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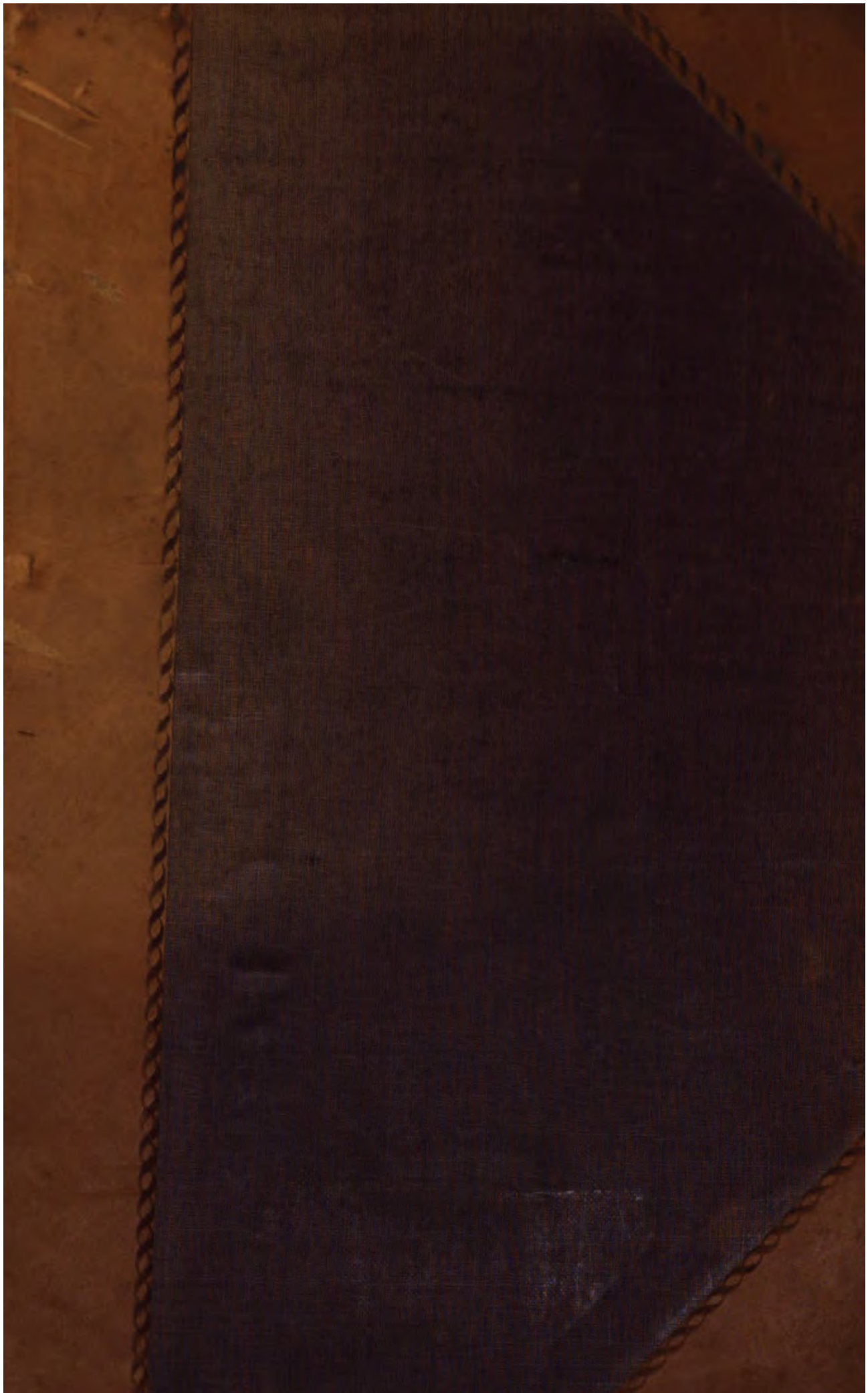
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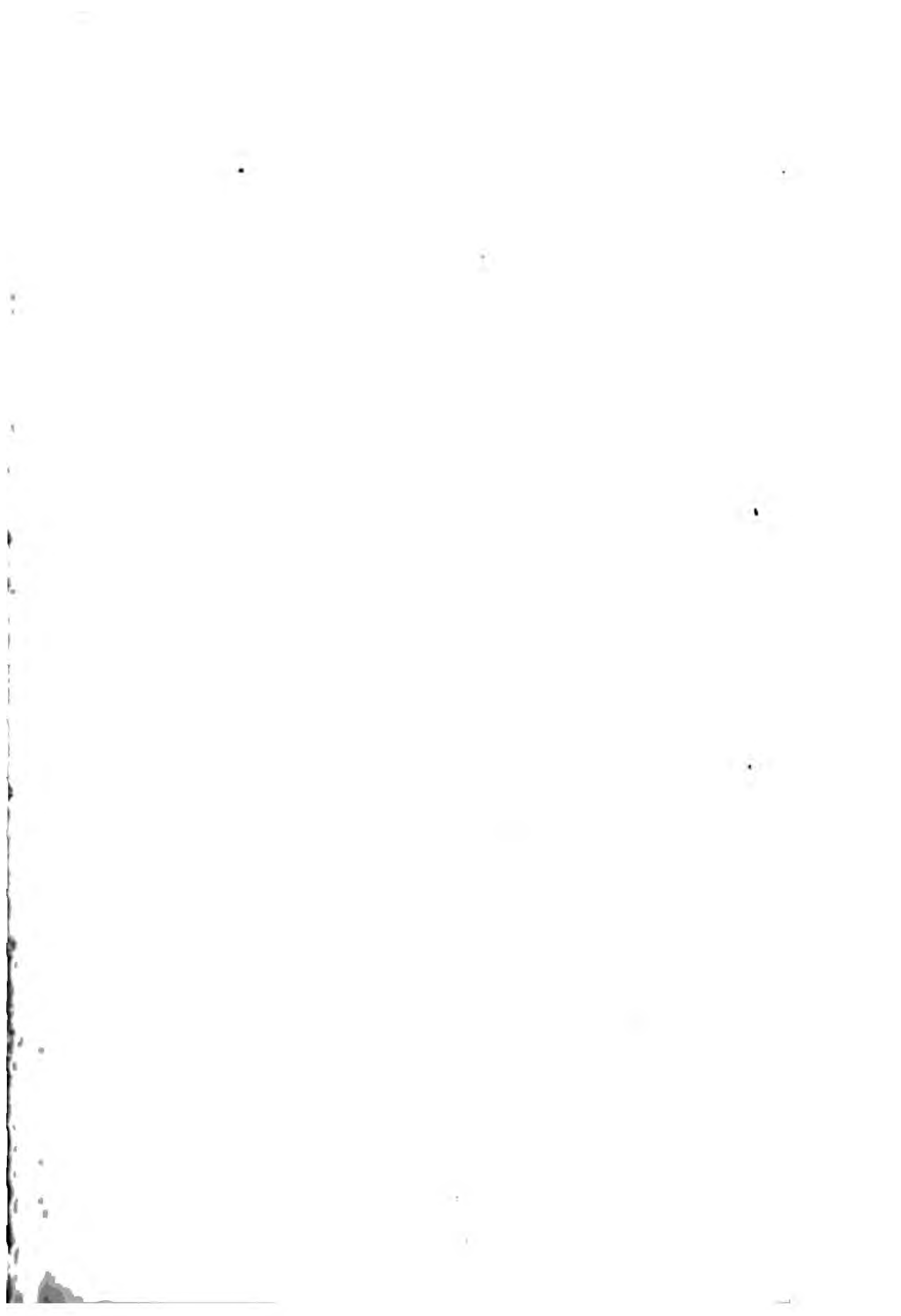
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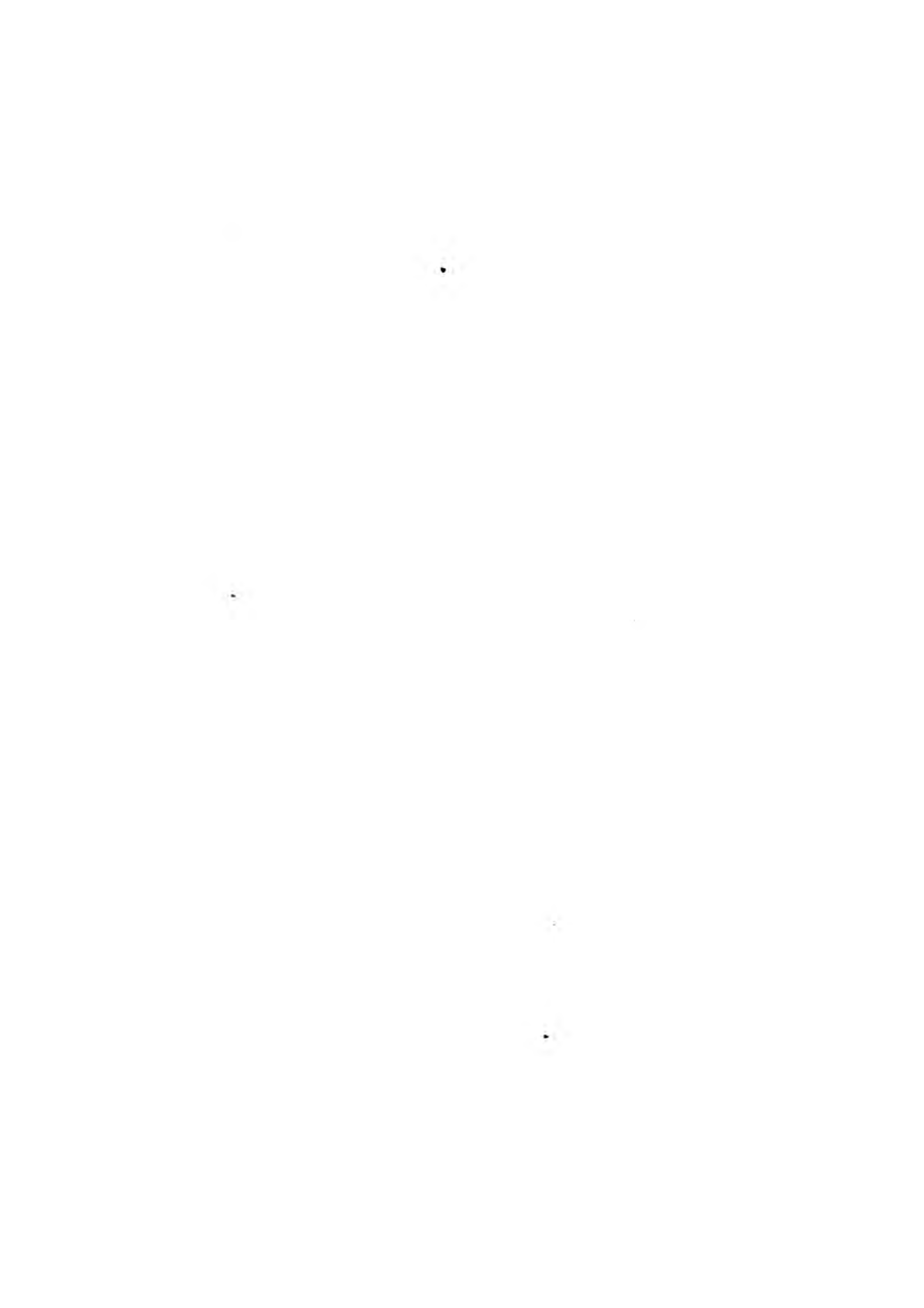




