rewarded with a golden arrow from the hand of the Queen of the May, who was to be his partner in the dance till the close of the feast. This stimulated the knight's emulation : young Gamwell supplied him with a bow and arrow, and he took his station among the foresters, but had the mortification to be out-shot by them all, and to see one of them lodge the point of his arrow in the golden ring of the centre, and receive the prize from the hand of the beautiful Matilda, who smiled on him with particular grace. The jealous knight scrutinised the successful champion with great attention, and surely

thought he had seen that face before. In the meantime the forester led the lady to the station. The luckless Sir Ralph drank deep draughts of love from the matchless grace of her attitudes, as, taking the bow in her left hand, and adjusting the arrow with her right, advancing her left foot, and gently curving her beautiful figure with a slight motion of her head that waved her black feathers and her ringleted hair, she drew the arrow to its head, and loosed it from her open fingers. The arrow struck within the ring of gold, so close to that of the victorious forester that the points were in contact, and the feathers were intermingled. Great acclamations succeeded, and the forester led Matilda to the dance. Sir Ralph gazed on her fascinating motions till the torments of baffled love and jealous rage became unendurable; and approaching young Gamwell, he asked him if he knew the name of that forester who was leading the dance with the Queen of the May?

"Robin, I believe," said young Gamwell carelessly; "I think they call him Robin."

"Is that all you know of him?" said Sir Ralph.

"What more should I know of him?" said young Gamwell.

"Then I can tell you," said Sir Ralph, "he is the outlawed Earl of Huntingdon, on whose head is set so large a price."

"Ay, is he?" said young Gamwell, in the same careless manner.

"He were a prize worth the taking," said Sir Ralph.

"No doubt," said young Gamwell.

"How think you?" said Sir Ralph: "are the foresters his adherents?"

"I cannot say," said young Gamwell.

"Is your peasantry loyal and well-disposed?" said Sir Ralph.

" Passing loyal," said young Gamwell.

" If I should call on them in the king's name," said Sir Ralph, " think you they would aid and assist ? "

" Most likely they would," said young Gamwell, " one side or the other."

" Ay, but which side ? " said the knight.

" That remains to be tried," said young Gamwell.

" I have King Henry's commission," said the knight, " to apprehend this earl that was. How would you advise me to act, being, as you see, without attendant force ? "

" I would advise you," said young Gamwell, " to take yourself off without delay, unless you would relish the taste of a volley of arrows, a shower of stones, and a hailstorm of cudgel-blows, which would not be turned aside by a 'God save King Henry ! ' "

Sir Ralph's squire no sooner heard this, and saw by the looks of the speaker that he was not likely to prove a false prophet, than he clapped spurs to his horse and galloped off with might and main. This gave the knight a good excuse to pursue him, which he did with great celerity, calling, " Stop, you rascal." When the squire fancied himself safe out of the reach of pursuit, he checked his speed, and allowed the knight to come up with him. They rode on several miles in silence, till they discovered the towers and spires of Nottingham, where the knight introduced himself to the sheriff, and demanded an armed force to assist in the apprehension of the outlawed Earl of Huntingdon. The sheriff, who was willing to have his share of the prize, determined to accompany the knight in person, and regaled him and his man with good store of the best ; after which they, with a stout retinue of fifty men, took the way to Gamwell feast.

" God's my life," said the sheriff, as they rode along, " I had as lief you would tell me of a service of plate. I much doubt if this outlawed earl, this forester Robin, be not the man they call Robin Hood, who has quartered himself in Sherwood Forest, and whom in endeavouring to apprehend I have fallen divers times into disasters. He has gotten together a band of disinherited prodigals, outlawed debtors, elder sons that have spent all they had, and younger sons that never had anything to spend ; and with these he kills the king's deer, and plunders wealthy travellers of five-sixths of their money ; but if they be abbots or bishops, them he despoils utterly."

The sheriff then proceeded to relate to his companion the adventure of the abbot of Doubleflask (which some grave historians have related of the abbot of Saint Mary's, and others of the bishop of Hereford) : how the abbot, returning to his abbey, in company with his high selerer, who carried in his portmanteau the rents of the abbeylands, and with a numerous train of attendants, came upon four seeming peasants, who were roasting the king's venison by the king's highway : how, in just indignation at this flagrant infringement of the forest laws, he asked them what they meant, and they answered that they meant to dine ; how he ordered them to be seized and bound, and led captive to Nottingham ; how they prayed for mercy, and how the abbot swore that he would show them none : how one of them thereupon drew a bugle-horn from under his smock-frock and blew three blasts, on which the abbot and his train were instantly surrounded by sixty bowmen in green : how they tied him to a tree, and made him say mass for their sins : how they unbound him, and sate him down with them to dinner, and gave him venison and wild-fowl and

wine, and made him pay for his fare all the money in his high selerer's portmanteau, and enforced him to sleep all night under a tree in his cloak, and to leave the cloak behind him in the morning: how the abbot, light in pocket and heavy in heart, raised the country upon Robin Hood, for so he had heard the chief forester called by his men, and hunted him into an old woman's cottage: how Robin changed dresses with the old woman, and how the abbot rode in great triumph into Nottingham, having in custody an old woman in a green doublet and breeches: how the old woman discovered herself: how the merrymen of Nottingham laughed at the abbot: how the abbot railed at the old woman, and how the old woman out-railed the abbot, telling him that Robin had given her food and fire through the winter, which no abbot would ever do, but would rather take it from her for what he called the good of the church, by which he meant his own laziness and gluttony; and that she knew a true man from a false thief, and a free forester from a greedy abbot.

"Thus you see," added the sheriff, "how this villain perverts the people by making them believe that those who tithe and toll upon them for their benefit are not their best friends and fatherly guardians; for he holds that in giving to boors and old women what he takes from priests and peers, he does but restore to the former what the latter had taken from them. Judge now if any loyal subject can be safe in such neighbourhood."

While the sheriff was thus enlightening his companion concerning the offenders, and whetting his own indignation against them, the sun was fast sinking to the west. They rode on till they came in view of a bridge, which they saw a party approaching from the opposite side, and the knight presently

discovered that the party consisted of the lady Matilda and friar Michael, young Gamwell, cousin Robin, and about half-a-dozen foresters. The knight pointed out the earl to the sheriff, who exclaimed, "Here, then, we have him an easy prey"; and they rode on manfully towards the bridge, on which the other party made halt.

"Who be these," said the friar, "that come riding so fast this way? Now, as God shall judge me, it is that false knight Sir Ralph Montfaucon, and the sheriff of Nottingham, with a posse of men. We must make good our post, and let them dislodge us if they may."

The two parties were now near enough to parley; and the sheriff and the knight, advancing in the front of the cavalcade, called on the lady, the friar, young Gamwell, and the foresters, to deliver up that false traitor, Robert, formerly Earl of Huntingdon. Robert himself made answer by letting fly an arrow that struck the ground between the fore feet of the sheriff's horse. The horse reared up from the whizzing, and lodged the sheriff in the dust; and, at the same time, the fair Matilda favoured the knight with an arrow in his right arm, that compelled him to withdraw from the affray. His men lifted the sheriff carefully up, and replaced him on his horse, whom he immediately with great rage and zeal urged on to the assault with his fifty men at his heels, some of whom were intercepted in their advance by the arrows of the foresters and Matilda; while the friar, with an eight-foot staff, dislodged the sheriff a second time, and laid on him with vigour, in spite of his ejaculations of "Hey, friar Michael! What means this, honest friar? Hold, ghostly friar! Hold, holy friar!"—till Matilda interposed, and delivered the battered sheriff to the care of the foresters. The friar continued flourishing

his staff among the sheriff's men, knocking down one, breaking the ribs of another, dislocating the shoulder of a third, flattening the nose of a fourth, cracking the skull of a fifth, and pitching a sixth into the river, till the few, who were lucky enough to escape with whole bones, clapped spurs to their horses and fled for their lives, under a farewell volley of arrows.

Sir Ralph's squire, meanwhile, was glad of the excuse of attending his master's wound to absent himself from the battle: and put the poor knight to a great deal of unnecessary pain by making as long a business as possible of extracting the arrow, which he had not accomplished when Matilda, approaching, extracted it with great facility, and bound up the wound with her scarf, saying, "I reclaim my arrow, sir knight, which struck where I aimed it, to admonish you to desist from your enterprise. I could as easily have lodged it in your heart."

"It did not need," said the knight, with rueful gallantry; "you have lodged one there already."

"If you mean to say that you love me," said Matilda, "it is more than I ever shall you: but if you will show your love by no further interfering with mine, you will at least merit my gratitude."

The knight made a wry face under the double pain of heart and body; but he did not choose to put in any such claim to the lady's gratitude as would bar all hopes of her love: he therefore remained silent: and the lady and her escort, leaving him and the sheriff to the care of the squire, rode on till they came in sight of Arlingford Castle, when they parted in several directions. The friar rode off alone; and after the foresters had lost sight of him they heard his voice through the twilight, singing.

CHAPTER VII

MATILDA had carried her point with the baron of ranging at liberty whithersoever she would, under her positive promise to return home; she was a sort of prisoner on parole: she had obtained this indulgence by means of an obsolete habit of always telling the truth and keeping her word, which had the effect of giving her father so much confidence in her, that he could not help considering her word a better security than locks and bars.

The baron had been one of the last to hear of the rumours of the new outlaws of Sherwood, as Matilda had taken all possible precautions to keep those rumours from his knowledge, fearing that they might cause the interruption of her greenwood liberty; and it was only during her absence at Gamwell feast, that the butler, being thrown off his guard by liquor, forgot her injunctions, and regaled the baron with a long story of the right merry adventure of Robin Hood and the abbot of Doubleflask.

The baron was one morning, as usual, cutting his way valorously through a rampart of cold provision, when his ears were suddenly assailed by a tremendous alarum, and sallying forth, and looking from his castle wall, he perceived a large party of armed men on the other side of the moat, who were calling on the warder in the king's name to lower the drawbridge and raise the portcullis, which had both been secured by Matilda's order. The baron walked along the battlement till he came opposite to these unexpected visitors, who, as soon as they saw him, called out, "Lower the drawbridge, in the king's name."

"For what, in the devil's name?" said the baron.

"The sheriff of Nottingham," said one, "lies in bed grievously bruised, and many of his men are

wounded, and several of them slain ; and Sir Ralph Montfaucon, knight, is sore wounded in the arm ; and we are charged to apprehend William Gamwell the younger, of Gamwell Hall, and father Michael of Rubygill Abbey, and Matilda Fitzwater of Arlingford Castle, as agents and accomplices in the said breach of the king's peace."

" Breach of the king's fiddlestick ! " answered the baron. " What do you mean by coming here with your cock-and-bull stories of my daughter grievously bruising the sheriff of Nottingham ? You are a set of vagabond rascals in disguise ; and I hear, by-the-bye, there is a gang of thieves that has just set up business in Sherwood Forest : a pretty pretence, indeed, to get into my castle with force and arms, and make a famine in my buttery, and a drought in my cellar, and a void in my strong-box, and a vacuum in my silver scullery."

" Lord Fitzwater," cried one, "take heed how you resist lawful authority : we will prove ourselves——"

" You will prove yourselves arrant knaves, I doubt not," answered the baron ; " but, villains, you shall be more grievously bruised by me than ever was the sheriff by my daughter (a pretty tale truly !), if you do not forthwith avoid my territory."

By this time the baron's men had flocked to the battlements, with long-bows and cross-bows, slings and stones, and Matilda with her bow and quiver at their head. The assailants, finding the castle so well defended, deemed it expedient to withdraw till they could return in greater force, and rode off to Rubygill Abbey, where they made known their errand to the father abbot, who said that doubtless brother Michael had heinously offended ; that he would summon a chapter of monks, and pass on the offender a sentence proportionate to his offence. The party rode off to Gamwell Hall, where they

found the Gamwells and their men just sitting down to dinner, which they saved them the trouble of eating by consuming it in the king's name themselves, having first seized and bound young Gamwell ; all which they accomplished by dint of superior numbers, in despite of a most vigorous stand made by the Gamwellites in defence of their young master and their provisions.