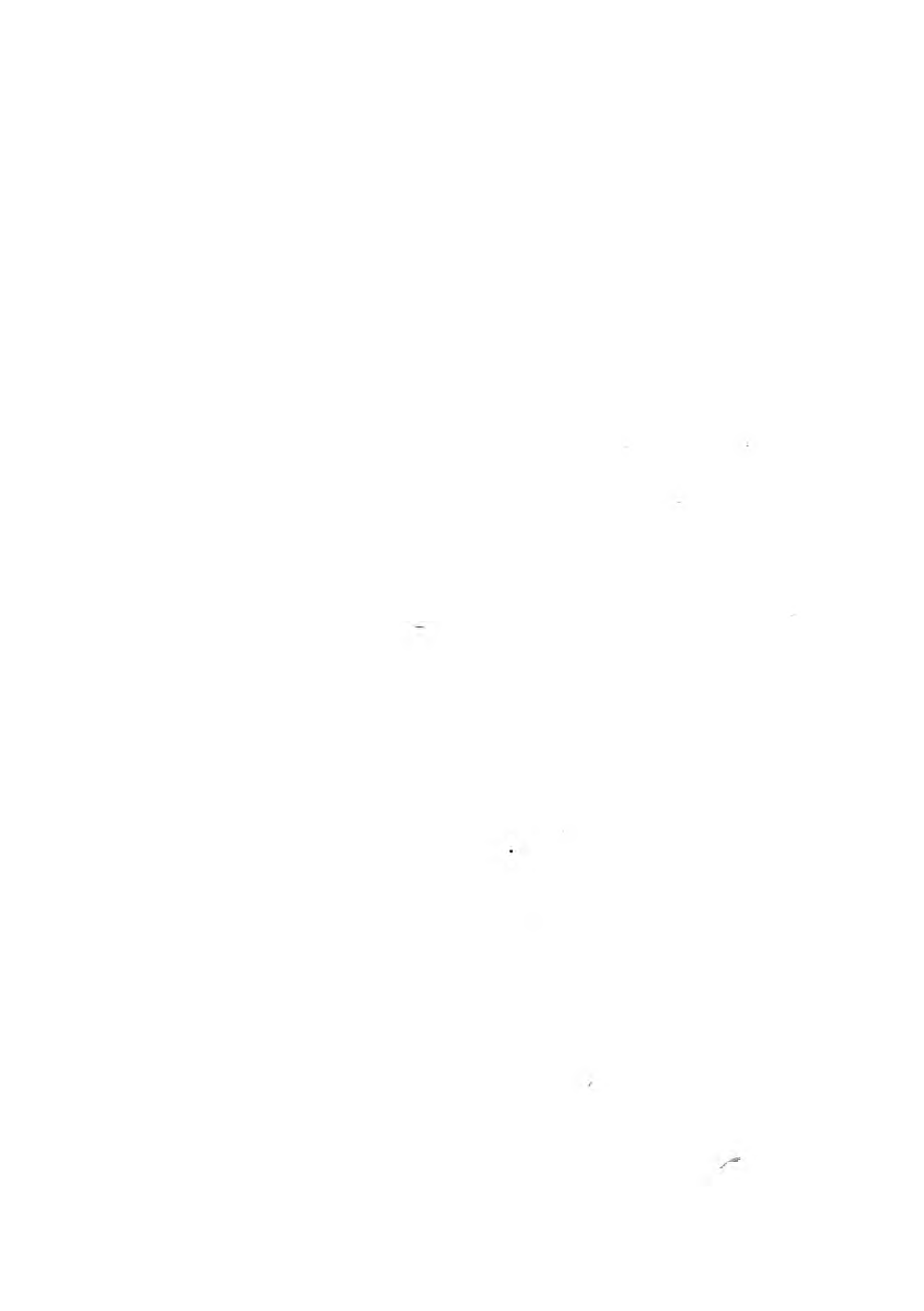
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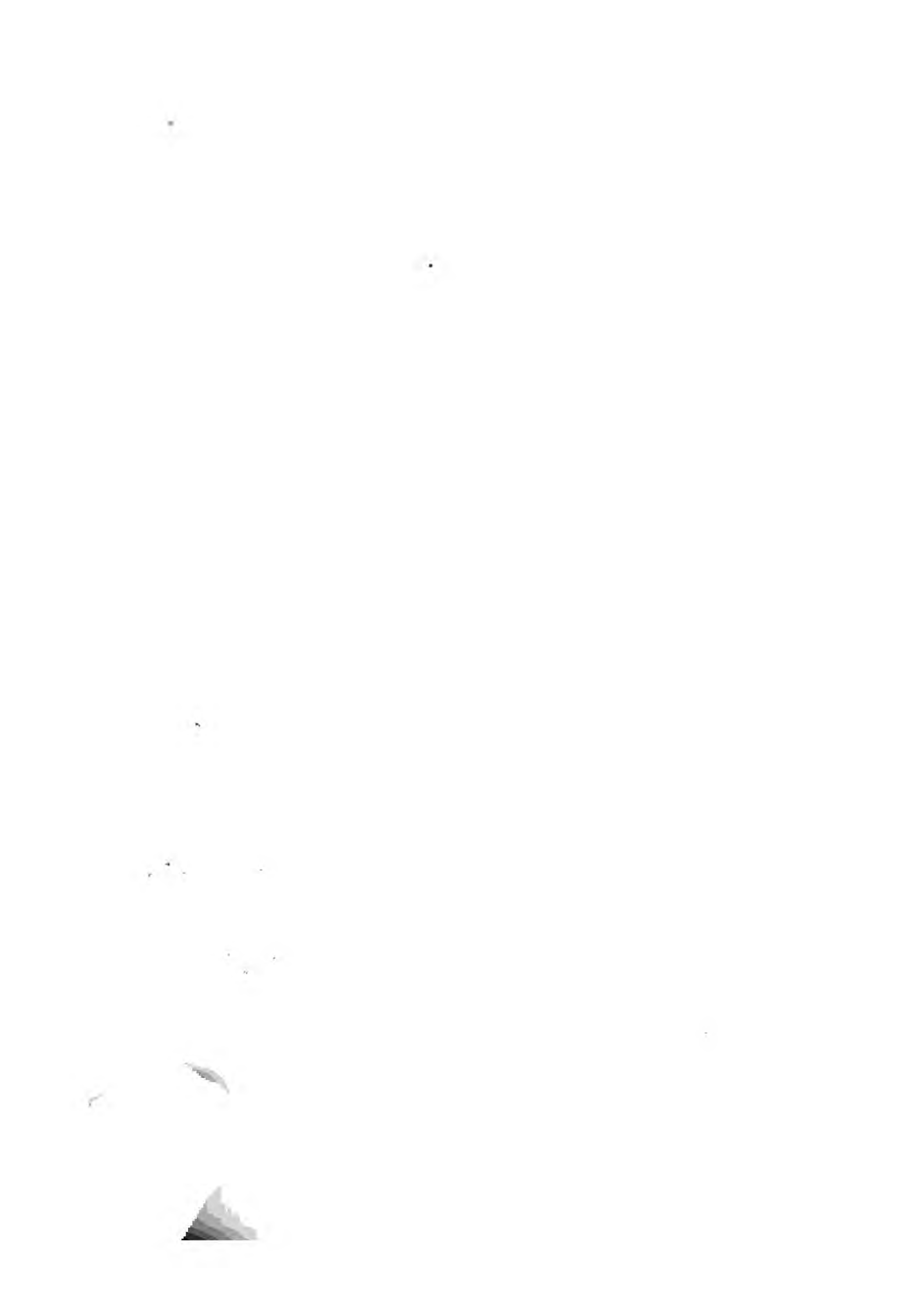






FAIR ROSAMOND.





# FAIR ROSAMOND;

OR

## THE DAYS OF KING HENRY II.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE;

BY THOMAS MILLER,

AUTHOR OF "ROYSTON GOWER," "BEAUTIES OF THE COUNTRY,"  
"A DAY IN THE WOODS," ETC.

Let us sit on the ground,  
And tell sad stories.

*King Richard II.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER:  
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1839.

489.



LONDON :  
PRINTED BY STEWART AND MURRAY,  
OLD BAILEY.



TO

THOMAS MOORE, ESQ.

IN ADMIRATION OF HIS GENIUS,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE HUMBLY DEDICATED,

WITH DEEP RESPECT,

BY

THE AUTHOR.



## PREFACE.

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IN again entering the field as an Historical Romance writer, the author has no excuse to offer. His last novel succeeded to an extent far beyond what he dared to anticipate ; for he was well aware that it contained many faults, and some of them such as only a more mature judgment can hope to amend, having had no one to suggest an alteration or perfect a sentence ; therefore such as the works are, the author only is responsible for them. Many of the faults which were kindly pointed out by



some of the reviewers (and which it is the duty of a honest critic to comment upon) he has in the present work endeavoured to avoid, and attempted to give a greater individuality to his characters, by making them stand out more prominently in the pages, and bringing the incidents to bear more closely upon the working out of the story. With all his attention, he is well aware that there will yet be found plenty of errors for those who only hunt out for them, and pass over the best portions; and to such he only wishes, that they all, and each were compelled to write such a work, in the same given space of time: they would find the necessary labour of research for such a task no trifle. Once again, and for the last time, in answer to those who wish to know at what school he learned his grammar, and Latin, he begs to refer them to the Preface prefixed to his "Day in the Woods;" there they will see at what

University he studied, and what a stern taskmaster he was under, while taking up the degrees of M. B. The author has kept nothing secret, has made no vain display, but fearlessly announced his position, and is proud that he has sprung from those ranks, which will ere long make themselves respected—those “corner stones which the builders rejected.”

The author cannot appropriate to himself all the praise that was bestowed upon his last romance, but is inclined to think that his industry in raking together and selecting much ancient, interesting, and almost forgotten matter, had much to do with its success.