The baron, meanwhile, after the ministers of justice had departed, interrogated Matilda concerning the alleged fact of the grievous bruising of the sheriff of Nottingham. Matilda told him the whole history of Gamwell feast, and of their battle on the bridge, which had its origin in a design of the sheriff of Nottingham to take one of the foresters into custody.

" Ay ! ay ! " said the baron, " and I guess who that forester was ; but truly this friar is a desperate fellow. I did not think there could have been so much valour under a grey frock. And so you wounded the knight in the arm. You are a wild girl, Mawd—a chip of the old block, Mawd. A wild girl, and a wild friar, and three or four foresters, wild lads all, to keep a bridge against a tame knight, and a tame sheriff, and fifty tame varlets ; by this light, the like was never heard ! But do you know, Mawd, you must not go about so any more, sweet Mawd ; you must stay at home ; for there is your tame sheriff on the one hand, that will take you perforce ; and there is your wild forester on the other hand, that will take you without any force at all, Mawd : your wild forester, Robin, cousin Robin, Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest, that beats and binds bishops, spreads nets for archbishops, and hunts a fat abbot as if he were a buck ; excellent game, no doubt, but you must hunt no more in such company. I see it now : truly, I might have

guessed before that the bold outlaw Robin, the most courteous Robin, the new thief of Sherwood Forest, was your lover, the earl that has been : I might have guessed it before, and what led you so much to the woods : but you hunt no more in such company. No more May games and Gamwell feasts. My lands and castle would be the forfeit of a few more such pranks ; and I think they are as well in my hands as the king's,—quite as well."

" You know, father," said Matilda, " the condition of keeping me at home : I get out if I can, and not on parole."

" Ay ! ay ! " said the baron, " if you can ; very true : watch and ward, Mawd, watch and ward is my word : if you can, is yours. The mark is set, and so start fair."

The baron would have gone on in this way for an hour ; but the friar made his appearance with a long oak staff in his hand, singing,—

" Drink and sing, and eat and laugh,
And so go forth to battle :
For the top of a skull and the end of a staff
Do make a ghostly rattle."

" Ho ! ho ! friar ! " said the baron—" singing friar, laughing friar, roaring friar, fighting friar, hacking friar, thwacking friar ; cracking, cracking, cracking friar ; joke-cracking, bottle-cracking, skull-cracking friar ! "

" And ho ! ho ! ! " said the friar,—" bold baron, old baron, sturdy baron, wordy baron, long baron, strong baron, mighty baron, flighty baron, mazed baron, crazed baron, hacked baron, thwacked baron ; cracked, cracked, cracked baron ; bone-cracked, sconce-cracked, brain-cracked baron ! "

" What do you mean," said the baron, " bully friar, by calling me hacked and thwacked ? "

" Were you not in the wars ? " said the friar, " where he who escapes unhacked does more credit to his heels than his arms. I pay tribute to your valour in calling you hacked and thwacked."

" I never was thwacked in my life," said the baron ; " I stood my ground manfully, and covered my body with my sword. If I had had the luck to meet with a fighting friar indeed, I might have been thwacked, and soundly too ; but I hold myself a match for any two laymen ; it takes nine fighting laymen to make a fighting friar."

" Whence come you now, holy father ? " asked Matilda.

" From Rubygill Abbey," said the friar, " whither I never return :

" For I must seek some hermit cell,
Where I alone my beads may tell,
And on the wight who that way fares
Levy a toll for my ghostly pray'rs,
Levy a toll, levy a toll,
Levy a toll for my ghostly pray'rs."

" What is the matter, then, father ? " said Matilda.

" This is the matter," said the friar : " my holy brethren have held a chapter on me, and sentenced me to seven years' privation of wine. I therefore deemed it fitting to take my departure, which they would fain have prohibited. I was enforced to clear the way with my staff. I have grievously beaten my dearly beloved brethren : I grieve thereat ; but they enforced me thereto. I have beaten them much ; I mowed them down to the right and to the left, and left them like an ill-reaped field of wheat, ear and straw pointing all ways, scattered in singleness and jumbled in masses ; and so bade them farewell, saying, Peace be with you. But I must not tarry, lest danger be in my rear : therefore, farewell, sweet

Matilda ; and farewell, noble baron ; and farewell, sweet Matilda, again, the alpha and omega of father Michael, the first and the last."

" Farewell, father," said the baron, a little softened; " and God send you be never assailed by more than fifty men at a time."

" Amen," said the friar, " to that good wish."

" And we shall meet again, father, I trust," said Matilda.

" When the storm is blown over," said the baron.

" Doubt it not," said the friar, " though flooded Trent were between us, and fifty devils guarded the bridge."

He kissed Matilda's forehead, and walked away without a song.

CHAPTER VIII

A PAGE had been brought up in Gamwell Hall, who, while he was little, had been called Little John, and continued to be so called after he had grown to be a foot taller than any other man in the house. He was full seven feet high. His latitude was worthy of his longitude, and his strength was worthy of both ; and though an honest man by profession, he had practised archery on the king's deer for the benefit of his master's household, and for the improvement of his own eye and hand, till his aim had become infallible within the range of two miles. He had fought manfully in defence of his young master, took his captivity exceedingly to heart, and fell into bitter grief and boundless rage when he heard that he had been tried in Nottingham and sentenced to die. Alice Gamwell, at Little John's request, wrote three letters of one tenour ; and Little John, having attached them to three blunt arrows, saddled the

fleetest steed in old Sir Guy of Gamwell's stables, mounted, and rode first to Arlingford Castle, where he shot one of the three arrows over the battlements ; then to Rubygill Abbey, where he shot the second into the abbey-garden ; then back past Gamwell Hall to the borders of Sherwood Forest, where he shot the third into the wood. Now the first of these arrows lighted in the nape of the neck of Lord Fitzwater, and lodged itself firmly between his skin and his collar ; the second rebounded with the hollow vibration of a drumstick from the shaven sconce of the abbot of Rubygill ; and the third pitched perpendicularly into the centre of a venison pasty in which Robin Hood was making incision.

Matilda ran up to her father in the court of Arlingford Castle, seized the arrow, drew off the letter, and concealed it in her bosom before the baron had time to look round, which he did with many expressions of rage against the impudent villain who had shot a blunt arrow into the nape of his neck.

" But you know, father," said Matilda, " a sharp arrow in the same place would have killed you ; therefore the sending a blunt one was very considerate."

" Considerate, with a vengeance ! " said the baron. " Where was the consideration of sending it at all ? This is some of your forester's pranks. He has missed you in the forest since I have kept watch and ward over you, and by way of a love-token and a remembrance to you, takes a random shot at me."

The abbot of Rubygill picked up the messenger arrow, which had rebounded from his shaven crown, with a very unghostly malediction on the sender. He opened the letter, which was addressed to father Michael ; and found it to contain an intimation

that William Gamwell was to be hanged on Monday at Nottingham.

"And I wish," said the abbot, "father Michael were to be hanged with him: an ungrateful monster, after I had rescued him from the fangs of civil justice, to reward my lenity by not leaving a bone unbruised among the holy brotherhood of Rubygill."

Robin Hood extracted from his venison pasty a similar intimation of the evil destiny of his cousin, whom he determined, if possible, to rescue.

The sheriff of Nottingham, though still sore with his bruises, was so intent on revenge, that he raised himself from his bed to attend the execution of William Gamwell. He rode to the gallows with a splendid retinue of well-equipped knaves and varlets, as our ancestors called honest serving-men.

Young Gamwell was brought forth with his arms pinioned behind him; his sister Alice and his father, Sir Guy, attending him in disconsolate mood. He had rejected the confessor provided by the sheriff, and had insisted on the privilege of choosing his own, whom Little John had promised to bring. Little John, however, had not made his appearance when the fatal procession began its march; but when they reached the place of execution, Little John appeared, accompanied by a ghostly friar.

"Sheriff," said young Gamwell, "let me not die with my hands pinioned: give me a sword, and set any odds of your men against me, and let me die the death of a man, like the descendant of a noble house."

"No, no," said the sheriff; "I have had enough of setting odds against you. I have sworn you shall be hanged, and hanged you shall be."

"Then God have mercy on me," said young Gamwell; "and now, holy friar, shrive my sinful soul."

The friar approached.

"Let me see this friar," said the sheriff: "if he be the friar of the bridge, I had as lief have the devil in Nottingham; but he shall find me too much for him here."

"The friar of the bridge," said Little John, "as you very well know, sheriff, was father Michael of Rubygill Abbey, and you may easily see that this is not the man."

"I see it," said the sheriff; "and God be thanked for his absence."

Young Gamwell stood at the foot of the ladder. The friar approached him, opened his book, groaned, turned up the whites of his eyes, tossed up his arms in the air, and said "*Dominus vobiscum.*" He then crossed both his hands on his breast under the folds of his holy robes, and stood a few moments as if in inward prayer. A deep silence among the attendant crowd accompanied this action of the friar; interrupted only by the hollow tone of the death-bell, at long and dreary intervals. Suddenly the friar threw off his holy robes, and appeared a forester clothed in green, with a sword in his right hand and a horn in his left. With the sword he cut the bonds of William Gamwell, who instantly snatched a sword from one of the sheriff's men; and with the horn he blew a loud blast, which was answered at once by four bugles from the quarters of the four winds, and from each quarter came five-and-twenty bowmen running all on a row.

"Treason! treason!" cried the sheriff. Old Sir Guy sprang to his son's side, and so did Little John; and the four setting back to back, kept the sheriff and his men at bay till the bowmen came within shot and let fly their arrows among the sheriff's men, who, after a brief resistance, fled in all directions. The forester, who had personated the

friar, sent an arrow after the flying sheriff, calling with a strong voice, "To the sheriff's left arm, as a keepsake from Robin Hood." The arrow reached its destiny; the sheriff redoubled his speed, and, with the one arrow in his arm, did not stop to breathe till he was out of reach of another.

The foresters did not waste time in Nottingham, but were soon at a distance from its walls. Sir Guy returned with Alice to Gamwell Hall; but thinking he should not be safe there, from the share he had had in his son's rescue, they only remained long enough to supply themselves with clothes and money, and departed, under the escort of Little John, to another seat of the Gamwells in Yorkshire. Young Gamwell, taking it for granted that his offence was past remission, determined on joining Robin Hood, and accompanied him to the forest, where it was deemed expedient that he should change his name; and he was rechristened without a priest, and with wine instead of water, by the immortal name of Scarlet.

CHAPTER IX

THE baron was inflexible in his resolution not to let Matilda leave the castle. The letter, which announced to her the approaching fate of young Gamwell, filled her with grief and began to undermine her health. She had no longer the consolation of the society of her old friend, father Michael; the little fat friar of Rubygill was substituted as the castle confessor, not without some misgivings in his ghostly bosom; but he was more allured by the sweet savour of the good things of this world at Arlingford Castle, than deterred by his awe of the lady Matilda, which nevertheless was so excessive,

from his recollection of the twang of the bow-string, that he never ventured to find her in the wrong, much less to enjoin anything in the shape of penance.

The little friar, however, though he found the lady spotless, found the butler a great sinner : at least so it was conjectured, from the length of time he always took to confess him in the buttery.