To render an historical romance only merely readable, the author must work hard before he begins it; he must read whole volumes of dry, and often uninteresting matter, must dig out of the dark and dusty mines of antiquity, all that is picturesque and poetical, and be very

choice in his selections in searching for the hidden gold in these dusky recesses, lest he should bring forth more dross than pure metal. Nay more, he must have a love for his labour; for if he once pursues his task with reluctance, all is then over. Neither is this all; for when the materials are selected, they require a nicety of arrangement, they must be placed carefully together, or they will resemble the confused threads which we see underneath ancient embroidery rather than the upper part where the beautiful effects are represented. True, a master-hand could toss the material together in a brief space of time, when it is thus arranged, although he might begrudge the labour of preparing it, for the work is then half done to his hands; but an inferior workman with fair judgment need not to despair, although he cannot give an equal charm to the task when it is completed. No matter how great

the genius may be, he must undergo the same labour in digging up the dry bones, before he can even form them into a skeleton; and although he may more readily arrange them with just and anatomical skill, yet an inferior artist may by stern industry give them a shape near enough to the original, and by drawing the skin carefully over, and infusing the life and blood, and passions, and feelings, that flow in the present day, so animate it, as to give to the whole a look of life. History is full of pictures; its pages teem with poetry; dramatic incidents almost every where abound; but all cannot seize upon them alike, for the imagination must be left loose, to bound over the dim and doubtful passages which the historian scarcely dared to venture upon. True, these beautiful bits often lie too far and wide apart to strike the general reader, or have too common a look to call forth the attention of all; but let the fancy once

have the rein, and a thousand rich colourings will instantly break upon that which before looked dead and dull, and unworthy of notice. Thus the mere plodding reader will wade heavily through the pages, and make himself acquainted with certain events. Not so with the poetical reader; he will pause, and wonder what effect such an incident had on the beholders of it at that period; think how the actor felt while undergoing what he did; guess at his looks,—how he stood, in what voice he spoke, what changes his features underwent, what costume he wore, where the scene took place, recal the high vaulted and gothic hall, the open plain or the dark forest,—in a word, make a picture from that which to others would scarcely seem worthy of notice, and set it in a quaint, old oaken frame, where it will carry the look of antiquity about it, yet have mingled withal a life and a freshness. Many say, How dull

are the pages of the old chroniclers!—what dry stuff is Dooms-day book, the writings of Matthew Paris, Froissart, Holingshed, Stow, Rapin, &c.—how tedious are the works of Wace, Gower, and Chaucer,—the writings of Occlever, Lidgate and Skelton. So they must be to those who have no love for the past ages; but once have a passion for them, and where will you discover such rich and unworked mines? Sometimes one thought from these fine old fellows has given the author the key to whole chapters.

Take but one instance which the author has availed himself of in the present work. Thomas à Becket having defied King Henry and all his nobles, on the day of trial in the hall at Northampton, is compelled to make his escape in disguise. It is a cold night in autumn, the old chroniclers only just mention this simple incident, they scarcely name the privations he underwent. But let the reader of history con-

trast it with the splendour of the Primate but a few hours before, when, mounted on horseback, he rode forth amid the shouts of the assembled populace in all his archiepiscopal splendour,—then it is that this simple and natural incident, stands out in all its picturesque bearings. Let him also throw into the scene the supposed feelings of the high-souled churchman, and then he comes at once to the poetry and painting of history. The author is conscious that it required a more masterly hand than his own to grapple with such a mighty character as Becket; and all he can trust to, to making his sketch even readable, is the care which he has bestowed in analyzing the various histories which have treated on the character of this great man. Let it also be remembered that Becket matched himself against no less a person than King Henry the Second, as courageous and wise a monarch as any of the Norman



line of kings; and that they were like two Titans battling for the supremacy, both equally brave, and each alike ambitious.

There is no denying that the Author of *Waverley* is the great founder of this school of fiction, as Shakspeare is the great god who presides over the drama. But are none to tread in the mighty paths which they have discovered? Are they to have no humble disciples? Must none attempt to light their torches at the everlasting lamps they hold aloof? If so, there must be no more historical plays or romances, for such beings never visit the earth but once: when they are gone, mortal eye never looks upon their like again. In painting it is held an honour for a man to colour like Titian, to throw in the savage grandeur of Salvator Rosa, the ethereal hues of Claude, the bold beauty of Rubens, the soft breathing of Raphael; but in literature the same



praise is not always bestowed upon those who tread humbly in the footsteps of a great master, because the lowly aspirant is not equally great. That man would indeed be a servile copyist, who undertook to imitate every stroke; but he who produces a picture that bursts upon the beholder and awakens a sensation akin to that of the works of the great master, would be held as no mean workman. It is the spirit and not the letter, which should be aimed at, and if the work arouses the true feeling, it cannot be altogether despicable. The Author is not so vain, as to suppose that he can for a moment stand a comparison beside the great and popular writers: if in the same walk he has succeeded in making his works interesting and readable it is all he aimed at.

Let any man sit down to write a work wholly original,—to do what has never before been done,—to record such thoughts as we have never

before met with, and how many readers would he find? Let another, on the other hand, guide such thoughts and feelings as spring up of their own accord, through new channels, giving them objects to interest and excite, making their situations and changes fresh and natural; and few will pause to consider whether or not the thoughts they give utterance to have been recorded before. He who reads much, and ponders well over what he peruses, must unconsciously treasure up many thoughts which are not his own; we all draw more or less from each other. But it is the adaptation of these thoughts that gives the charm, and they seldom bear even a resemblance to the expressions of the Author who first struck them out.

Sir Walter Scott himself says in the general preface to his novels—"The volumes, therefore, to which the present pages form a Preface, are entirely the composition of the Author \* \* \* \*

with the exception of avowed quotations, and such unpremeditated and involuntary plagiarisms as can scarce be guarded against by one who has read and written a great deal.”

But to come to the present work, many no doubt will be disappointed to find that the author has married Fair Rosamond to King Henry. It is no secret connected with the chain of the story, for upon it the whole plot of the tale is chiefly founded, and the reader is made acquainted with it, at almost the opening of the first volume. The Author will not pause to offer any reasons for so doing, for so little is known of the real history of Rosamond Clifford, that it would be useless. It is, however, on record that Henry became acquainted with her while he was only Prince, and long before he married Eleanor, and it is not improbable that as Rosamond's father was a baron of great power, he married her privately, and kept her

secreted at Woodstock, to prevent his marriage from being known. An ingenious argument might be brought to bear upon the few facts which the Author has collected, but he has written a romance, and not a history, and if giving to Rosamond two husbands, as well as Henry the same number of wives, would have added an additional interest to the story, the Author would have done it. Beside, he has taken the sting out of his book; and in case the moral should never be discovered, he would here advise no young gentleman to marry two wives, nor any young lady to take a husband who has another wife living; for the old adage says, "Two are company, but three none."

Some may think that the author has been too severe upon the character of Queen Eleanor; but if we are to believe the old historians, she was, to use a homely phrase, "no better

than she should be." She was divorced by Louis of France for intriguing with a Saracen, and six weeks after her separation from that monarch, married to Henry. As she was about ten years older than the King, we must suppose that the realms of Poictou and Aquitaine, which belonged to her by descent, made more impression on Henry than her charms, although she was considered very beautiful.

The character of Gamas Gobbo was suggested through reading Gilbert White's "History of Selbourne;" all who are acquainted with that beautiful and interesting work, must be familiar with the character of the poor idiot, who spent all his days in summer in chasing bees, and feeding on their honey-bags. Nearly all the incidents connected with Thomas à Becket, are historically correct; and last spring the Author traversed almost every inch of the ground which the Primate is supposed to have

gone over in his flight from Northampton, that he might the better preserve the features of the scenery, which for many a weary mile is doubtless nearly the same as it was six hundred years ago.

The Author, in conclusion, might say that he has doubts about several things in the present work which he would have altered, if he could but have afforded the time, and in saying so, speak but the truth. But to say that he felt altogether incapable of his task, would only be abusing his readers, and setting light store by those opinions, which he has won from many eminent literary men and critics of high standing, whose notice in the outset of his career, he scarcely dared to hope to obtain. The few ill-natured rubs he has had, he regards not, for the man who sits down with the firm conviction that he has had more praise than he deserves, must expect to meet with a few draw-

backs. And although his works are open to criticism, yet there are points about them which ought not to call down the whole weight of the lash: to such belong his humble station in life, his short practice in the craft of authorship, and his lack of education; let these be dealt mercifully with, and he will be content to submit to all fair chastisement, for he has not forgotten the old couplet, that says—

“The man who printeth his poetic fits,  
Into the public’s mouth, his head commits.”

T. MILLER.

*Elliott’s Row, Southwark,  
April 28, 1839.*

# FAIR ROSAMOND.

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## CHAPTER I.

Another abbey is there by,  
Forsooth a great nunnery ;  
Up a river sweet as milk,  
Where is plenty great of silk ;  
When the summer-day is hot,  
The young nuns do take a boat.—  
When far from the grey abbey,  
They make them ready for to play.

*Ancient Saxon Poem.*

THE scene of our story opens amid the sylvan solitudes of Woodstock Park, which, in former days, nearly extended to the walls of Oxford, and was the most ancient of these princely enclosures in England, having been first secluded for regal pleasure by Henry Beauclerk. Here too, in a more remote period, the immortal Alfred retired to translate his beloved Boetius, and brood over those mighty plans which



he afterwards put in force to redeem his kingdom from the invaders ; and many a goodly oak was standing at the period of which we write, that had thrown its grey and weather-beaten branches over the head of the Saxon monarch. The venerable Chaucer also dwelt here in a later day, and many a beautiful description of the surrounding scenery may yet be traced in his pages, the general features of which, nature herself preserved, almost up to the present time.

It was on a sweet morning towards the latter end of May, and about the close of the reign of Stephen, that a troop of young nuns, and other damsels from the neighbouring nunnery of Godstow, were wandering among the green bowers of Woodstock, a privilege which had been granted to that convent from time immemorial. Merry were the hearts of those maidens as they rambled from glade to thicket, now running where the sunbeams beat on the delicate greensward, or lingering a moment in the faint shadows of the newly-robed trees ;

and well did their loud laughter mingle with the melodious song of the sky-lark, as it winged its way into the clear blue of heaven, and showered down a flood of music. The waters of the Glyme—then a deep but narrow river—also went plashing blythely between its flowery banks, now falling on the ear in pleasant murmurs, then gliding along scarcely audible, just as it was drowned by the boisterous voices of the light-hearted group, or caught up by the fitful sounding of the wind. Here and there a heavy bee went muttering to itself from daisy to king-cup, sometimes swinging on a drooping bell, then winging his way down the sun-lit coppice, until he was lost amid the clustering underwood. The scene was also enlivened by herds of deer of the choicest breeds, which were scattered up and down in a variety of picturesque positions, some basking in the open patches of sunlight, others half hidden in the green gloom, or scarcely to be distinguished, saving by the glancing of their antlers, from the brown boles and mossy stems by which they

stood. But beautiful as the whole landscape appeared, the presence of those lovely maidens seemed to give it an additional charm, and to throw a life into the scenery, which it could not otherwise have possessed. Here a little knot were busied in gathering the blossoming may, some standing a tip-toe, or jumping up to reach the pink-flushed branches, which filled the very air with fragrance. Further on by a broken and banky eminence, which was overgrown with primroses and violets, was another party dispersed in just such positions as a painter would love to see them placed, to break the foreground of a picture. The low and overhanging branches of a few dwarf-oaks, were also in quiet keeping with the scene, and harmonized well with the various figures, as they were stooping to gather flowers, or standing to arrange those they had collected. Two or three, who appeared to be the most youthful of the party, had retired to where a swing was suspended from the arms of two sturdy trees, and laughed aloud whenever they tossed their

companion high among the thick foliage. A few there were, and they the eldest of the party, who assumed a more staid deportment, and took no share in the merriment of their companions, but conversed together in low and serious tones: these grave-looking maidens also wore the sober habit of their order, and from time to time cast a sharp glance on the different groups around them.

No religious order in England possessed more privileges than the nuns of Godstow, for it was only in extreme cases that any of them took the veil and vow, after the rigid manner with which such things were enforced in other establishments. It is moreover on record, that they had the liberty of attending a fair in the neighbourhood once a year, and that Robert de Witham presented them with a pleasure-house at Medley, whither they used to betake themselves for days together, freed from all the trammels and ceremonies of the convent. Many of the Norman nobles who lived in the adjacent counties sent their daughters here to

be educated, without any idea of their ever taking the veil, but only expecting them to learn a little rude embroidery, with just skill enough to decypher a prayer or two from some richly illuminated missal, or with the greatest possible industry to be able to imitate the massy black letters, in which the manuscripts were written. Nor was there another nunnery in the whole shire of Oxford, that could boast of so much tapestry as that of Godstow: one old "St. Luke" was celebrated throughout all the neighbouring countries, copies of him having been made for a score or two of convents, much to the annoyance of the nuns, for he was the very horn-book of embroidery.

Nor were convents alone dedicated to religion and learning, for many a high-born maiden, during these turbulent times, sought shelter within their walls from the brutal barons, who regarding no law that interfered with their own passions, made light of bearing them away captives, unless they were under the protection of some religious order. A proof of this existed

in the case of Matilda, the consort of Henry the First, who, before she was united to that monarch, sought safety in the convent of Rumsey, in Hampshire, and often appeared veiled like a nun. And when the marriage was objected to, and witnesses summoned before a council of bishops, abbots, and monks, in the city of Rochester, it was proved that many females in that age retired into the nunneries, "and threw a piece of black stuff over their heads to save themselves from the lust of the Normans." Nor were these places of refuge always held sacred, at the period of which we write, for there are instances on record, when even the nuns themselves were carried away by these brave, but brutal barons.

But none of these matters engrossed the thoughts of the group now before us; nay, they had even forgotten the advice of the old Abbess Agatha, who, with her sharp vinegar aspect and cold grey eyes fixed upon them as they passed the postern, bid them patter a prayer or two to themselves during their walk,

and be sure to tell their beads whenever they felt a gaiety coming over their spirits. But once from her presence, they were like a troop of romps released from the thralldom of school, and almost ran riot with delight, regarding not the shrill voices of the graver sisters, who every now and then endeavoured to call them to order. Two of this untamed party had wandered together along the banks of the river, and one of them slipping off her pointed shoes, and crimson hose, threw them carelessly upon the grass, and extending her hand to her companion for safety, ventured to plant one of her white feet in the water. The stream was, however too cold, and she withdrew her foot, while a silvery shivering ran through her frame, and pervaded her delicate neck and shoulders, (which were somewhat freely exposed,) not unlike the sudden gust that for a moment stirs the white leaves of the willow, then all becomes again suddenly still. While she stood with her long tunic drawn aside, her white feet and ancles glancing through the green grass, and her beautiful head slightly



bent forward, as if listening to the rippling and plashing of the river, she bore no bad resemblance to Diana, where that goddess is represented as if hesitating whether or not to enter the bath. She was, however, suddenly started from her reverie by the loud bellowing of a stag, which springing angrily from an adjoining covert, came with bowed head, and flaming eyes, which denoted mischief, in a direct line to where she stood. The damsel who held her hand, on discovering the danger, uttered a loud scream, and loosing her hold, fled along the bank, without once deigning to look behind. Not so with the bare-footed beauty; for while she half-averted her lovely head, to discover the cause of so sudden an alarm, she beheld the infuriated animal in the act of rushing upon her, and unconscious for the moment of the danger that lay before her, she suddenly bounded forward with outstretched arms, and in another moment was struggling with the headlong torrent. The noble stag also shared the same fate, but before he had been borne far by the stream, he breasted



about and made for the shore. Fortunately at this moment a horseman chanced to issue from an opposite thicket, and throwing up the hawk which was perched upon his wrist, he instantly sprung from his saddle, and without hesitating a moment, at one bound threw himself from the bank into the river. Hitherto the maiden's flowing drapery had kept her afloat, and had just become sufficiently saturated to draw her whole figure under water, as she was caught by the sinewy grasp of the horseman. With one of his long masculine arms he bore the drooping and delicate damsel along, and with the other dashed aside the rapid current, and in less time than we have been occupied in the description, bore her safely ashore, and laid her down gently upon the sloping greensward. Meantime several horsemen, equipped for hawking, had reined in their steeds along the brow of the bank, and stood gazing in astonishment at the object before them.

The scene had now become animated and picturesque to the highest degree, for several of

the horsemen had dismounted, and stood in bent and musing attitudes, over the beautiful and senseless form, that lay outstretched on the sloping bank. The dogs, too, poked their sharp bright noses through wherever there was an opening, as if they also were interested in what was going forward ; and every now and then, some noble steed suddenly jerked up his graceful head, and scattered his white foam upon the greensward, while the bells that ornamented the bridle, which was thrown carelessly over the rider's arm, jingled again with the motion. On the opposite bank stood the nuns and their companions, all crowded together like a herd of deer suddenly alarmed : some of them were wringing their hands, and shrieking, while others shouted across the water, and put so many interrogations in a breath, that their mingled voices produced such a variety of confused sounds, as reminded the hearer of the babbling of Babel.

But all these sounds were lost to the ear of the noble stranger, who had so bravely

rescued the unfortunate damsel; and he knelt beside her, utterly unconscious of those around him; and never bestowing a thought on himself, although he was wet to the very skin. Sometimes he lifted up her head gently, and while a painful anxiety (mingled with such a look of tenderness as a mother casts upon her dying child) overspread his fine features, he earnestly watched for the first sign of returning animation. And when the first feeble breathing came, so faint as only just to move one of the silken tresses which had fallen over her lips, a sudden joy broke over his face, and lighted up his large blue eyes with a tenderness that looked not unlike the first kindling of love.

There she lay, unconscious of those charms which drew forth many a sigh from the breasts of the group which had gathered around her: even the waves, as they went plashing by, seemed as if they made a struggle to bathe her white and beautiful feet, or were envious at the earth bearing so lovely a burden. The sun also had burst forth, and shed a golden lustre through

the long green grass that fell around her head ; giving a brightness to the upper part of her face, not unlike the glory surrounding a saint. Her sweet lips were now slightly apart, and the returning breath came over her white and pearly teeth, like the gentle air stealing through a row of lilies. Here and there, too, the white foam bells of the river had broken over, and encrusted her silken tresses; as if even they could not forbear kissing such lovely locks. Her fine arms also fell carelessly by her side, and as they rested upon the folds of her unbound and upper tunic, it required but a slight effort of fancy to conjure them into the resemblance of wings, and the whole figure into that of an angel, sleeping. Her thin delicate eye-lids were closed over those bright orbs, and showed their purple and veiny lines, freaked and figured like the irregular tracery of flowers. Above them spanned her nobly arched and finely marked brows, just varying as much from the colour of her hair as a skilful painter would mark the faintest shadow, without perceptibly altering the tone.

The horseman, who still knelt beside her with clasped hands, and watched charm after charm return, seemed struck with astonishment when her blue eyes unsealed their lids, as if he doubted whether such a vision of beauty could be mortal.

Meantime, the assembled horsemen, perceiving that the danger was in some measure past, began to exchange looks and whispers with each other. "By the mass, our leader hath pounced upon a prime quarry this sweet spring morning," said one in an under-tone, touching the person addressed with his elbow as he spoke, "and if I err not, it will need some goodly hawk-craft to win him again to his lure." Then heaving a sigh, as he looked at the beautiful and recumbent figure before him, he added, "Marry, he is no gos-hawk to fly at any common game, but hath as dainty a choice as a Barbary falcon: 'twill be long before either you or I light upon so pretty a piece of prey."

"Thou sayest sooth," replied the other, with a smile, "but such mallards wet not their wings

every day, as are worth a few stoopings and a crossing or two. But I dare be sworn, that we may all put on our hoods, and return to the perch, unless," he added, glancing at the group of females on the opposite bank, "we have a cast at yonder covey, which, by the mass, I think were well worth springing."

"Such a quarry might have been safely struck, if stiff Stephen sat asleep with the sceptre in his hand," answered the first speaker; "but I trow it would be rather a dangerous flight to take now, there are so many around us. Seest thou not that there are a few mass-mumblers amongst the number, and that if we should chance to stumble upon any of these sedge-wearing sisters, we should raise as great a hubbub about our ears, as if we had captured a queen bee. Aye, and by the holy rood, we should have the whole hive about our ears,—from old Theobald of Canterbury,—to Agatha of Godstow, not a drowsy monk but would spring up and bay aloud against such an invasion of their sacred privileges."

"And yet thou seest," replied the other,

pointing to the beautiful object before them, "that one hath been selected from their number, and if I read aright, it will need a stronger power than ours to——. But see," continued he, "she revives, and——." Here the conversation was carried on in a whisper.

By this time, the maiden had so far recovered as to open her eyes, and from the slight shivering which was visible in her arms, she seemed suffering from the cold. No sooner did her preserver perceive this, than he sprung up, exclaiming, "Fool that I am, to think that so tender a frame as this can bear the brunt of wind and water like myself." Then springing into the saddle without the aid of the stirrup, he bade the nearest horseman to lift up the damsel and place her before him,—adding, in an authoritative tone, "Touch her as gently as you would a young hawk, that hath not been manned; for, by the blessed saints, I will break the bones of him who handleth her more roughly than he would a holy relic;"—and resting her head gently on his arm, while her long fair hair,



which was unbound, fell down in clusters, and mingled with the mane of the steed, he turned to an attendant, and said, "Hugh, do thou ride round by the bridge, and give our kind greetings to the Abbess of Godstow: tell her that her charge shall be placed in safety at the lodge of Vincent, the verdurer's, nor will we permit her to return to the nunnery, until she hath recovered." And leading the way at a gentle pace, he again struck into the thicket, and was followed by the horsemen.