Matilda became every day more pale and dejected. While she could freely range the forest with her lover in the morning, she had been content to return to her father's castle in the evening, thus preserving the balance of her duties, habits, and affections ; not without a hope that the repeal of her lover's outlawry might be eventually obtained, by a judicious distribution of some of his forest spoils among the holy fathers and saints-that-were-to-be. But the affair at Gamwell feast threw many additional difficulties in the way of the accomplishment of this hope ; and very shortly afterwards King Henry the Second went to make up in the next world his quarrel with Thomas-à-Becket ; and Richard Cœur-de-Lion made all England resound with preparations for the crusade, to the great delight of many zealous adventurers, who eagerly flocked under his banner in the hope of enriching themselves with Saracen spoil, which they called fighting the battles of God. Richard, who was not remarkably scrupulous in his financial operations, was not likely to overlook the lands and castle of Locksley, which he sold to the highest bidder. Now, as the repeal of the outlawry would involve the restitution of the estates to the rightful owner, it was obvious that it could never be expected from that most Christian king, Richard the First of England. Matilda, therefore, from all these circumstances, felt little hope that her lover would be anything but an outlaw for life.

The departure of King Richard from England

was succeeded by the regency of the bishops of Ely and Durham. Longchamp, bishop of Ely, proceeded to show his sense of Christian fellowship by arresting his brother bishop, and despoiling him of his share in the government. In a general ferment, Prince John took advantage to make the experiment of getting possession of his brother's crown in his absence. He began by calling at Reading a council of barons, whose aspect induced the holy bishop to disguise himself (some say as an old woman, which, in the twelfth century, perhaps might have been a disguise for a bishop), and make his escape beyond sea. Prince John followed up his advantage by obtaining possession of several strong posts, and among others of the castle of Nottingham.

While John was conducting his operations at Nottingham, he rode at times past the castle of Arlingford. He stopped on one occasion to claim Lord Fitzwater's hospitality, and made most princely havoc among his venison and brawn. Now it is a matter of record among divers great historians and learned clerks, that he was then and there grievously smitten by the charms of the lovely Matilda, and that a few days after he despatched his travelling minstrel, Harpiton (whom he retained at moderate wages, to keep a journal of his proceedings, and prove them all just), to the castle of Arlingford, to make proposals to the lady.

Prince John was of opinion that the love of a prince was in itself a sufficient honour to the daughter of a simple baron, and was, therefore, graciously pleased to fall into an exceeding passion, when his confidential messenger returned from his embassy in piteous plight, having been, by the baron's order, first tossed in a blanket and set in the stocks to cool, and afterwards ducked in the moat and set again in the stocks to dry. John swore to revenge horribly

this flagrant outrage, and to obtain possession of the lady by force of arms ; and accordingly collected a body of troops, and marched upon Arlingford Castle. A letter, conveyed as before on the point of a blunt arrow, announced his approach to Matilda : and Lord Fitzwater had just time to assemble his retainers, collect a hasty supply of provision, raise the drawbridge, and drop the portcullis, when the castle was surrounded by the enemy. The little fat friar, who during the confusion was asleep in the buttery, found himself, on awaking, inclosed in the besieged castle, and dolefully bewailed his evil chance.

CHAPTER X

PRINCE JOHN sat down impatiently before Arlingford Castle in the hope of starving out the besieged ; but finding the duration of their supplies extend itself in an equal ratio with the prolongation of his hope, he made vigorous preparations for carrying the place by storm. He constructed an immense machine on wheels, which, being advanced to the edge of the moat, would lower a temporary bridge, of which one end would rest on the bank and the other on the battlements, and which, being well furnished with stepping boards, would enable his men to ascend the inclined plane with speed and facility. Matilda received intimation of this design by the usual friendly channel of a blunt arrow, which must either have been sent from some secret friend in the prince's camp, or from some vigorous archer beyond it.

The machine was completed, and the ensuing morning fixed for the assault. Six men, relieved at intervals, kept watch over it during the night.

Prince John retired to sleep, congratulating himself in the expectation that another day would place the fair culprit at his princely mercy. His anticipations mingled with the visions of his slumber, and he dreamed of wounds and drums, and sacking and firing the castle, and bearing off in his arms the beautiful prize through the midst of fire and smoke. In the height of this imaginary turmoil, he awoke, and conceived for a few moments that certain sounds which rang in his ears, were the continuation of those of his dream. He was, however, very soon fully awake to the fact of his guards calling on him to arm, which he did in haste, and beheld the machine in flames, and a furious conflict raging around it. He hurried to the spot, and found that his camp had been suddenly assailed from one side by a party of foresters, and that the baron's people had made a sortie on the other, and that they had killed the guards, and set fire to the machine, before the rest of the camp could come to the assistance of their fellows.

The night was in itself intensely dark, and the fire-light shed around it a vivid and unnatural radiance. On one side, the crimson light quivered by its own agitation on the waveless moat, and on the bastions and buttresses of the castle, and their shadows lay in massy blackness on the illuminated walls: on the other, it shone upon the woods, streaming far within among the open trunks, or resting on the closer foliage. The circumference of darkness bounded the scene on all sides: and in the centre raged the war; shields, helmets, and bucklers gleaming and glittering as they rang and clashed against each other; plumes confusedly tossing in the crimson light, and the massy light and shade that fell on the faces of the combatants, giving additional energy to their ferocious expression.

John, drawing nearer to the scene of action, observed two young warriors fighting side by side, one of whom wore the habit of a forester, the other that of a retainer of Arlingford. He looked intently on them both: their position towards the fire favoured the scrutiny; and the hawk's eye of love very speedily discovered that the latter was the fair Matilda. The forester he did not know: but he had sufficient tact to discern that his success would be very much facilitated by separating her from this companion, above all others. He therefore formed a party of men into a wedge, only taking especial care not to be the point of it himself, and drove it between them with so much precision, that they were in a moment far asunder.

"Lady Matilda," said John, "yield yourself my prisoner."

"If you would wear me, prince," said Matilda, "you must win me": and without giving him time to deliberate on the courtesy of fighting with the lady of his love, she raised her sword in the air, and lowered it on his head with an impetus that would have gone nigh to fathom even that extraordinary depth of brain which always by divine grace furnishes the interior of a head-royal, if he had not very dexterously parried the blow. Prince John wished to disarm and take captive, not in any way to wound or injure, least of all to kill, his fair opponent. Matilda was only intent to get rid of her antagonist at any rate: the edge of her weapon painted his complexion with streaks of very unloverlike crimson, and she would probably have marred John's hand for ever signing Magna Charta, but that he was backed by the advantage of numbers, and that her sword broke short on the boss of his buckler. John was following up his advantage to make a captive of the lady, when he was suddenly

felled to the earth by an unseen antagonist. Some of his men picked him carefully up, and conveyed him to his tent, stunned and stupefied.

When he recovered, he found Harpiton diligently assisting in his recovery, more in the fear of losing his place than in that of losing his master: the prince's first inquiry was for the prisoner he had been on the point of taking. He was told that his people had been on the point of securing the said prisoner, when the devil suddenly appeared among them in the likeness of a tall friar, having his grey frock cinctured with a sword-belt, and his crown, which whether it were shaven or no they could not see, surmounted with a helmet, and flourishing an eight-foot staff, with which he laid about him to the right and to the left, knocking down the prince and his men as if they had been so many ninepins: in fine, he had rescued the prisoner, and made a clear passage through friend and foe, and in conjunction with a chosen party of archers, had covered the retreat of the baron's men and the foresters, who had all gone off in a body towards Sherwood Forest.

Harpiton suggested that it would be desirable to sack the castle, and volunteered to lead the van on the occasion, as the defenders were withdrawn, and the exploit seemed to promise much profit and little danger: John considered that the castle would in itself be a great acquisition to him, as a stronghold in furtherance of his design on his brother's throne; and was determining to take possession with the first light of morning, when he had the mortification to see the castle burst into flames in several places at once. A piteous cry was heard from within, and while the prince was proclaiming a reward to any one who would enter into the burning pile, and elucidate the mystery of the doleful voice, forth waddled the little fat friar in an agony of fear, out

of the fire into the frying-pan ; for he was instantly taken into custody and carried before Prince John, wringing his hands and tearing his hair.

" Are you the friar," said Prince John, in a terrible voice, " that laid me prostrate in battle, mowed down my men like grass, rescued my captive, and covered the retreat of my enemies ? And, not content with this, have you now set fire to the castle in which I intended to take up my royal quarters ? "

The little friar quaked like a jelly : he fell on his knees, and attempted to speak ; but in his eagerness to vindicate himself from this accumulation of alarming charges, he knew not where to begin ; after several ineffectual efforts, his utterance totally failed him, and he remained gasping, with his mouth open, his lips quivering, his hands clasped together, and the whites of his eyes turned up towards the prince with an expression most ruefully imploring.

" Are you that friar ? " repeated the prince.

Several of the bystanders declared that he was not that friar. The little friar, encouraged by this patronage, found his voice, and pleaded for mercy. The prince questioned him closely concerning the burning of the castle. The little friar declared that he had been in too great fear during the siege to know much of what was going forward, except that he had been conscious during the last few days of a lamentable deficiency in provisions, and had been present that very morning at the broaching of the last butt of sack. Harpiton groaned in sympathy. The little friar added, that he knew nothing of what had passed since, till he heard the flames roaring at his elbow.

" Take him away, Harpiton," said the prince, " fill him with sack, and turn him out."

" Never mind the sack," said the little friar, " turn me out at once."

"A sad chance," said Harpiton, "to be turned out without sack."

But what Harpiton thought a sad chance the little friar thought a merry one, and went bounding like a fat buck towards the abbey of Rubygill.

An arrow, with a letter attached to it, was shot into the camp, and carried to the prince. The contents were these :—

"PRINCE JOHN,—I do not consider myself to have resisted lawful authority in defending my castle against you, seeing that you are at present in a state of active rebellion against your liege sovereign Richard : and if my provisions had not failed me, I would have maintained it till doomsday. As it is, I have so well disposed my combustibles that it shall not serve you as a stronghold in your rebellion. If you hunt in the chases of Nottinghamshire, you may catch other game than my daughter. Both she and I are content to be houseless for a time, in the reflection that we have deserved your enmity, and the friendship of Cœur-de-Lion.

"FITZWATER."

CHAPTER XI

THE baron, with some of his retainers, and all the foresters, halted at daybreak in Sherwood Forest. The foresters quickly erected tents, and prepared an abundant breakfast of venison and ale.

"Now, Lord Fitzwater," said the chief forester, "recognise your son-in-law that was to have been, in the outlaw Robin Hood."

"Ay, ay," said the baron, "I have recognised you long ago."

"And recognise your young friend Gamwell," said the second, "in the outlaw Scarlet."

"And Little John, the page," said the third, "in Little John the outlaw."

"And Father Michael, of Rubygill Abbey," said the friar, "in Friar Tuck of Sherwood Forest. Truly, I have a chapel here hard by, in the shape of a hollow tree, where I put up my prayers for travellers, and Little John holds the plate at the door, for good praying deserves good paying."

"I am in fine company," said the baron.

"In the very best of company," said the friar, "in the high court of Nature, and in the midst of her own nobility."

"Yet there is one thing wanting to constitute a court," said Robin Hood, "and that is a queen. And now, lovely Matilda, look round upon these sylvan shades where we have so often roused the stag from his ferny covert. The rising sun smiles upon us through the stems of that beechen knoll. Shall I take your hand, Matilda, in the presence of this my court? Shall I crown you with our wild-wood coronal, and hail you queen of the forest? Will you be the queen Matilda of your own true king Robin?"

Matilda smiled assent.

"Not Matilda," said the friar: "the rules of our holy alliance require new birth. We have excepted in favour of Little John, because he is great John, and his name is a misnomer. I sprinkle, not thy forehead with water, but thy lips with wine, and baptize thee MARIAN."

"Here is a pretty conspiracy," exclaimed the baron. "Why, you villainous friar, think you to nickname and marry my daughter before my face with impunity?"