The gallant rider, who had so generously rescued the lovely damsel, was a young man, over whose head not more than twenty summers had passed; his countenance was noble, and so ruddy with health, as almost to appear dark. His head was large and round, with a broad brow, denoting great intellectual powers, while his light round blue eyes, as they sometimes slumbered in apparent softness, or sparkled with a fierceness that was almost startling, showed at once that his passion could be as soon kindled, as his pity awakened. His



arms were long and powerful for so young a man, and his chest broad and square, giving undoubted signs of great strength, both to act and endure fatigue; his hair was of a reddish brown, and closely cut behind, while a long lock or two fell down in front from under his phrygian-shaped bonnet. While he took off his hawking gloves to wring the moisture from his light surcoat, his hands when exposed, appeared unusually large and coarse, as if they were accustomed to grasp weapons, and were oftener bared to the sun and air than covered. There was also something very peculiar in the form of his legs and feet, the latter appearing arched, and the limbs slightly deformed; the consequence of passing so many hours in the saddle. His was a figure, which once seen could never be forgotten; and there was something in his fine noble countenance, which resembled the majestic features of a lion at repose. Although not beyond the middle size, yet there was so much natural dignity and unrestrained freedom in his motion, that his figure seemed to

draw the eye from off those who surrounded him, and to command attention unawares, as if the spirit by which he was actuated had far out-grown his years.

Such was the appearance of the bold character, before whom the drawbridge of the palace of Woodstock fell, when he had resigned his lovely burden; for during the long wars which had been carried on through the reigns of Henry the First and Stephen, the latter of whom had but just arranged matters amicably among the partizans of Matilda, it became necessary to convert even the royal residences into fortresses. Battlement and barbican thus sprung up at Woodstock, and what had before been but the hunting lodge of the different kings, was at the period of which we write, a strong fortification, surrounded by a moat, which was watered by the river Glyme. Here Stephen had lodged the principal guests who came over with Henry of Anjou to settle his claims to the throne of England, for it required considerable political skill, and more than an ordinary degree of cau-

tion, to keep peace among so many turbulent spirits who had only met each other as enemies through a long series of years, and in many a well-fought field. But peace now reigned throughout the land; for when King Stephen lost his son Eustace, he seemed to have nothing left worth drawing his sword for. Prince William was docile and unambitious; and the king himself, worn down with disappointment and the fatigues of a fearful war, did not long survive after signing the treaty of Winchester. But with these matters our story hath little to do:— it is among the bustling incidents of a future day that we must now carry our reader.

## CHAPTER II.

O thou day o' the world,  
Chain my armed neck ; leap thou, attire and all,  
Through proof of armour to my heart, and there  
Ride on the pants triumphing.

*Antony and Cleopatra.*

A LONG time must be supposed to have elapsed since the incident in our first chapter took place; for the beautiful maiden who so narrowly escaped death, had become the bride of her gallant deliverer. Happy in the possession of his love, she murmured not at the intervals of long absence which he was compelled to steal from her, as they only served to sweeten their meetings; nor did she demur at the secluded manner in which her life was passed, well knowing that she possessed the heart of her young and affectionate husband, and that if there were secrets and periods of absence to which she

must submit, the knowledge of their cause would render her no happier.

Great changes had, however, taken place since their union; the stormy reign of Stephen was over, and the land seemed to sleep after his death, as if war itself was wearied, and had laid down to slumber when its great mover cast off his steel vestments for a shroud, and gave up the tumult of battle for the quiet of the tomb.

Henry the Second was expected daily in England, and so well had he arranged matters before Stephen's death, that no attempts were made to prevent his access to the throne. Rumour spoke loudly of his entry, for he had recently wedded Eleanor the divorced wife of Louis the Seventh of France, and daughter and heiress of William the Ninth, Earl of Poictou and Duke of Aquitaine, and through this marriage he had become the heir of her extensive possessions, which, united to his own, stretched far along the sea-coast from Picardy to the Pyrenees, and made him at once master of the greater part of France. Never had any English

king possessed so much continental territory; and well did the few know (who were in heart opposed to his accession to the throne of England,) that all their forces would be inadequate to oppose the power of such a monarch, who by his own right could command the whole forces of Normandy, the wide domains of Anjou and Maine, and place himself at the head of those vast provinces which extended from the Loire to the very feet of the mountainous barriers of France.

All England rung again with the rumour of his vast possessions. Even the disaffected and oppressed Saxons looked up to his coming with hope, for they believed that he would sway the sceptre with justice, and as he himself had descended on his mother's side from the Saxons, trusted that the animosities which had so long existed between the two races, would speedily terminate. The heart of the young bride also beat high with hope, for she had received tidings that her brave husband would come over in

Henry's train, nor had he ever before been so long absent. So stood matters at the time we may suppose our story commences, for the first chapter was but a necessary introduction.

It was on a gusty evening in December, when the snow lay deep on the ground, that the young bride sat by her bower window in the turret, awaiting the return of her husband, for on that day he had promised to be with her, should the winds prove favourable. She had set off her beautiful figure to the best advantage, which needed not the art of dress to enhance her loveliness. Sometimes the colour fled her cheeks as she listened to the loud roaring of the wind, or watched the huge gnarled and naked oaks, clash their iron arms together, or grate against the jagged angles of the old castle. Then she would uplift her blue and beautiful eyes to the heavens, and watch the pale round moon, struggling through the billowy clouds, like a solitary ship on a wide and tempestuous sea. Her ready fancy would also compare the orb of night and the stormy sky, to the ship in



which her lord rode, and the billows by which he was buffeted, and ever and anon as the moon was buried beneath some dark cloud, or shone a moment between the lines of light, that divided the black rays, her lips would move as if they breathed a prayer for his safety.

In the back-ground sat her attendant, a good looking merry-faced maiden, who had but just passed her twentieth year; but she also seemed to have caught a portion of that sadness which had settled upon the spirit of her beautiful mistress. Nor could she avoid turning her head occasionally in the direction where the lady sat, and giving a few ejaculations, or deep "hems" as if she had a mighty wish to say something, yet was at a loss how to begin.

At last she fairly gave up the embroidery with which she had so long busied herself, trimmed the little silver lamp which stood beside her, and which the wind seemed ready to extinguish at every gust, then rose and took her station behind the massy chair in which her mistress was seated.



“He cometh not yet,” she said in a low voice which half startled the hearer.

A deep sigh from the lady was her only answer; then there was a long pause, and neither spoke for some time, until the attendant again ventured to give utterance to her thoughts, and said,

“I scarce slept a wink last night until past the first cock-crow, for the wind so rattled about this old castle, and the trees made such a clattering, that I fancied I heard the tramp of horsemen, and twice rose to peep through the loop-holes on the turret stair.”

“I slept not at all,” replied the lady, heaving another deep sigh, “until the cold grey morning fell on the frostwork of my casement, and the robin had begun his twittering song, I could not sleep until the wind went down, when I thought of him, who all night was tossing on the stormy sea.”

“Marry, and they talk so much of the sea,” replied the maiden, glad that she had untied her lady’s tongue, “I have been on the Wye in

winter, when the winds have been blowing aloud, and crossed the wide Thames on a dark and stormy night; and if the sea is broader, assuredly the river stretches as far length-wise, and I never was afraid of the white waves that rose around us."

"Thou hast never been on the sea, my dear Maud," answered the lady, "and knowest nothing of that dread loneliness which settles upon the spirit, when the last headlands have disappeared, and one wide waste of tumultuous waters are heaving around, bounded only by the dull and lowering sky. Thou hast not felt that mighty dread, which overwhelms the timid wayfarer on the ocean, who watches the little ship stagger from wave to wave, or heard the shrill wind singing through her cordage, until the masts bend again like a reed in the storm. Thou hast not looked around upon the pathless waters, where nothing moved but the black hull on which we stood, and the rolling mountains of waves, the smallest of which might close over the barque for ever, and leave

not a vestige to tell that ought living ever glided above those depths. But more; thou never hadst one whom thou didst love dearer than thine own life, journeying over those perilous paths, and thou far away, dreaming of the death to which he is exposed, or pining to be a partaker of his dangers."

"Mayhap I have not," replied Maud somewhat tartly; "but when thou wentest to Normandy with thy father, I threw oil on the waters of the Wye when the waves were rough, and sent up feathers into the air on which I had signed the cross, that thy voyage might be smooth, and thy return quick; nor did I ever sleep without uttering three aves for thee."

"Thou art a kind-hearted maiden," answered her mistress with a faint smile, placing her hand familiarly on her attendant's arm, "and lovest me like thy very self. But hark!—assuredly I heard the tramp of a steed sounding as if its footsteps were muffled by the snow?"

The ears of love are light, and what to Maud seemed but as the sighing of the wind, or the

clashing of the branches, had to her mistress's ear different music, nor was it long before she heard the warder summoned to the barbican by the blast of a bugle—the chains of the draw-bridge rattle, and the heavy portcullis upheaved.

Like a young fawn springing forward to the hind, which it first perceives, after having searched through glade and thicket; so did that lovely lady bound down the turret stair—swing open the ponderous and iron-studded doors which, at any other time, she could scarcely have found strength to have opened,—and reach the vaulted and gloomy postern, just as the horseman, encumbered with heavy armour, alighted from his foam-flecked and panting steed. The fastenings of his helmet seemed to fly loose as if by magic, and in an instant her arms were around his mailed neck, and after a long and fervent embrace, the knight lifted up his eyes to heaven, and seemed breathing forth a silent prayer. He had not come alone, for two attendants, well mounted and armed, though

not so heavily as himself, stood without the barbican, not so far distant, however, but that they might behold the meeting between the knight and his lady.

The countenance of the noble warrior seemed to have undergone a great change, since the day that he rescued his lovely lady from death. It was not an alteration of features, but some indescribable dignity seemed to sit upon him. He looked as if the weight of a nation sat upon his brow, and seemed worthy to bear so overwhelming a load. But that look vanished when he entered the castle, and had long and fixedly scanned the angelic countenance of his bride, and there seemed to steal over him a kind of cloudiness, as if the moody spirit warred against it, and was still shining serenely on, unconscious that a cloud rested between itself and the beholder. Her presence seemed to fill him with pleasure, yet while he gazed upon her, it was too visible that there were other thoughts mingled with his happiness, and that these cast a shadow over his present joys. But this again by degrees vanished, and he gave way to the

full flow of his feelings in many a silent embrace, and in those deep brief ejaculations that spring only from the heart.

“Thou seemest wearied, my love,” said she, with a look that would have cheered up the worst of foot-beaten pilgrims that ever wearied himself in the fulfilment of a penance. He would have replied, but her own sweet lips checked his utterance; for she hung upon him like a bee, revelling in the bell of some favourite flower. “I knew thou wouldst come at last,” continued she; looking so lovingly at him, that his very heart shook with its own weight of love. “I shall hang around thy neck now instead of thy shield,” added she; leaning her whole weight upon him, which seemed no more than the blossom to the tree. “Thou wilt not go forth without me again, amid danger, and leave my poor heart forlorn and aching; and take away that which I ought to guard. Thou wilt not leave me again to grieve so long for thine absence: I know thou wilt not.” He only replied by pressing her closer to his mailed bosom; and she returned the caress with an earnestness that

echoed from heart to heart, as they vibrated in unison with each other. "Take off thine armour," said she; attempting with her long white fingers to remove the hauberk: "Why didst thou place this cold mail between thy heart and mine after such a long absence?"

The warrior replied not, for his heart seemed too full to speak; but linking his fingers together behind her waist, while she leant back, gazed upon her for a moment or two in silence: then again pressed her lips, and bowing his head upon her shoulder, hugged her closely to his bosom. He murmured a few low words upon her ear, but their purport was inaudible; neither could they express half so much as that long, silent, and fervent pressure,—the dumb but thrilling eloquence of Love. And while her long silken locks fell over the linked mail in which his arms were sheathed, and her own white naked arms were firmly locked around his gorget and habergeon, and her own beautiful face looking unutterable love into his manly and replying countenance, she seemed like the figure of Peace



newly alighted upon the earth, imploring the God of Battle to throw aside his armour, and fly with her to some tranquil solitude, where the voice of war never sounded.

“Take off thine armour, my love,” continued she, in a voice so low and sweet, that it thrilled like plaintive music through his heart, and he seemed spell-bound under its utterance. “Unloose these envious buckles, and rough rivets, and rest thine head upon me. Thou seemest weary; come and stretch thyself upon yonder couch, and I will gaze my fill at thee while thou sleepest.”

“Mine eyes would never close, my sweet one,” replied he, in a voice soft and tremulous with emotion, “while thine were bending over me; but keep up a jealous watch, lest thine should steal their light, for if they once closed upon thine image, they would never open again for fear it should escape them.”

“An’ thou wilt take my image to thy heart, as I have thine, ’twill never want to stray,” replied she, unbuckling his coat of mail.



“Thou seemest anxious to disburthen me of mine armour,” said he, assisting her to unloose the fastenings: “Thou little dreamest that this hauberk hath borne the brunt of many a blow; and repelled many a shaft, that might have found lodgment elsewhere.”

“Then will I have it hung up to look upon when thou art away,” said she, smiling, “and thy face will obey the summons of my fancy and readily fill the helmit, and I shall — But no,” — continued she, in an altered tone of voice, piling the armour on the floor, then chaining his neck with her arms, and hanging upon him, (a load with which a god would willingly have been encumbered) — “thou wilt not leave me again?”

“Never for so long a space,” answered he, “unless the call is most urgent.”

“But why wilt thou leave me at all?” said she, seating herself beside him on the large oaken settle, and leaning on him familiarly. “Oh! thou but little knowest, what I have fancied in thy absence; sometimes dreaming of thee all

night long;—seeing thee fall in the battle, or wrecked on the ocean;—watched beside thee wounded or dying;—now trembling with affright, then flying to save thee. Oh! say thou wilt not leave me again, to become subject to these fears. Assuredly King Henry hath knights enow among his followers to attend him, who have no aching heart to leave behind. But say, shall I not accompany thee when thou goest into Normandy again, for thou knowest that Queen Eleanor will need a few ladies for companions; and peradventure through the love thou sayest the King holds for thee, I may be enabled to accompany thee to Normandy.”

“We will speak of these matters anon, sweet lady,” said the knight, somewhat troubled; “but tell me now,” added he, running his fingers through her hair, “hast thou not a wish to see Henry’s court, the gold and glitter of his knights, and show thine own figure among the ladies of the land, as much as to be with me?”

“Nay, my valiant lord,” replied she, “I have no wish to see these things; for well do I wot

that Henry hath not a nobler knight in his train than thyself; and as for his court, I would keep far from it, if I may but have thine image before me."

"Nor hath Eleanor so lovely a lady in her train as thou art," muttered the knight half to himself. "But it pleaseth me to find that thy inclinations lead thee not to mingle with these empty pageants. What wouldst thou have me to do, could I follow thy wishes?"

"Nothing until thou hadst fulfilled thine own," replied she.

"But, what if I had none of my own," inquired he, "but gave myself up to thy guidance?"

"That would be too great a bliss," replied she. "Thou lovest hunting; sometimes I would ride by thy side, to witness thy manly feats in the field, or I would linger behind, to see that thy meals were in readiness when thou didst return. I would lean on thee, and lead thee forth into the pleasant meadows in the sweet summer time; or seated on some flowery bank, hear

thee tell of dangers thou hast undergone,—weep for pity at the perils thou hast encountered, and at night pray to the Virgin for having protected thee. I would sit and watch thy wishes, and only think how I could make thee happy. Thou shouldst be my king, and I would be thy only subject,—and all my servitude should be love.”

“And a happy monarch I should reign!” answered the knight, pressing his hand to his brow. “Alas,” continued he, in a deep mournful voice, “I am unworthy of a love like thine; ambition hath cast its bitter spell around me; I have bartered my peace at its shrine: I have lifted the intoxicating cup to my lips, and, though bitter the draught to the palate, it must be my constant potion through life. I know thou lovest me;—but oh! ill can I requite thy faithful love. Thou must be my land-mark, the anchor of all my hopes; the resting-place that I must fly to from all my care,—my only comfort. While to thee I am but a deep and—” He folded her again to his bosom, and heaving a deep sigh, remained silent.

“Oh! speak not thus sadly,” said she, returning the deep caress; “I will be all thou wishest me, and crave in return thy love, a costly equivalent for so poor a guerdon. I will lend thee for the service of the King; thou shalt move in thy high destination, and I will not murmur: but thou shalt pay homage for my love; own that thou holdest thyself from me, and lose no day on which thou canst escape to pay fealty. Holy Mary shield me!” exclaimed she, suddenly bursting into tears, and burying her face in his bosom, “why do I talk thus, when my heart is nearly broken through fear! Oh! tell me what thou meanest?”

“It is over now,” said he, arising and gently unloosing her arms. “I knew not what I said, so deep is my grief at the thought of parting with thee again, to-morrow.”

“To-morrow!” echoed she, springing up in alarm: “Oh! say thou didst but jest with me; to-morrow will still be to-morrow, and so on throughout all space. Thou wilt stay with me many to-morrows, wilt thou not?”

“ I would never leave thee, dearest,” answered he, “ did not my country demand my presence ; believe me I could live happy in the lowliest grange, if I had but thee to share it. But I must away on the morrow, it may be but for a brief space.”

“ There is some secret which thou fearest to tell me,” said she, looking fondly on his noble countenance. “ Oh ! that thou didst but know the strength of my love ; thou wouldst not linger long ere thou didst name it.”

“ I doubt thee not,” replied he in a mournful voice ; “ and I may put thy affections to the trial too soon.”

“ Mayest thou find some cause of import enough to put it to the very rack,” said she ; “ I would that were the worst that might befall thee. And yet I could not love thee enough.”

“ An I were to tell thee,” said he recovering his spirits, after having taken a hearty draught from the wine-cup ; “ That I must leave thee for two years, wouldst thou not forget me after

so long a period, and take to thyself a new lord."

"I should need a new heart first," replied she, leaning on his shoulder, "and a forgetfulness of all that hath been. No, this could never come to pass, were I to live to grow grey."

"What then if I were dead?" continued he, "thinkest thou that thou couldst stand a siege that would outdo that of the famous Penelope?"

"An thou wert to die," replied she, in a sweet mournful voice; "I should survive none of these trials: hope of thy return once fled, I should follow thee to the grave."

"Well, then, were my heart to become estranged from thee," continued he, with an affected lightness, in which nevertheless there was a deep emotion; "wouldst thou not then turn thy thoughts to some other object more worthy of thy love?"

"I have given thee my heart, all my affection," replied she, with a sigh. "It is no gift that I can ever recall. I might pine and droop in sorrow at thy neglect—but no," added she,



clinging yet closer to him, "thou wilt never forget me."

"But were I to take another in thy stead," argued he, proceeding like a man who ventures upon ice, expecting that the very next stride will immerse him in the water, "would not that cause thee to despise me for ever?"

"It would break my heart," answered she, "and I should die; but I should die as I have lived, loving thee alone;" and she burst into tears, and buried her beautiful face in his bosom.

"Nay! nay!" continued he, "ill betide my tongue, that could thus wantonly give thee a moment's pain. Trust me, I did but try thy sweet temper, to see how much it would brook. And now I would brave the anger of a whole world for thee, unworthy although I am of thy love."

"Nay, speak not thus," replied she, comforted by his words. "The life I possess was of thy giving, and it cannot be too much that I devote it to loving thee, when thou hast given



me thyself. But thou speakest of trials : ah ! thou knowest not how much a woman dare venture, when her love is the prize to be struggled for, and he on whom all her happiness hangs, is hard bestead, and needeth her aid."

"I will gage body and soul on thy love," said he, sinking down upon the couch, "and may the malison of Heaven alight upon me if all that I have drawn down upon my head, cause me to relinquish so costly a pearl."

Wearied with the long journey which he had that day undergone, he was soon asleep, while his fair wife bent over him like a guardian spirit, sent down to watch his slumbers. His was not, however, the unbroken repose of sleep, for his spirit seemed restless, and his thoughts ill at ease, while his lips breathed half-audible words : sometimes they uttered the war-cry of England, then issued brief and bold commands : then they spoke the soft expressions of love, and in sleep his fancy held converse with the beautiful watcher who bent over him. So he came and returned again, and weeks passed

away in which nothing occurred that comes within the compass of our story. But there were, at times, a cloud upon his brow, and a weight hanging around his heart, which came upon him unawares; and many a time that fair lady retired to weep apart, when her husband had gone.

## CHAPTER III.

Up goeth the herne into the sunnie skie,  
Up goes the hawke, and upward manie an eye ;  
To watche the stoop and mount, and see them flie.  
The quarry tries to soar above his peer,  
The falconer whoops, his speckled hawke to cheer,—  
No bush or brake above to shelter there.

*Jokling's Gay Ger-falcon.*

A SWEET spring morning with its primrose-coloured sky broke softly over the massy turrets of the old castle, and though its principal inmates still slept, the drowsy warders dragged their weary forms along the high-piled battlements, and by many a gape, and stretching of the arms, told how welcome would be a relieve-guard, sunrise, and sleep. A thousand birds in the adjacent coverts had burst forth into song at the first glimmering of day, and the dusky rooks went sailing and cawing over the half-lighted fields in quest of food, awaking by their

loud uproar, the recumbent sheep that dotted the various pastures. As the daylight spread, the figures of a serf or two might be distinguished issuing from the rude huts at the foot of the castle, and wending away to their various occupations over field and woodland. At length the sun arose and "firing the proud tops of the eastern pines," glanced "goldenly" upon the arms and armour of the soldiers as they moved wearily along battlement and turret: hill and tree and stream caught the bursting lustre of his beams, and stood out before his glory, as if they had become instinct with life, and were suddenly awakened by his presence.