"Even so, bold baron," said the friar; "we are

strongest here. Say you, might overcomes right? I say no. There is no right but might: and to say that might overcomes right is to say that right overcomes itself."

"Father," said Matilda, "you know the terms of our compact: from the moment you restrained my liberty, you renounced your claim to all but compulsory obedience. The friar argues well. Right ends with might. Thick walls, dreary galleries, and tapestried chambers were indifferent to me while I could leave them at pleasure, but have ever been hateful to me since they held me by force. May I never again have roof but the blue sky, nor canopy but the green leaves, nor barrier but the forest-bounds; with the foresters to my train, Little John to my page, Friar Tuck to my ghostly adviser, and Robin Hood to my liege lord. I am no longer Lady Matilda Fitzwater, of Arlingford Castle, but plain Maid Marian of Sherwood Forest."

"Long live Maid Marian!" re-echoed the foresters.

"Oh false girl!" said the baron, "do you renounce your name and parentage?"

"Not my parentage," said Marian, "but my name indeed: do not all maids renounce it at the altar?"

"The altar!" said the baron: "grant me patience! what do you mean by the altar?"

"Pile green turf," said the friar, "wreathe it with flowers, and crown it with fruit, and we will show the noble baron what we mean by the altar."

The foresters did as the friar directed.

"Now, Little John," said the friar, "on with the cloak of the abbot of Doubleflask. I appoint thee my clerk: thou art here duly elected in full mote."

"I wish you were all in full moat together," said the baron, "and smooth wall on both sides."

"Punnest thou?" said the friar. "Fie on it. Stand forth, clerk. Who is the bride's father?"

"There is no bride's father," said the baron. "I am the father of Matilda Fitzwater."

"There is none such," said the friar. "This is the fair Maid Marian. Will you make a virtue of necessity, or will you give laws to the flowing tide? Will you give her, or shall Robin take her? Stand forth, Scarlet."

"Stand back, sirrah Scarlet," said the baron. "My daughter shall have no father but me. Needs must when the devil drives."

"No matter who drives," said the friar, "so that, like a well-disposed subject, you yield cheerful obedience to those who can enforce it."

"Mawd, sweet Mawd," said the baron, "will you then forsake your poor old father in his distress, with his castle in ashes, and his enemy in power?"

"Not so, father," said Marian; "I will always be your true daughter: I will always love, and serve, and watch, and defend you: but neither will I forsake my plighted love, and my own liege lord, who was your choice before he was mine, for you made him my associate in infancy; and that he continued to be mine when he ceased to be yours, does not in any way show remissness in my duties or falling off in my affections. And though I here plight my troth at the altar to Robin, in the presence of this holy priest and pious clerk, yet. . . . Father, when Richard returns from Palestine, he will restore you to your barony, and perhaps, for your sake, your daughter's husband to the earldom of Huntingdon: should that never be, should it be the will of fate that we must live and die in the greenwood, I will live and die MAID MARIAN."

The friar went through the ceremony with great unction, and Little John was most clerical in the

intonation of his responses. After which, the friar sang, and Little John fiddled, and the foresters danced, Robin with Marian, and Scarlet with the baron ; and the venison smoked, and the ale frothed, and the wine sparkled, and the sun went down on their unwearied festivity : which they wound up with the following song, the friar leading and the foresters joining chorus :

Oh, bold Robin Hood is a forester good,
As ever drew bow in the merry greenwood :
At his bugle's shrill singing the echoes are ringing,
The wild deer are springing for many a rood :
Its summons we follow, through brake, over hollow,
The thrice-blown shrill summons of bold Robin Hood.

And what eye hath e'er seen such a sweet Maiden Queen,
As Marian, the pride of the forester's green ?
A sweet garden-flower, she blooms in the bower,
Where alone to this hour the wild rose has been :
We hail her in duty the queen of all beauty :
We will live, we will die, by our sweet Maiden Queen.

And here's a grey friar, good as heart can desire,
To absolve all our sins as the case may require :
Who with courage so stout, lays his oak-plant about,
And puts to the rout all the foes of his choir :
For we are his choristers, we merry foresters,
Chorussing thus with our militant friar.

And Scarlet doth bring his good yew-bough and string,
Prime minister is he of Robin our king :
No mark is too narrow for Little John's arrow,
That hits a cock-sparrow a mile on the wing ;
Robin and Mariòn, Scarlet, and Little John,
Long with their glory old Sherwood shall ring.

Each a good liver, for well-feathered quiver
Doth furnish brawn, venison, and fowl of the river :

But the best game we dish up, it is a fat bishop :
When his angels we fish up, he proves a free giver :
For a prelate so lowly has angels more holy,
And should this world's false angels to sinners deliver.

Robin and Mariòn, Scarlet and Little John,
Drink to them one by one, drink as ye sing :
Robin and Mariòn, Scarlet and Little John,
Echo to echo through Sherwood shall fling :
Robin and Mariòn, Scarlet and Little John,
Long with their glory old Sherwood shall ring.

" Well then, sweet Mawd," said the baron next morning, " I must leave you, Mawd : your life is very well for the young and the hearty, but it squares not with my age or my humour. I must house, Mawd. I must find refuge : but where ? That is the question."

" Where Sir Guy of Gamwell has found it," said Robin Hood, " near the borders of Barnsdale. There you may dwell in safety with him and fair Alice, till King Richard return, and Little John shall give you safe conduct. You will have need to travel with caution, in disguise and without attendants, for Prince John commands all this vicinity, and will doubtless lay the country for you and Marian. Now it is first expedient to dismiss your retainers. If there be any among them who like our life, they may stay with us in the greenwood ; the rest may return to their homes."

Some of the baron's men resolved to remain with Robin and Marian, and were furnished accordingly with suits of green, of which Robin always kept good store.

Marian now declared that as there was danger in the way to Barnsdale, she would accompany Little John and the baron, as she should not be happy unless she herself saw her father placed in security. Robin was very unwilling to consent to this, and

assured her that there was more danger for her than the baron : but Marian was absolute.

" If so, then," said Robin, " I shall be your guide instead of Little John, and I shall leave him and Scarlet joint-regents of Sherwood during my absence, and the voice of Friar Tuck shall be decisive between them if they differ in nice questions of state policy." Marian objected to this, that there was more danger for Robin than either herself or the baron : but Robin was absolute in his turn.

" Talk not of my voice," said the friar ; " for if Marian be a damsel errant, I will be her ghostly esquire."

Robin insisted that this should not be, for number would only expose them to greater risk of detection. The friar, after some debate, reluctantly acquiesced.

CHAPTER XII

WHILE they were discussing these matters, they heard the distant sound of horse's feet.

" Go," said Robin to Little John, " and invite yonder horseman to dinner."

Little John bounded away, and soon came before a young man, who was riding in a melancholy manner, with the bridle hanging loose on the horse's neck, and his eyes drooping towards the ground.

" Whither go you ? " said Little John.

" Whithersoever my horse pleases," said the young man.

" And that shall be," said Little John, " whither I please to lead him. I am commissioned to invite you to dine with my master."

" Who is your master ? " said the young man.

" Robin Hood," said Little John.

" The bold outlaw ? " said the stranger. " Neither he nor you should have made me turn an inch aside yesterday ; but to-day I care not."

" Then it is better for you," said Little John, " that you came to-day than yesterday, if you love dining in a whole skin : for my master is the pink of courtesy : but if his guests prove stubborn, he bastes them and his venison together, while the friar says mass before meat."

The young man made no answer, and scarcely seemed to hear what Little John was saying, who therefore took the horse's bridle and led him to where Robin and his foresters were setting forth their dinner. Robin seated the young man next to Marian. Recovering a little from his stupor, he looked with much amazement at her, and the baron, and Robin, and the friar ; listened to their conversation, and seemed much astonished to find himself in such holy and courtly company. Robin helped him largely to numble-pie and cygnet and pheasant, and the other dainties of his table ; and the friar pledged him in ale and wine, and exhorted him to make good cheer. But the young man drank little, ate less, spake nothing, and every now and then sighed heavily.

When the repast was ended, " Now," said Robin, " you are at liberty to pursue your journey : but first be pleased to pay for your dinner."

" That would I gladly do, Robin," said the young man, " but all I have about me are five shillings and a ring. To the five shillings you shall be welcome, but for the ring I will fight while there is a drop of blood in my veins."

" Gallantly spoken," said Robin Hood. " A love-token, without doubt : but you must submit to our forest laws. Little John must search ; and if he find no more than you say, not a penny will

I touch ; but if you have spoken false, the whole is forfeit."

" And with reason," said the friar ; " for thereby is the truth maintained. The abbot of Doubleflask swore there was no money in his valise, and Little John forthwith emptied it of four hundred pounds. Marry, we turned his cloak to further account, and thereby hangs a tale that may be either said or sung ; for in truth I am minstrel here as well as chaplain ; I pray for good success to our just and necessary warfare, and sing thanksgiving odes when our foresters bring in booty :

Bold Robin has robed him in ghostly attire,
And forth he is gone like a holy friar,
  Singing, hey down, ho down, down, derry down :
And of two grey friars he soon was aware,
Regaling themselves with dainty fare,
  All on the fallen leaves so brown.

" Good morrow, good brothers," said bold Robin Hood,
" And what make you in the good greenwood,
  Singing hey down, ho down, down, derry down !
Now give me, I pray you, wine and food ;
For none can I find in the good greenwood,
  All on the fallen leaves so brown."

" Good brother," they said, " we would give you full fain,
But we have no more than enough for twain,
  Singing, hey down, ho down, down, derry down."
" Then give me some money," said bold Robin Hood,
" For none can I find in the good greenwood,
  All on the fallen leaves so brown."

" No money have we, good brother," said they :
" Then," said he, " we three for money will pray :
  Singing, hey down, ho down, down, derry down :
And whatever shall come at the end of our prayer,
We three holy friars will piously share,
  All on the fallen leaves so brown."

" We will not pray with thee, good brother, God wot :
For truly, good brother, thou pleasest us not,
Singing, hey down, ho down, down, derry down " :
Then up they both started from Robin to run,
But down on their knees Robin pulled them each one,
All on the fallen leaves so brown.

The grey friars prayed with a doleful face,
But bold Robin prayed with a right merry grace,
Singing, hey down, ho down, down, derry down :
And when they had prayed, their portmanteau he took,
And from it a hundred good angels he shook,
All on the fallen leaves so brown.

" The saints," said bold Robin, " have hearkened our prayer
And here's a good angel apiece for your share :
If more you would have, you must win ere you wear :
Singing, hey down, ho down, down derry down " :
Then he blew his good horn with a musical cheer,
And fifty green bowmen came trooping full near,
And away the grey friars they bounded like deer,
All on the fallen leaves so brown.

" Here is but five shillings and a ring," said Little John, " and the young man has spoken true."

" Then," said Robin to the stranger, " if want of money be the cause of your melancholy, speak. Little John is my treasurer, and he shall disburse to you."

" It is, and it is not," said the stranger ; " it is, because, had I not wanted money, I had never lost my love ; it is not, because, now that I have lost her, money would come too late to regain her."

" In what way have you lost her ? " said Robin : " let us clearly know that she is past regaining, before we give up our wishes to restore her to you."

" She is to be married this day," said the stranger, " and perhaps is married by this, to a rich old knight ; and yesterday I knew it not."

" What is your name ? " said Robin.

" Allen," said the stranger.

" And where is the marriage to take place, Allen ? " said Robin.

" At Edwinstow church," said Allen, " by the bishop of Nottingham."

" I know that bishop," said Robin ; " he dined with me a month since, and paid three hundred pounds for his dinner. He has a good ear and loves music. The friar sang to him to some tune. Give me my harper's cloak, and I will play a part at this wedding."

" These are dangerous times, Robin," said Marian, " for playing pranks out of the forest."

" Fear not," said Robin ; " Edwinstow lies not Nottingham-ward, and I will take my precautions."

Robin put on his harper's cloak, while Little John painted his eyebrows and cheeks, tipped his nose with red, tied him on a comely beard, took his harp, and went to the wedding.

Robin found the bishop and his train in the church porch, impatiently expecting the arrival of the bride and bridegroom. The clerk was observing to the bishop that the knight was somewhat gouty, and that the necessity of walking the last quarter of a mile from the road to the churchyard probably detained the lively bridegroom rather longer than had been calculated upon.

" Oh ! by my fay," said the music-loving bishop, " here comes a harper in the nick of time, and now I care not how long they tarry. Ho ! honest friend, are you come to play at the wedding ? "

" I am come to play anywhere," answered Robin, " where I can get a cup of sack ; for which I will sing the praise of the donor in lofty verse, and emblazon him with any virtue which he may wish to have the credit of possessing, without the trouble of practising."

" A most courtly harper," said the bishop ; " I will fill thee with sack ; I will make thee a walking butt of sack, if thou wilt delight my ears with thy melodies."

" That will I," said Robin ; " in what branch of my art shall I exert my faculty ? I am passing well in all, from the anthem to the glee, and from the dirge to the coranto."

" It would be idle," said the bishop, " to give thee sack for playing me anthems, seeing that I myself do receive sack for hearing them sung. Therefore, as the occasion is festive, thou shalt play me a coranto."

Robin struck up and played away merrily, the bishop all the while in great delight, nodding his head, and beating time with his foot, till the bride and bridegroom appeared. The bridegroom was richly apparelled, and came slowly and painfully forward, hobbling and leering, and pursing up his mouth into a smile of resolute defiance to the gout, and of tender complacency towards his lady-love, who, shining like gold at the old knight's expense, followed slowly between her father and mother, her cheeks pale, her head drooping, her steps faltering, and her eyes reddened with tears.

Robin stopped his minstrelsy, and said to the bishop, " This seems to me an unfit match."

" What do you say, rascal ? " said the old knight, hobbling up to him.

" I say," said Robin, " this seems to me an unfit match. What, in the devil's name, can you want with a young wife, who have one foot in flannels and the other in the grave ? "

" What is that to thee, sirrah varlet ? " said the old knight ; " stand away from the porch, or I will fracture thy sconce with my cane."

" I will not stand away from the porch," said

Robin, " unless the bride bid me, and tell me that you are her own true love."

" Speak," said the bride's father, in a severe tone, and with a look of significant menace. The girl looked alternately at her father and Robin. She attempted to speak, but her voice failed in the effort, and she burst into tears.

" Here is lawful cause and just impediment," said Robin, " and I forbid the banns."

" Who are you, villain ? " said the old knight, stamping his sound foot with rage.

" I am the Roman law," said Robin, " which says that there shall not be more than ten years between a man and his wife ; and here are five times ten : and so says the law of nature."

" Honest harper," said the bishop, " you are somewhat over-officious here, and less courtly than I deemed you. If you love sack, forbear ; for this course will never bring you a drop. As to your Roman law, and your law of nature, what right have they to say anything which the law of Holy Writ says not ? "

" The law of Holy Writ does say it," said Robin ; " I expound it so to say ; and I will produce sixty commentators to establish my exposition."

And so saying, he produced a horn from beneath his cloak, and blew three blasts, and threescore bowmen in green came leaping from the bushes and trees ; and young Allen was the first among them to give Robin his sword, while Friar Tuck and Little John marched up to the altar. Robin stripped the bishop and clerk of their robes, and put them on the friar and Little John ; and Allen advanced to take the hand of the bride. Her cheeks grew red and her eyes grew bright, as she locked her hand in her lover's, and tripped lightly with him into the church.

" This marriage will not stand," said the bishop, " for they have not been thrice asked in church."

" We will ask them seven times," said Little John, " lest three should not suffice."

" And in the meantime," said Robin, " the knight and the bishop shall dance to my harping."

So Robin sat in the church porch and played away merrily, while his foresters formed a ring, in the centre of which the knight and bishop danced with exemplary alacrity ; and if they relaxed their exertions, Scarlet gently touched them up with the point of an arrow.

The knight grimaced ruefully, and begged Robin to think of his gout.

" So I do," said Robin ; " you shall dance the gout away, and be thankful to me while you live. I told you," he added to the bishop, " I would play at this wedding ; but you did not tell me that you would dance at it. The next couple you marry, think of the Roman law."

The bishop was too much out of breath to reply ; and now the young couple issued from church, and departed together with the foresters, the parents storming, the attendants laughing, the bishop puffing and blowing, and the knight rubbing his gouty foot, and uttering doleful lamentations for the gold and jewels with which he had so unwittingly adorned and dowered the bride.

CHAPTER XIII

The baron, Robin, and Marian disguised themselves as pilgrims returned from Palestine, and travelling from the sea-coast of Hampshire to their home in Northumberland. By dint of staff and cockle-shell,

sandal and scrip, they proceeded in safety the greater part of the way (for Robin had many sly inns and resting-places between Barnsdale and Sherwood), and were already on the borders of Yorkshire, when, one evening, they passed within view of a castle, where they saw a lady standing on a turret, and surveying the whole extent of the valley through which they were passing. A servant came running from the castle, and delivered to them a message from his lady, who was sick with expectation of news from her lord in the Holy Land, and entreated them to come to her, that she might question them concerning him. This was an awkward occurrence: but there was no pretence for refusal, and they followed the servant into the castle. The baron, who had been in Palestine in his youth, undertook to be spokesman on the occasion, and to relate his own adventures to the lady as having happened to the lord in question. This preparation enabled him to be so minute and circumstantial in his detail, and so coherent in his replies to her questions, that the lady fell into the delusion, and was delighted to find that her lord was alive and in health, and in high favour with the king, and performing prodigies of valour in the name of his lady, whose miniature he always wore in his bosom. The baron guessed at this circumstance from the customs of that age, and happened to be in the right.

"This miniature," added the baron, "I have had the felicity to see, and should have known you by it among a million." The baron was a little embarrassed by some questions of the lady concerning her lord's personal appearance; but Robin came to his aid, observing a picture suspended opposite to him on the wall, which he made a bold conjecture to be that of the lord in question; and making a

calculation of the influences of time and war, which he weighed with a comparison of the lady's age, he gave a description of her lord sufficiently like the picture in its groundwork to be a true resemblance, and sufficiently differing from it in circumstances to be more an original than a copy. The lady was completely deceived, and entreated them to partake her hospitality for the night; but this they deemed it prudent to decline, and with many humble thanks for her kindness, and representations of the necessity of not delaying their homeward course, they proceeded on their way.

As they passed over the drawbridge, they met Sir Ralph Montfaucon and his squire, who were wandering in quest of Marian, and were entering to claim that hospitality which the pilgrims had declined. Their countenances struck Sir Ralph with a kind of imperfect recognition, which would never have been matured, but that the eyes of Marian, as she passed him, encountered his. Those eyes, he thought, were certainly the eyes of Matilda Fitzwater; and if the eyes were hers, it was extremely probable that the rest of the body they belonged to was hers also. Now, if it were really Matilda Fitzwater, who were her two companions? The baron? Aye, and the elder pilgrim was something like him. And the Earl of Huntingdon? Very probably. The earl and the baron might be good friends again, now that they were both in disgrace together. While he was revolving these cogitations, he was introduced to the lady, and after claiming and receiving the promise of hospitality, he inquired what she knew of the pilgrims who had just departed? The lady told him they were newly returned from Palestine, having been long in the Holy Land. The knight expressed some scepticism on this point. The lady replied, that they had given her so minute

a detail of her lord's proceedings, and so accurate a description of his person, that she could not be deceived in them. This staggered the knight's confidence in his own penetration. But while the lady and the knight were conversing, the warder blew his bugle-horn, and presently entered a confidential messenger from Palestine, who gave her to understand that her lord was well ; but entered into a detail of his adventures most completely at variance with the baron's narrative, to which not the correspondence of a single incident gave the remotest colouring of similarity. It now became manifest that the pilgrims were not true men ; and Sir Ralph Montfaucon sate down to supper with his head full of cogitations, which we shall leave him to chew and digest with his pheasant and canary.

Meanwhile our three pilgrims proceeded on their way. The evening set in black and lowering, when Robin turned aside from the main track, to seek an asylum for the night, along a narrow way that led between rocky and woody hills. A peasant observed the pilgrims as they entered that narrow pass, and called after them : " Whither go you, my masters ? there are rogues in that direction."

" Can you show us a direction," said Robin, " in which there are none ? If so, we will take it in preference." The peasant grinned, and walked away whistling.

The pass widened as they advanced, and the woods grew thicker and darker around them. Their path wound along a woody slope, which rose high above them in a thick rampart of foliage, and descended almost precipitously to the bed of a small river, which they heard dashing in its rocky channel, and saw its white foam gleaming at intervals in the last faint glimmerings of twilight. In a short time all was dark, and the rising voice of the wind foretold

a coming storm. They turned a point of the valley, and saw a light below them in the depth of the hollow, shining through a cottage-casement and dancing in its reflection on the restless stream. Robin blew his horn, which was answered from below. The cottage door opened: a boy came forth with a torch, ascended the steep, showed tokens of great delight at meeting with Robin, and lighted them down a flight of steps rudely cut in the rock, and over a series of rugged stepping-stones, that crossed the channel of the river. They entered the cottage, which exhibited neatness, comfort, and plenty, being amply enriched with pots, pans, and pipkins, and adorned with flitches of bacon and sundry similar ornaments, that gave goodly promise in the firelight that gleamed upon the rafters. A woman, who seemed just old enough to be the boy's mother, had thrown down her spinning-wheel in her joy at the sound of Robin's horn, and was bustling with singular alacrity to prepare an abundant supper. Her features, though not beautiful, were agreeable and expressive, and were now lighted up with such manifest joy at the sight of Robin, that Marian could not help feeling a momentary touch of jealousy. However, this was very soon dissipated by the entrance of the woman's husband, who testified as much joy as his wife had done at the sight of Robin; and in a short time the whole of the party were amicably seated round a smoking supper of river-fish and wild wood fowl, on which the baron fell with as much alacrity as if he had been a true pilgrim from Palestine.

The husband produced some flasks of wine, which were laid by in a binn consecrated to Robin, whose occasional visits to them in his wanderings were the festal days of these warm-hearted cottagers, whose manners showed that they had not been born to this

low estate. Their story had no mystery, and Marian easily collected it from the tenour of their conversation. The young man had been, like Robin, the victim of a usurious abbot, and had been outlawed for debt, and his nut-brown maid had accompanied him to the depths of Sherwood, where they lived an unholy life, killing the king's deer, and never hearing mass. In this state, Robin, then Earl of Huntingdon, discovered them in one of his huntings, and gave them aid and protection. When Robin himself became an outlaw, he had found them a retreat in this romantic and secluded spot. He had done similar service to other lovers similarly circumstanced, and had disposed them in various wild scenes which he and his men had discovered in their flittings from place to place, supplying them with all necessaries and comforts. The benefit was in some measure mutual; for these cottages served him as resting-places in his removals, and enabled him to travel untraced and unmolested; and in the delight with which he was always received he found himself even more welcome than he would have been at an inn; and this is saying very much for gratitude and affection together. The smiles which surrounded him were of his own creation, and he participated in the happiness he had bestowed.

The casements began to rattle in the wind, and the rain to beat upon the windows. The wind swelled to a hurricane, and the rain dashed like a flood against the glass. The boy retired to his little bed, the wife trimmed the lamp, the husband heaped logs upon the fire: Robin broached another flask; and Marian filled the baron's cup, and sweetened Robin's by touching its edge with her lips.