Before the outer barrier of the castle, three men were already in waiting, and from the anxious glances which they cast from time to time on the opposite towers, it was evident that they waited the pleasure of some of the inmates, to join in the royal and gallant sport of hawking. A groom held two beautiful horses ready caparisoned for the noble sport; one, a light graceful jennet, was decorated with a splendid

foot-cloth, the usual appendage when a lady took the saddle. Two or three dogs, such as were trained to that particular sport, were chasing each other along the greensward, while the falconer stood with his hawks around him, all hooded and perched on a light frame, and ready to be unloosed at a moment's notice. Among them might be distinguished, the falcon-gentle, and the ger-falcon, at that time so celebrated for flying at the game by rivers; the saker, the lanner, the tercel and the musket, stood also each upon his separate perch, ready to fly at whatever quarry they might chance to start; for in those days they were not so particular as to striking only at such game as might be in season. It was curious to watch the actions of the various hawks, as they stood perched around the falconer: some preening themselves, or shaking open their beautiful brown wings, as they felt the warm sunshine, while one or two of a nobler cast pricked up their hooded heads, or held them aside, as if listening to the barking of the dogs, or endeavouring to catch up any

other sound which gave hopes of the approaching sport.

“What springlad is this, worthy falconer,” said the groom, “that we are summoned hither to attend at this early hour! wottest thou anything of his quality?”

“Not a jot I,” replied the jolly falconer, a brave Saxon, whose face was ruddy with health, and the model of good humour: “nevertheless I hold him a hawk good at the mount, and no mean bird at the stoop, while we are to await him by the king’s orders, and for my part, whether he be falcon-gentle, merlin, hobby, or gos-hawk, I care not. I mean to man him gently, and keep him from dropping asleep this sweet spring morning, and make him acquainted with the gentle and loving countenance of Rufus Rantin, falconer to King Stephen, a king who loved fighting better than hawking, and whom it hath please death to call to the lure. Ha! ha! ha!”

“Why thou great gos-herd, what hast thou found to laugh at saving thine own folly?” said

the groom, screwing up his thin miserable features into such a sneer, that his high cheek-bones seemed to project forth as far as his sharp hooked nose,—“making a long homily about thy hawkship, thou poor paltry bird-feeder,—and dragging as many of thy outlandish falconry phrases into thy speech, as if thou thoughtest that all mankind were hawks, or understood all thy gibberish.”

“Peace, thou man of bots and spavins,” said the good-humoured falconer, laughing at his irritable companion; “thou dost not assuredly think of naming thy paltry profession beside mine, or mentioning thy mangy broken-kneed palfreys on the same day with my bonny brown hawks?”

“And why not, master Rantin Rufus?” said the groom, speaking as if ready to bite him.

“Why not?” echoed Rufus, with well affected astonishment. “Why not?—a murrain on thine ignorance, to put forth so foolish a question. Marry, and whenever didst thou see a sweet lady, take up one of thy botchy and

mangy four-legged monsters, and place it upon her own fair wrist, lure it with her sweet voice, look lovingly into its round dark eyes, and stroke and play with it, as if it was a very child."

"And did never fair lady love a good palfrey?" inquired the gruff groom, "nor speak loving to it? Who would run after thy lousy kites, without a good jennet, or hold them upon the wrist, if they had once seen them bad of the nares, megrims, or fillanders,—answer me Rantin Rufus? and cast thy gorge, like a foul kite as thou art."

"Ah! thou wouldst make but a sorry falconer, with that crusty humour of thine," continued Rufus, his good temper unruffled: "devil a bird wouldst thou ever get to come to either the lure or voice. As to making them bold and familiar with thy looks, marry, thou wouldst scare them as bad as a musket-hawk doth the bird in the bush over which it stoops."

"Thou hast never a hawk in thy mews," answered the groom, that will so readily answer



to either thy call or lure, as the meanest capul in my care. Look thee, bragging Rantin ;” so saying, he spoke to the beautiful jennet, which was already caparisoned for a lady, and the noble animal replied by a variety of actions, such as rubbing its graceful head against the groom’s breast, moving its tail, and many other similar signs, which these sagacious creatures adopt to show that kindness is not lost upon them. “There, thou seest that a good horse knoweth his friend as well as e’er an hawk on thy perch,” said the groom, with a grin which was his best apology for a smile.

“Turn him loose like this,” replied the falconer, throwing up a beautiful hawk, “and see if he will settle on thy wrist at a whistle, or obey thy call ;” saying which, he gave so shrill a whistle by the aid of his fingers, that the whole valley rang again with the sound. But the falcon paid no regard to his call ; for just then a window in the eastern turret was thrown open, and the hawk instantly made a stoop, and

alighted upon the wrist of the knight, who was already equipped for the saddle.

A grim smile passed over the features of the groom at this triumph,—and as Rufus put on a kind of puzzling look, which whether it was shame at being thus taken aback in his own boast, or seen in the act of throwing up a falcon before the knight had given the order, were difficult to tell. He, however, cast his eyes upon the ground, and began to whistle a low ancient air, at which the groom said, “Surely thou hast forgotten the true chaunt, Rufus, or dost whistle on the wrong side of the mouth; or mayhap she cannot hear thee; show her the lure.”

But Rufus was not one to be long daunted at an accident like this, and was about to reply, when the grating of the portcullis as it was uplifted, and the rattle of the chains of the draw-bridge as it fell, announced the forthcoming of the knight and lady; and in another minute they were both mounted on their palfreys, and the whole group were in motion.

It was a gallant sight to behold that little group wending merrily along in the pleasant sunshine, when they entered the Park of Woodstock; and to hear the tramping of the steeds, and the jingling of the bridles; and to see the jocund dogs bounding to and fro, as if the whole had been got up for their own pleasure. There was, however, a cloud upon the brow of the noble horseman, and once or twice he shot off at full speed from his fair companion, as if he was unconscious of her presence; then remembering himself, he was again as suddenly by her side. They rode with the hawks perched upon their wrists, and the hoods unloosed, ready to cast them forth whenever the game appeared.

They gained the very extremity of the Park without starting a feather; indeed it seemed as much the object of the horseman to enjoy the ride and the conversation of his fair companion, as to start the quarry. At length they traversed the banks of the Glyme, and the falconer made a signal, for he espied a heron, which had

taken its solitary station on the sedge, where it was on the look out for prey.

Up flew the heron, his long legs stretched out like rudders, to steer him through the wide space; after him shot the falcons, never once turning their heads, but making way against the wind, that they might be the better prepared for the stoop, and seeming to fly a contrary way to the quarry.

Each flew so high, that they appeared only mere specks in the distance; and although the gallant ger-falcons still gained upon their prey, yet the heron flapped his bulkier form to an amazing height, until at length they both dropped like stones, and the nearest falcon, in landing, missed the quarry. The flight was again speedily renewed, and with as much apparent vigour on each part; but the elevation they gained next time was considerably beneath their former ascent. The heron this time availed itself of the wind, and descended at a slower pace than before; while the falcon, hovering a moment in its flight, to make sure in the stoop-

ing, fell plump downward, as a ball of lead, and in so direct a line as to alight upon the heron, ere it had reached the earth. Uttering a shrill harsh cry as it saw the enemy descend, the heron, by a dexterous motion, threw itself on its back in the air; and the noble falcon alighted with all its force upon the beak of the bird, and was pierced through the body. A moment or two the flutter of their wings bore them along in the struggle, then they fell heavily together on the field.

But scarcely had our little party time to recal their hawks, before they were startled by as gay a cavalcade as ever rode forth with bell on bridle; who came up at full speed, and in dashing style, along the wooded avenue which led in the direction of Oxford, and from which place the party had that morning ridden. Conspicuous among this new group was a lady, who managed her steed (which was a high-spirited animal) with masterly skill, and sat as firm in her saddle as a knight who had rushed into a hundred encounters. Of her looks we shall

here say nothing, saving that they mingled with great beauty a spirit of daring and deep decision.

When the cavalcade first came in sight of our hawking party, it seemed a race between the lady and one of her attendants which should first reach them ; but a stern " Back sirrah !" from the lips of the haughty female caused the horseman to fall behind among the retinue, and the proud beauty rode up and reined in her steed full in the face of the knight, just as a favourite hawk was alighting upon his wrist.

" Your highness has delayed your sport beyond the usual hour," said the lady, addressing the knight, who was none other than King Henry the Second, and the speaker herself Queen Eleanor. We left the Council awaiting your presence in the palace of Oxford, and fearing that your Grace might injure yourself by pondering so much alone over your state affairs at Woodstock, rode down that we might share your company during your return. But you have, I perceive," added she, darting a fierce glance at the lady, who now, pale as death, drew

up her steed beside the monarch, "no need of our company."

Had the king suddenly awakened from slumber, and beheld an adder, with its jaws expanded ready to spring upon him, he could not have evinced more surprise and alarm than at the unexpected appearance of the Queen. It was, however, but for a moment; for, like a man situated as we have supposed, who sees in an instant that the only chance of safety depends either upon immediate flight or at once grappling with the enemy; so did he turn with an angry brow upon the Queen, and demanded to know "whether it behoved the king of England to consult his nobles at their pleasure, or was the more fitting to wait his own?"

"Methinks our presence hath brought the plague with it this morning," continued the undaunted Eleanor, casting her eyes upon the lady, who had by this time relinquished the reins of her palfrey, and would have fallen from her saddle, had she not been caught by Rufus Rantin;—"for that fair companion which



your highness hath chosen, and which, whether to call maid or mistress, we have not yet heard your royal pleasure; seems ill to brook our countenance; although I dare be sworn that there are times when she hath not such great objections to royalty."

Without hearing the half of Eleanor's sarcastic remarks, and as if entirely unconscious of her presence, Henry threw his arm around the fair and fainting form of his companion, and exclaimed, "Rosamond! dearest Rosamond! what aileth thee?" and with that characteristic energy which marked all his actions, he instantly sprung from the saddle, and taking the senseless beauty in his arms, stood with his eyes rivetted upon her pale countenance, while her head rested on his bosom.

"A marvellous pretty name!" said the Queen apart to one of her attendants, "and a face that looks as if all her life she had fed upon milk:" then added in a louder tone, "We ride to Oxford, for our presence seems not over-welcome here;—hath your Grace any commands?"



“ Ride to Sathanus an’ ye will ! ” thundered out the fiery monarch, his blood now boiling with anger, for he could no longer endure her taunts. So stood the King of England, pressing one of Eve’s frail daughters to his bosom, and wishing the other at the devil, as many a man has since that day done, who has been over-blessed with women.

Meantime Eleanor galloped back through the green and forest-like paths of the chase of Woodstock ; her countenance calm, but her bosom working like a fiery volcano which is on the eve of an eruption.

## CHAPTER IV.

Mount, mount my thoughts above the earthly pitch  
Of vassal minds, whilst strength of woman's wit  
Props my ambition up, and lifts my hope  
Above the flight of envy. Let the base  
And abject minds be pleased with servile bondage ;  
My breast breeds not a thought that shall not fly  
The lofty heights of towering majesty.