"Well," said the baron, "give me a roof over my head, be it never so humble. Your greenwood

canopy is pretty and pleasant in sunshine; but if I were doomed to live under it, I should wish it were water-tight."

"But," said Robin, "we have tents and caves for foul weather, good store of wine and venison, and fuel in abundance."

"Ay, but," said the baron, "I like to pull off my boots of a night, which you foresters seldom do, and to ensconce myself thereafter in a comfortable bed. Your beech-root is over-hard for a couch, and your mossy stump is somewhat rough for a bolster."

"Had you not dry leaves," said Robin, "with a bishop's surplice over them? What would you have softer? And had you not an abbot's travelling cloak for a coverlet? What would you have warmer?"

"Very true," said the baron, "but that was an indulgence to a guest, and I dreamed all night of the sheriff of Nottingham. I like to feel myself safe," he added, stretching out his legs to the fire, and throwing himself back in his chair with the air of a man determined to be comfortable. "I like to feel myself safe," said the baron.

At that moment the woman caught her husband's arm, and all the party following the direction of her eyes, looked simultaneously to the window, where they had just time to catch a glimpse of an apparition of an armed head, with its plumage tossing in the storm, on which the light shone from within, and which disappeared immediately.

CHAPTER XIV

SEVERAL knocks, as from the knuckles of an iron glove, were given to the door of the cottage, and a voice was heard entreating shelter from the storm

for a traveller who had lost his way. Robin arose and went to the door.

" What are you ? " said Robin.

" A soldier," replied the voice : " an unfortunate adherent of Longchamp, flying the vengeance of Prince John."

" Are you alone ? " said Robin.

" Yes," said the voice : " it is a dreadful night. Hospitable cottagers, pray give me admittance. I would not have asked it but for the storm. I would have kept my watch in the woods."

" That I believe," said Robin. " You did not reckon on the storm when you turned into this pass. Do you know there are rogues this way ? "

" I do," said the voice.

" So do I," said Robin.

A pause ensued, during which Robin listening attentively caught a faint sound of whispering.

" You are not alone," said Robin. " Who are your companions ? "

" None but the wind and the water," said the voice, " and I would I had them not."

" The wind and the water have many voices," said Robin, " but I never before heard them say, What shall we do ? "

Another pause ensued : after which,

" Look ye, master cottager," said the voice, in an altered tone, " if you do not let us in willingly, we will break down the door."

" Ho ! ho ! " roared the baron, " you are become plural, are you, rascals? How many are there of you, thieves ? What, I warrant, you thought to rob and murder a poor harmless cottager and his wife, and did not dream of a garrison ? You looked for no weapon of opposition but spit, poker, and basting ladle, wielded by unskilful hands : but, rascals, here is short sword, and long cudgel in hands

well tried in war, wherewith you shall be drilled into cullenders and beaten into mummy."

No reply was made, but furious strokes from without resounded upon the door. Robin, Marian, and the baron threw by their pilgrim's attire, and stood in arms on the defensive. They were provided with swords, and the cottager gave them bucklers and helmets, for all Robin's haunts were furnished with secret armouries. But they kept their swords sheathed, and the baron wielded a ponderous spear, which he pointed towards the door ready to run through the first that should enter, and Robin and Marian each held a bow with the arrow drawn to its head and pointed in the same direction. The cottager flourished a strong cudgel (a weapon in the use of which he prided himself on being particularly expert), and the wife seized the spit from the fireplace, and held it as she saw the baron hold his spear. The storm of wind and rain continued to beat on the roof and the casement, and the storm of blows to resound upon the door, which at length gave way with a violent crash, and a cluster of armed men appeared without, seemingly not less than twelve. Behind them rolled the stream, now changed from a gentle and shallow river to a mighty and impetuous torrent, roaring in waves of yellow foam, partially reddened by the light that streamed through the open door, and turning up its convulsed surface in flashes of shifting radiance from restless masses of half-visible shadow. The stepping-stones, by which the intruders must have crossed, were buried under the waters. On the opposite bank the light fell on the stems and boughs of the rock-rooted oak and ash tossing and swaying in the blast, and sweeping the flashing spray with their leaves.

The instant the door broke, Robin and Marian

loosed their arrows. Robin's arrow struck one of the assailants in the juncture of the shoulder, and disabled his right arm: Marian's struck a second in the juncture of the knee, and rendered him unserviceable for the night. The baron's long spear struck on the mailed breastplate of a third, and being stretched to its full extent by the long-armed hero, drove him to the edge of the torrent, and plunged him into its eddies, along which he was whirled down the darkness of the descending stream, calling vainly on his comrades for aid, till his voice was lost in the mingled roar of the waters and the wind. A fourth springing through the door was laid prostrate by the cottager's cudgel: but the wife being less dexterous than her company, though an Amazon in strength, missed her pass at a fifth, and drove the point of the spit several inches into the right-hand door-post as she stood close to the left, and thus made a new barrier which the invaders could not pass without dipping under it and submitting their necks to the sword: but one of the assailants seizing it with gigantic rage, shook it at once from the grasp of its holder and from its lodgment in the post, and at the same time made good the irruption of the rest of his party into the cottage.

Now raged an unequal combat, for the assailants fell two to one on Robin, Marian, the baron, and the cottager; while the wife, being deprived of her spit, converted everything that was at hand to a missile, and rained pots, pans, and pipkins on the armed heads of the enemy. The baron raged like a tiger, and the cottager laid about him like a thresher. One of the soldiers struck Robin's sword from his hand and brought him on his knee, when the boy, who had been roused by the tumult and had been peeping through the inner door, leaped forward in his shirt, picked up the sword and replaced it in

Robin's hand, who instantly springing up, disarmed and wounded one of his antagonists, while the other was laid prostrate under the dint of a brass cauldron launched by the Amazonian dame. Robin now turned to the aid of Marian, who was parrying most dexterously the cuts and slashes of her two assailants, of whom Robin delivered her from one, while a well-applied blow of her sword struck off the helmet of the other, who fell on his knees to beg a boon, and she recognised Sir Ralph Montfaucon. The men who were engaged with the baron and the peasant, seeing their leader subdued, immediately laid down their arms and cried for quarter. The wife brought some strong rope, and the baron tied their arms behind them.

"Now, Sir Ralph," said Marian, "once more you are at my mercy."

"That I always am, cruel beauty," said the discomfited lover.

"Odso! courteous knight," said the baron, "is this the return you make for my beef and canary, when you kissed my daughter's hand in token of contrition for your intermeddling at her wedding? Heart, I am glad to see she has given you a bloody coxcomb. Slice him down, Mawd! slice him down, and fling him into the river."

"Confess," said Marian, "what brought you here, and how did you trace our steps?"

"I will confess nothing," said the knight.

"Then confess you, rascal," said the baron, holding his sword to the throat of the captive squire.

"Take away the sword," said the squire, "it is too near my mouth, and my voice will not come out for fear: take away the sword, and I will confess all." The baron dropped his sword, and the squire proceeded: "Sir Ralph met you, as you quitted Lady Falkland's castle, and by representing to her

who you were, borrowed from her such a number of her retainers as he deemed must ensure your capture, seeing that your familiar the friar was not at your elbow. We set forth without delay, and traced you first by means of a peasant who saw you turn into this valley and afterwards by the light from the casement of this solitary dwelling. Our design was to have laid an ambush for you in the morning, but the storm and your observation of my unlucky face through the casement made us change our purpose; and what followed you can tell better than I can, being indeed masters of the subject."

"You are a merry knave," said the baron, "and here is a cup of wine for you."

"Gramercy," said the squire, "and better late than never: but I lacked a cup of this before. Had I been pot-valiant, I had held you play."

"Sir Knight," said Marian, "this is the third time you have sought the life of my lord and of me, for mine is interwoven with his. And do you think me so spiritless as to believe that I can be yours by compulsion? Tempt me not again, for the next time shall be the last. I spare you now, not in pity but in scorn. Yet shall you swear to a convention never more to pursue or molest my lord or me, and on this condition you shall live."

The knight had no alternative but to comply.

The pilgrims, without experiencing further molestation, arrived at the retreat of Sir Guy of Gamwell. They found the old knight a cup too low; partly from being cut off from the scenes of his old hospitality and the shouts of his Nottinghamshire vassals, who were wont to make the rafters of his ancient hall re-echo to their revelry; but principally from being parted from his son, who had long been the better half of his flask and pasty. The arrival of our

visitors cheered him up ; and finding that the baron was to remain with him, he testified his delight and the cordiality of his welcome by pegging him in the ribs till he made him roar.

Robin and Marian took an affectionate leave of the baron and the old knight ; and before they quitted the vicinity of Barnsdale, deeming it prudent to return in a different disguise, they laid aside their pilgrim's attire, and assumed the habits of wandering minstrels.

In the morning a forester came to the friar, with intelligence that Prince John had been compelled, by the urgency of his affairs in other quarters, to disembarrass Nottingham Castle of his royal presence. Our wanderers returned joyfully to their forest-dominion.

CHAPTER XV

So Robin and Marian dwelt and reigned in the forest, ranging the glades and the greenwoods from the matins of the lark to the vespers of the nightingale.

Many moons had waxed and waned, when on the afternoon of a lovely summer day a lusty broad-boned knight was riding through the forest of Sherwood. The sun shone brilliantly on the full green foliage, and afforded the knight a fine opportunity of observing picturesque effects, of which it is to be feared he did not avail himself. But he had not proceeded far, before he had an opportunity of observing something much more interesting, namely, a fine young outlaw leaning, in the true Sherwood fashion, with his back against a tree. The knight was preparing to ask the stranger a question, the answer to which, if correctly given, would have

relieved him from a doubt that pressed heavily on his mind, as to whether he was in the right road or the wrong, when the youth prevented the inquiry by saying: "In God's name, sir knight, you are late to your meals. My master has tarried dinner for you these three hours."

"I doubt," said the knight, "I am not he you wot of. I am nowhere bidden to-day, and I know none in this vicinage."

"We feared," said the youth, "your memory would be treacherous: therefore am I stationed here to refresh it."

"Who is your master?" said the knight; "and where does he abide?"

"My master," said the youth, "is called Robin Hood, and he abides hard by."

"And what knows he of me?" said the knight.

"He knows you," answered the youth, "as he does every wayfaring knight and friar, by instinct."

"Gramercy," said the knight; "then I understand his bidding: but how if I say I will not come?"

"I am enjoined to bring you," said the youth. "If persuasion avail not, I must use other argument."

"Say'st thou so?" said the knight; "I doubt if thy stripling rhetoric would convince me."

"That," said the young forester, "we will see."

"We are not equally matched, boy," said the knight. "I should get less honour by thy conquest, than grief by thy injury."

"Perhaps," said the youth, "my strength is more than my seeming, and my cunning more than my strength. Therefore, let it please your knighthood to dismount."

"It shall please my knighthood to chastise thy presumption," said the knight, springing from his saddle.

Hereupon, which in those days was usually the

result of a meeting between any two persons anywhere, they proceeded to fight.

The knight had in an uncommon degree both strength and skill: the forester had less strength, but not less skill than the knight, and showed such a mastery of his weapon as reduced the latter to great admiration.

They had not fought many minutes by the forest clock, the sun; and had as yet done each other no worse injury than that the knight had wounded the forester's jerkin, and the forester had disabled the knight's plume; when they were interrupted by a voice from a thicket, exclaiming, "Well fought, girl: well fought. Mass, that had nigh been a shrewd hit. Thou owest him for that, lass. Marry, stand by, I'll pay him for thee."

The knight turning to the voice, beheld a tall friar issuing from the thicket, brandishing a ponderous cudgel.

"Why art thou in arms," asked the friar, "against our lady queen?"

"What meanest thou?" said the knight.

"Truly, this," said the friar, "is our liege lady of the forest, against whom I do apprehend thee in overt act of treason. What sayest thou for thyself?"

"I say," answered the knight, "that if this be indeed a lady, man never yet held me so long."

"Spoken," said the friar, "like one who hath done execution. Hast thou thy stomach full of steel? Wilt thou diversify thy repast with a taste of my oak-graff? Or wilt thou incline thine heart to our venison, which truly is cooling? Wilt thou fight? or wilt thou dine? or wilt thou fight and dine? or wilt thou dine and fight? I am for thee, choose as thou mayest."

"I will dine," said the knight; "for with lady I never fought before, and with friar I never fought

yet, and with neither will I ever fight knowingly: and if this be the queen of the forest, I will not, being in her own dominions, be backward to do her homage."

So saying, he kissed the hand of Marian, who was pleased most graciously to express her approbation.

"Gramercy, sir knight," said the friar, "I laud thee for thy courtesy, which I deem to be no less than thy valour. Now do thou follow me, while I follow my nose, which scents the pleasant odour of roast from the depth of the forest recesses. I will lead thy horse, and do thou lead my lady."

The knight took Marian's hand, and followed the friar, who walked before them, singing:

When the wind blows, when the wind blows
From where under buck the dry log glows,
What guide can you follow,
O'er brake and o'er hollow,
So true as a ghostly, ghostly nose?

CHAPTER XVI

THEY proceeded, following their guide, first along a light elastic greensward under the shade of lofty and wide-spreading trees, that skirted a sunny opening of the forest, then along paths, which the deer, the outlaw, or the woodman had made, through the close shoots of the young coppices, through the thick undergrowth of the ancient woods, through beds of gigantic fern that filled the narrow glades and waved their green feathery heads above the plume of the knight. Along these sylvan alleys they walked in single file; the friar singing and pioneering

in the van, the horse plunging and floundering behind the friar, the lady following "in maiden meditation fancy-free," and the knight bringing up the rear, much marvelling at the strange company into which his stars had thrown him. Their path had expanded sufficiently to allow the knight to take Marian's hand again, when they arrived in the presence of Robin Hood and his court.

Robin's table was spread under a high overarching canopy of living boughs, on the edge of a natural lawn of verdure starred with flowers, through which a swift transparent rivulet ran sparkling in the sun. The board was covered with abundance of choice food and excellent liquor, not without the comeliness of snow-white linen and the splendour of costly plate, which the sheriff of Nottingham had unwillingly contributed to supply, at the same time with an excellent cook, whom Little John's art had spirited away to the forest with the contents of his master's silver scullery.

A hundred foresters were here assembled overready for their dinner, some seated at the table and some lying in groups under the trees.

Robin bade courteous welcome to the knight, who took his seat between Robin and Marian at the festal board; at which was already placed one strange guest in the person of a portly monk, sitting between Little John and Scarlet, with his rotund physiognomy elongated into an unnatural oval by the conjoint influence of sorrow and fear: sorrow for the departed contents of his travelling treasury, a good-looking valise which was hanging empty on a bough; and fear for his personal safety, of which all the flasks and pasties before him could not give him assurance. The appearance of the knight, however, cheered him up with a semblance of protection, and gave him just sufficient courage to

demolish a cygnet and a numble-pie, which he diluted with the contents of two flasks of canary sack.

But wine, which sometimes creates and often increases joy, doth also, upon occasion, heighten sorrow : and so it fared now with our portly monk, who had no sooner explained away his portion of provender, than he began to weep and bewail himself bitterly.

" Why dost thou weep, man ? " said Robin Hood. " Thou hast done thine embassy justly, and shalt have thy Lady's grace."

" Alack ! alack ! " said the monk : " no embassy had I, luckless sinner, as well thou wottest, but to take to my abbey in safety the treasure whereof thou hast despoiled me."

" Propound me his case," said Friar Tuck, " and I will give him ghostly counsel."

" You well remember," said Robin Hood, " the sorrowful knight who dined with us here twelve months and a day gone by."

" Well do I," said Friar Tuck. " His lands were in jeopardy with a certain abbot, who would allow him no longer day for their redemption. Whereupon you lent to him the four hundred pounds which he needed, and which he was to repay this day, though he had no better security to give than our Lady the Virgin."

" I never desired better," said Robin, " for she never yet failed to send me my pay ; and here is one of her own flock, this faithful and well-favoured monk of St Mary's, hath brought it me duly, principal and interest to a penny, as Little John can testify, who told it forth. To be sure, he denied having it, but that was to prove our faith. We sought and found it."

" I know nothing of your knight," said the monk :

" and the money was our own, as the Virgin shall bless me."

" She shall bless thee," said Friar Tuck, " for a faithful messenger."

The monk resumed his wailing. Little John brought him his horse. Robin gave him leave to depart. He sprang with singular nimbleness into the saddle, and vanished without saying, God give you good day.

The stranger knight laughed heartily as the monk rode off.

" They say, sir knight," said Friar Tuck, " they should laugh who win ; but thou laughest who art likely to lose."

" I have won," said the knight, " a good dinner, some mirth, and some knowledge : and I cannot lose by paying for them."

" Bravely said," answered Robin. " Still it becomes thee to pay : for it is not meet that a poor forester should treat a rich knight. How much money hast thou with thee ? "

" Troth, I know not," said the knight. " Sometimes much, sometimes little, sometimes none. But search, and what thou findest, keep : and for the sake of thy kind heart and open hand, be it what it may, I shall wish it were more."

" Then, since thou sayest so," said Robin, " not a penny will I touch. Many a false churl comes hither, and disburses against his will : and till there is lack of these, I prey not on true men."

" Thou art thyself a true man, right well I judge, Robin," said the stranger knight, " and seemest more like one bred in court than to thy present outlaw life."

" Gramercy, sir knight," said Robin—— But his speech was cut short by Little John calling, " Hark ! "

All listened. A distant trampling of horses was

heard. The sounds approached rapidly, and at length a group of horsemen glittering in holyday dresses was visible among the trees.

"God's my life!" said Robin, "what means this? To arms, my merrymen all."

"No arms, Robin," said the foremost horseman, riding up and springing from his saddle: "have you forgotten Sir William of the Lee?"

"No, by my fay," said Robin; "and right welcome again to Sherwood."

Little John bustled to re-array the table.

"I come late, Robin," said Sir William, "but I came by a wrestling, where I found a good yeoman wrongfully beset by a crowd of sturdy varlets, and I staid to do him right."

"I thank thee for that, in God's name," said Robin, "as if thy good service had been to myself."

"And here," said the knight, "is thy four hundred pound; and my men have brought thee an hundred bows and as many well-furnished quivers; which I beseech thee to receive and to use as a poor token of my grateful kindness to thee: for me and my wife and children didst thou redeem from beggary."

"Thy bows and arrows," said Robin, "will I joyfully receive: but of thy money, not a penny. It is paid already. My Lady, who was thy security, hath sent it me for thee."

Sir William pressed, but Robin was inflexible.

"It is paid," said Robin, "as this good knight can testify, who saw my Lady's messenger depart but now."

Sir William looked round to the stranger knight, and instantly fell on his knee, saying, "God save King Richard."

The foresters, friar and all, dropped on their knees together, and repeated in chorus: "God save King Richard."

" Rise, rise," said Richard, smiling : " Robin is king here, as his lady hath shown. I have heard much of thee, Robin, both of thy present and thy former state. And this, thy fair forest-queen, is, if tales say true, the lady Matilda Fitzwater."

Marian signed acknowledgment.

" Your father," said the king, " has approved his fidelity to me, by the loss of his lands, which the newness of my return, and many public cares, have not yet given me time to restore : but this justice shall be done to him, and to thee also, Robin, if thou wilt leave thy forest-life and resume thy earldom, and be a peer of Cœur-de-Lion : for braver heart and juster hand I never yet found."

Robin looked round on his men.

" Your followers," said the king, " shall have free pardon, and such of them as thou wilt part with shall have maintenance from me ; and if ever I confess to priest, it shall be to thy friar."

" Gramercy to your majesty," said the friar ; " and my inflictions shall be flasks of canary ; and if the number be (as in grave cases I may, peradventure, make it) too great for one frail mortality, I will relieve you by vicarious penance, and pour down my own throat the redundancy of the burden."

Robin and his followers embraced the king's proposal. A joyful meeting soon followed with the baron and Sir Guy of Gamwell : and Richard himself honoured with his own presence a formal solemnization of the nuptials of our lovers, whom he constantly distinguished with his peculiar regard.

The friar could not say, Farewell to the forest, without something of a heavy heart.

But the friar's farewell was not destined to be eternal. He was domiciled as the family confessor of the Earl and Countess of Huntingdon, who led a discreet and courtly life, and kept up old hospitality

in all its munificence, till the death of King Richard and the usurpation of John, by placing their enemy in power, compelled them to return to their greenwood sovereignty ; which, it is probable, they would have before done from choice, if their love of sylvan liberty had not been counteracted by their desire to retain the friendship of Cœur-de-Lion. Their old and tried adherents, the friar among the foremost, flocked again round their forest-banner ; and in merry Sherwood they long lived together, the lady still retaining her former name of Maid Marian, though the appellation was then as much a misnomer as that of Little John.

NOTES

I

PAGE

11. *alb*, a long white linen vestment with tight sleeves. *intone*, to chant.

13. *Our Lady*, the Virgin Mary. *translated*, changed. *ghostly*, priestly. *Sacrilege*, dishonouring a sacred place. *to stand upon the order of their going*, to wait for orders to go, before going. The phrase is from *Macbeth*, III., iv. 119.

14. *a-kembo*, akimbo; hands on hips, elbows out. *old*, great, unlimited. *pipe*, a large cask holding over 100 gallons.

15. *basta*, that is enough (*Italian*).

16. *fast-day*, Friday, on which good Catholics fast from meat, but may eat fish. *beeves*, cattle.

17. *opposite proposings*, differences of opinion. *Arachne*, a Lydian maiden so skilled in weaving and embroidery that she challenged the goddess Athena to compete with her. *Siren*, the sirens were sea-nymphs who charmed by their singing all who heard them. *single-stick*, staff or cudgel for one hand. *quarter-staff*, a long staff, grasped in the middle and at a quarter of its length.

18. *homily*, sermon.

II

19. *hunting of Cheviot*, related in the ballad of *Chevy Chase*.

20. *galloway*, small strong horse. *cloth-yard shaft*, an arrow.

III

22. *baron—of beef*, a joint consisting of two sirloins left uncut at the backbone. *choleric*, easily angered.

23. *en militaire*, military style; like a soldier.

PAGE

24. *Lincoln green*, bright green cloth, formerly made at Lincoln.

25. *with my glove*, one knight challenged another to combat by throwing down his glove.

26. *incarnate*, in the flesh. *elements*, the forces that make up the weather—wind, rain, etc. *buttery*, store-room for provisions, especially liquor.

27. *abet*, assist, especially in crime.

IV

30. *vert*, trees or shrubs in a deer-forest.

33. *catch*, a song for several voices.

35. *leading-strings*, used to lead children learning to walk.

V

37. *Gamwell feast*, May Day.

38. *old October*, ale brewed in October.

VI

39. *depending*, hanging down.

40. *coit*, quoit.

42. *Passing* (= surpassing), very.

43. *as lief*, as soon. *divers*, different. *selerer*, cellarer, store-keeper.

45. *posse*, the body of men called out by a sheriff to enforce the law.

VII

47. *on parole*, having given one's word of honour not to attempt escape.

48. *cock-and-bull stories*, far-fetched stories. *chapter of monks*, a daily meeting of all the monks in a monastery.

50. *sconce*, head.

52. *alpha and omega*, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet ; hence the beginning and the end, everything.

VIII

PAGE

52. *of one tenour*, saying the same thing.

54. *shrive*, to confess and pardon sins.

55. *Dominus vobiscum*, "The Lord be with you" (*Latin*).

IX

57. *crusade*: the third, in 1189, led by Richard I. against the Saracens.

58. *stocks*, an instrument in which the legs of offenders were confined.

X

60. *bastion*, projecting part of the fortifications of a castle.

61. *habit*, dress. *boss*, central stud or knob of a shield.

XI

66. *to*, as. *mote*, meeting, especially of representatives or of a council.

67. *give laws to the flowing tide*, a reference to the story of Canute.

68. *oak-plant*, staff.

69. *humour*, fancy, disposition.

70. *absolute*, firm. *nice*, delicate, fine. *errant*, wandering. *ghostly*, priestly.

XII

71. *baste*, (1) to thrash, (2) to fry or roast in fat. *numble-pie*, made of the liver, heart, etc., of a deer. *cygnet*, a young swan.

72. *valise*, travelling bag.

73. *angel*, an old English coin worth about ten shillings. It bore the figure of an angel.

75. *coranto*, a lively dance.

76. *forbid the banns*, object to the marriage. The banns, or intention of marriage, are usually proclaimed in church three times. *Holy Writ*, the Bible.

XIII

PAGE

77. *cockle-shell*, worn on the hat by pilgrims, as a sign that they had visited the shrine of St James of Compostella.

78. *scrip*, a pilgrim's pouch or wallet.

81. *pipkin*, a small earthen pot. *binn*, a box for holding wine-bottles.

XIV

84. *spit*, rod on which meat was turned in roasting it before a fire.

85. *cullender*, sieve. *mummy*, a body preserved by embalming, especially in the pyramids of Egypt; here, a shapeless mass.

86. *juncture*, a joint in a suit of armour. *Amazon*, a female warrior. *irruption*, a breaking in.

88. *Gramercy*, many thanks.

XV

90. *vicinage*, vicinity, neighbourhood. *rhetoric*, eloquence.

91. *jerkin*, short close coat or waistcoast. *shrewd*, artful, cunning. *overt*, open. *oak-graff*, cudgel, quarter-staff.

XVI

93. *in maiden meditation* (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, II., i. 164).

94. *jeopardy*, danger.

97. *vicarious*, in place of some one else. *redundancy*, what is over or unnecessary.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

I

1. Find the meaning of: panacea, paragon, insinuate, prostrate, disconcerted, to broach, virago.

2. Substitute a simpler word for: subside, martial, remonstrance, nuptials, resolute, vociferations, dexterity.

3. Rewrite the first sentence of this chapter in simpler words.

4. Explain: pillars of the faith, with arms akimbo.

5. Supply a word expressing sound: the ..... of swords, the ..... of bucklers, the ..... of helmets, the ..... of bow-strings, the ..... of arrows.

6. How does Peacock make fun of the scene in the chapel, of the abbot, the friars, and Sir Ralph?

7. Tell the story of this chapter seriously in your own words.

8. Pick out from this chapter three specially humorous or witty sentences.

9. Describe the character of (*a*) Matilda, (*b*) the little friar.

II

1. Give a simpler word or phrase for: pretext, infallible, reprimand, identify, testify, manifest, rotundity, peradventure, apprehension.

2. Explain: something in the wind, to cut short the thread of someone's eloquence, in the vein.

3. What was Sir Ralph Montfaucon's purpose in coming to Rubygill? Who had sent him? What previous events explain his mission?

4. Explain the little friar's fear of Matilda.

III

1. (*a*) Give simpler words or phrases for the following: to usher in, choleric *vehemence*, alternately, scrutinise,

gesture, copious, *ambiguous*, *frustrate*, solicitude, circuitous, exemplary, to *atone* for, imperturbable, *provoke*.

(*b*) Find from a dictionary the derivations of the words in italics.

(*c*) "Paternal" means "fatherly." Give the corresponding words for "motherly" and "brotherly." Find the meaning of "filial."

2. Illustrate from this chapter the perversity of the baron.

IV

1. (*a*) Explain: to rail at, in custody, confiscate, simultaneously, fluctuation.

(*b*) Find the derivation and meaning of: jovial, martial, saturnine, mercurial.

2. "Every one takes a pleasure in contradicting me," says the baron. Comment on this statement.

3. Matilda "might sometimes be led, but never could be driven." Illustrate this statement from her conduct.

4. What was the baron's attitude to Matilda? How did she manage him?

5. Pick out three similes from the first paragraph. What general effect do they produce?

6. From this chapter, quote as many examples of exaggeration as you can.

7. Explain: satire, innuendo, pun, bathos. Find examples of each in this chapter.

V

1. Give a simpler word for: vestige, indefatigably, anticipation, alacrity, cordial, ponderous.

2. Explain: a passport to favour, paid with the wages of hope, to sharpen one's appetite.

3. Why was Sir Ralph so anxious to capture the Earl of Huntingdon?

VI

1. (*a*) Give a simpler word for: quadruple, vibrate, rural, amicable, fascinating, *acclamation*, adherent, *cavalcade*, emulation, admonish.

(*b*) Find the meaning of: floral, stimulate, *dislocation*, regale, prodigal, flagrant, *pervert*, enlighten, whet, *ejaculation*.

(*c*) Find the derivations of the words in italics, and give other words from the same roots.

2. Explain: a price on one's head, a service of plate, to raise the country, to make a wry face.

VII

1. Explain: (*a*) obsolete, accomplice, expedient, alleged; (*b*) a prisoner on parole, a breach of the peace, a chip of the old block.

2. Relate (*a*) how the king's men attempted to take Matilda, and took young Gamwell; (*b*) why the baron forbade Marian further exit from the castle; (*c*) why and how the friar left the abbey.

3. Relate the encounter of the abbot of Doubleflask with Robin Hood, and that of the Sheriff of Nottingham with Robin Hood and his men.

4. Write a paragraph on Gamwell Feast.

5. Describe any festival or procession you have seen.

VIII

1. Give the opposite of: malediction, latitude, fallible, perpendicularly, impudent, civil (justice), lenity, reject, descend, sinful, expedient.

2. Explain: the storm is blown over, to take exceedingly to heart, a random shot, the fangs of justice, from the quarters of the four winds, the nape of the neck.

3. Write a paragraph describing Little John and his capabilities.

4. Describe the rescue of young Gamwell.

IX

1. Give simpler words or phrases for: inflexible, allure, iudicious, scrupulous, obvious, restitution, flagrant, eventually.

2. What was Peacock's opinion of (*a*) Longchamp, (*b*) King John, (*c*) Richard Cœur-de-Lion and the Crusaders?

X

1. (*a*) Give simpler words for: ferocious, surmount, elucidate, enmity, ineffectual, dexterously, facility.

(*b*) Find the meaning of: tact, discern, impetus, mortification, combustibles, prostrate, sortie, foliage, ratio, vivid, vindicate.

(*c*) Give the opposite of: temporary, facility, extraordinary, interior, defenders.

2. Describe the encounter of John and Matilda, and the part played by the tall friar.

3. Relate the adventures of the little friar, inside and outside the castle.

XI

1. Explain: indifferent, canopy, with impunity, compact (*n.*), unction, vicinity, misnomer, to plight one's troth, coronal, safe conduct, reluctant, acquiesce.

2. Express more simply and directly: Look round upon these sylvan shades where we have so often roused the stag from his ferny covert.

3. What is a pun? Quote an example from this chapter.

4. (*a*) Describe the wedding of Robin Hood and Marian.

(*b*) Describe any wedding you have seen.

XII

1. (*a*) Give a simpler word for: disburse, donor, complacency, impediment.

(*b*) Explain: exhort, officious, commentator, grimace, forfeit, to have one foot in the grave.

2. Quote a pun from this chapter.

3. Describe the young man, his plight, and how it was relieved by Robin Hood.

4. Mention other stories or poems in which a young bride is to be forced to marry an aged lover.

5. Compose a new Robin Hood adventure, describing a rescue.

XIII

1. (*a*) Give a simpler word for : minute (*adj.*), prodigy, scepticism, manifest, asylum, dissipate, participate.

(*b*) Explain : circumstantial, coherent, delusion, miniature, secluded, mutual.

(*c*) Distinguish : minúte, mínute ; cómpact, compáct. Give other similar examples.

2. What happenings or statements in this chapter are improbable ?

3. (*a*) Describe the situation and interior of the cottage, and (*b*) tell the story of its inhabitants.

XIV

1. (*a*) Give the meaning of : ponderous, impetuous, convulse, deprive, missile, contrition, alternative, comply.

(*b*) Explain : at this juncture, to stand on the defensive, to cry for quarter.

2. Explain the humour of the following dialogue :—

" Do you know there are rogues this way ? "
" I do," said the voice.
" So do I," said Robin.

3. What is (*a*) exciting, (*b*) amusing, in the fight in the cottage ? What accidents led up to it ?

XV

1. Find the meaning of : matins, vespers, laud, chastise.

2. Describe the meeting and combat between the unknown knight and Maid Marian.

XVI

1. (*a*) Find the meaning of : *inflexible*, testify, munificence, *counteract*, usurp, *adherent*, *discreet*, pioneer.

(*b*) What is the meaning of the prefix in the words italicised above ?

2. Tell the story of Sir William of the Lee, and his dealings with Robin Hood.

3. Compare this description of King Richard in the forest with the corresponding description in *Ivanhoe*.

General

1. What part is played in the story by: Sir Ralph Montfaucon, King John, the Sheriff of Nottingham, King Richard, Little John?

2. Write short character-sketches of: Maid Marian, the Baron, Sir Ralph, the little friar.

3. Name the different occasions on which Robin Hood (and his men) went to the help of the distressed. What was his favourite plan?

4. Give the outlaw-names of: Sir Robert Fitz-Ooth, William Gamwell, his page, Father Michael, Matilda Fitzwater.

5. Explain: (*a*) stayathomeitiveness, earl-no-earl, saints-that-were-to-be, the earl that was, his latitude was worthy of his longitude, pot-valiant, to make a virtue of necessity, on a friendly footing.

(*b*) To aid and abet, goods and chattels, vert and venison, to keep watch and ward, might and main, to wax and wane, a cock and bull story.

Give other phrases of the same kind.

6. Who spoke the following and on what occasion?—

(*a*) I think they call him Robin.
(*b*) To the sheriff's left arm.
(*c*) You are become plural, are you?
(*d*) Well fought, girl.
(*e*) I forbid the ceremony.
(*f*) And here is thy four hundred pound.
(*g*) You may easily see that this is not the man.
(*h*) My master has tarried dinner for you these three hours.
(*i*) It is not very good.
(*j*) I like to feel myself safe.
(*k*) Who be these that come riding so fast this way?
(*l*) There are rogues in that direction.
(*m*) But I will swim the moat.
(*n*) I am the Roman law.
(*o*) I never was thwacked in my life.

7. Compare or contrast the following characters and incidents in *Maid Marian* with the corresponding characters and incidents in *Ivanhoe* :—

(*a*) Robin Hood, (*b*) Brother Michael with Friar Tuck, (*c*) Sir Ralph de Montfaucon and the Baron of Arlingford with Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert and Front-de-Bœuf, (*d*) Prince John's attack on Arlingford Castle with the attack on Torquilstone Castle, (*e*) the archery contests, (*f*) the return of Richard I., (*g*) the conduct of Prince John during the absence of Richard I.

8. Compare the descriptions given by Scott and Peacock of the people and manners of the thirteenth century.

9. Compare and contrast Scott's attitude to the clergy with Peacock's.

10. How does Peacock satirise (*a*) the Kings, (*b*) the Regents, (*c*) the Third Crusade, (*d*) the Sheriff? Quote incidents and passages to illustrate your answers.

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