*The Queen and Concubine.*

QUEEN Eleanor turned her palfrey through the postern which led to Oxford, without once deigning to approach the palace of Woodstock; nor could there be any doubt of the mood in which she had left Henry, as she never once slackened rein, until she had gained the royal residence; for in spite of her calm brow, her unusual silence told too well the state of her feelings. Her attendants also assumed the same taciturn mood, for they well knew that a storm was gathering, and on whom it first might alight was almost a matter of chance. The

Queen, however, reserved her rage, and entered the hall of the palace in silence, not even deigning to exchange a nod of recognition with any of the numerous domestics who were drawn up to honour her entrance.

When she had gained the inner hall, she threw herself for a few moments into a massy oaken seat, and parting her hair in front, for it had slipped from the braid by the motion of riding, she placed her elbow upon the arm of the seat, and heaved a deep sigh. She then arose and paced the apartment slowly and thoughtfully, until at length she halted by a pedestal, on which stood the figures of the Virgin and Child, carved in solid oak, and executed in a far superior manner to the general productions of the age. She regarded not, however, the holy emblems by which she stood, her thoughts having wandered to King Henry and Fair Rosamond, and only bent upon accomplishing some scheme which might lead to a full development of the position in which they stood with each other. While she thus

paused motionless by the holy images, she bore no bad resemblance to a priestess waiting beside the shrine of her deity, in expectation of its uttering some sacred mandate, which she only waited to obey. The sunbeams also shed a holy splendour through the painted windows, and gave a kind of religious light to the vaulted and gloomy apartment, which corresponded well with the solemn cast of her countenance. Her lips were also in constant motion; but the words she uttered were inaudible, as if they stole from her unawares, or the anger which she had so long treasured to herself came too confused for utterance,—a rolling together of thoughts without order, sounding like the far-off murmuring of a storm.

Her figure also, accorded well with the scene, for she was tall and commanding, with a countenance which, although handsome in its repose, wore a somewhat stern expression, that seemed partly aided by her almost olive complexion, which had no doubt been deepened by the scorching suns of Palestine. Her hair was black

as the darkest thunder-cloud and had been plaited in front, much after the present fashion; the braids were brought low down her lofty brow, thereby aiding the heavy and thoughtful appearance of the forehead. Her eyes were also large and dark, and whenever she was excited, flashed with a fierce and wild brightness, that almost appalled the beholder; and as she had mingled in the camp of the crusaders, she had caught a portion of the spirit of those brave warriors, and moved with almost a masculine dignity. Nor was there in the tones of her voice anything that approached the feminine; but on the contrary a deep mellowness, which, although not disagreeable, seemed better adapted to call a war-cry than chaunt a bower-lay. She seemed a meet mother for a race of warriors, one who could only give suck to the brave, as if her breasts were the very fountains of courage, and she herself the great nurse of battle. And so much did she carry out this feeling in all her actions, that tradition records her quelling the cries of her son Richard, (afterwards Cœur de Lion,) by

clanging a battle-axe on an helmet, and giving him for toys, shields and swords, on which he all day long kept up a constant clattering, and was soon able to tilt at his nurse, and put to flight any of the menials. She also carried a richly cased dagger in her belt, and if rumour spoke truth, it had more than once tasted blood; nor could any one look at her for a moment and feel a doubt that she would hesitate to wield such a weapon if occasion required.

Queen Eleanor, however, had undergone a few trials, which naturally soured a disposition originally proud and unyielding like hers. Brought up with the full conviction that she was the heiress of William the Ninth, Earl of Poictou, and Duke of Aquitaine, and that she would one day be in possession of the whole western coast of France, from where the Loire first poured its waters, to where the Pyrenees upheaved their hilly barriers—she had claimed and received homage from all who surrounded her. But when she became the wife

of Louis the Seventh of France, and after her return from the Holy Land was divorced by that monarch, and accused of intriguing with a young Saracen ; then did those strong passions which she had so long subdued, blaze forth, and she began to make those around feel her power. Nor was her marriage with Henry, which transpired within six weeks of her divorce, an union in which the affections were consulted ; for he had long before been united to Rosamond Clifford, and even to the last for her kept up a constant affection. Henry married Eleanor for her possessions, without once regarding the stain which was attached to her character ; and she, on the other hand, although no doubt a little smitten by the handsome person and pleasing manners of the brave Henry, jumped at a chance which at once offered the means of annoying her former husband, and in every way gratifying her ambition. Louis, too, was jealous of the rising power of England, and even prohibited Henry from marrying his divorced Queen ; but that prince disregarded



his threats, well knowing that the union would make him master of one-fourth of the territories of France.

As it regarded his marriage with Rosamond, that had taken place privately, and during his minority ; so that, if even discovered, (which he dreaded more from shame, than any fear of its consequences,) it might be set aside with but little difficulty. But still the monarch was devoted to the bride of his early love, and as our story will show, bravely sheltered her from the attacks of her more powerful and ambitious rival. Conscience, however, that impartial accuser, caused him to feel many bitter pangs, and he would willingly have resigned Eleanor and her immense possessions, if he could have done so with safety. But he well knew that he had now gone too far to retract ; and had no alternative left but to arm himself against all consequences.

It will be readily conceived that a marriage under such motives as these was not calculated to bring much happiness. Nor did Henry then



dream of the misery it would in the end produce, when the spirit of Eleanor was aroused, and as some of the chroniclers suppose, to be revenged for the love of Rosamond, she stirred up her own sons to rebel against their sire, and was the means of promoting a war which embittered the close of Henry's days. Hers is a character which falls like a shadow on the pages of history. We feel that she was a chief mover in many of the events, but the power by which she acted is nearly hidden : like the mole, her plans seemed to be carried on in darkness, and no one was conscious of what she had done, until they stumbled upon the very hillock which had been upheaved. Such a character, it may be presumed, was but little likely to keep the heart of Henry in thrall ; and as she never attempted to win him over by subjecting herself to his wishes, but on the contrary aspired at command, and as the monarch was himself too much addicted to rule, and too proud to acknowledge or even permit the sway of another, no marvel that there was a constant bickering between them.

Eleanor's jealousy at first found vent in anger ; then an apparent coldness seemed to have settled between them, an hollow armistice, which at length gave way, and left in her bosom no feelings but jealousy and revenge.

Eleanor's ancestors were a wayward race, and seemed to struggle which should be the greatest saint or sinner. Her grandfather was a celebrated troubadour, one of the most licentious, and his are considered the oldest lays which are extant. He offered to pledge the duchy of Aquitaine to William Rufus ; he built an abbey for strumpets and profligates, appointed over them a suitable prioress, and mingling amongst them, ate, drank, and sang his own obscene lays, and had even the portrait of one of his profligate women painted upon his shield, trusting to the devil and his own evil deeds in the field of battle. He seems to have had no limits to his licentiousness ; for, after having yielded to the exhortations of St. Bernard, to undertake an expiatory crusade, (which was unsuccessful,) he again took to his depraved course of life,

and even turned the miseries of his calamitous journey into merry metre, sung, and made himself jovial over his sorrows. Eleanor's father seemed also to have caught the romantic spirit of the profligate troubadour, which he carried to the reverse purpose. Seized with a sudden fit of penitence, he made the domains of Poictou and Aquitaine, together with his daughter Eleanor, over to the king of France, relinquished all his splendour and greatness, and went on pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James of Compostella. During his journey he pretended to have died, and was actually buried, and the fact of his death was believed and acted upon, and Eleanor established her claim to his possessions. And while it was believed that he was dead, he went secretly to Rome, where he confided his projected penance to the Pope, travelled in disguise to Jerusalem, returned and died in a retired hermitage on a desert mountain, in Tuscany, none but his religious friends knowing for a long time his secret. Such was the stock from which Queen Eleanor sprung, to

whom we will now return after this out-of-place digression.

Eleanor summoned an attendant, and bade him instantly send into the room Oliphant of Uggleshred. "I will fathom this mystery," muttered the angry queen to herself, when she was again alone in the apartment: "I, who was besieged by the Earl of Blois, and Geoffrey of Anjou, for my hand, — men who cared more for my person than my possessions, to be thus slighted, after having brought a dower that rivals the proudest in Europe, and that too by the king of a petty island like England! He loves me not," continued she, after a painful pause; "fool that I was to wed with one so many years younger than myself, — one who would have joined his fate with the sister of Satan, if she had but brought him such fair provinces as Poictou and Aquitaine! And this is the price at which I have purchased my revenge on the old dotard of France," added she with a sigh. "But ere I lose my power over these goodly realms, because another carrieth a fairer cheek

than mine own, I will—but this may but be fancied jealousy. Fool that I am to care more for Henry of England, than Louis of France!” and just as she was about to uplift her hand to her brow, her eye fell on Oliphant of Uggleshred, and a change passed instantly over her fine features.

With the stealthy pace of a cat did Uggleshred enter the apartment; and when he saw the confusion which his sudden presence had caused to Eleanor, a smile of grim delight passed over his countenance.

“Methinks thou mightest give us a slight notice before entering our presence,” said the Queen, glancing angrily at the attendant; “I marvel where thou didst pick up that stealthy step of thine?”

“And I marvel also at your highness’s memory,” said the ruffian, with matchless effrontery, “that could thus soon forget my learning it in your own service, when I kept watch in the camp of the Crusaders, while your——”

"Peace, villain!" exclaimed the angry Queen, "or, by the soul of my father, I will plunge my dagger into thine heart's blood."

"An' that be all the reward I am worthy of for past services," replied Uggleshred retiring, "I will e'en look out for new employment."

"Remember, knave, that thou canst not retire beyond the reach of my vengeance," said Eleanor, subduing her passion with difficulty as she spoke.

"It will but be making a confessor of the assassin," replied Uggleshred, "and thy vengeance will soon find enough to do."

"Thou art a villain," muttered the Queen in a low voice, yet so high that it reached the ear of Oliphant, as the savage glance which shot from under his shaggy brows fully testified. "Oliphant," said Eleanor in an altered tone of voice which called forth all her powers of dissimulation to give a softness to the sound, "thou hast not, I trust, come to quarrel with me at a time like this, when I have so much need of thy kind service."

Had Eleanor but seen the expression of Uggleshred's countenance while she spoke thus, she could scarcely have resisted striking him to the earth, for never did a more demoniacal spirit lurk in the human features. But he bent his glance on the floor, while he said, "Small temptation have I to quarrel with your grace, for methinks neither of us would be great gainers by that matter. What deed doth your highness require me to execute?"

"No deed of peril, my trusty Oliphant," replied Queen Eleanor; "remember that we are not now in Palestine, where we could find death in the probe of a lancet, and gratify our revenge by the cup in which we pledged our foe, and lay all these deeds at the door of the Infidel. But we can accomplish as much by watching and playing the eaves-dropper, and leave the accomplishment of our vengeance to others."

"A matter of no small convenience," said Uggleshred with a sneer. "But may I crave to know what this business is, so free of peril, that your grace wishes me to accomplish?"



“To keep a sharp eye on the king’s actions,” said Eleanor, “to watch him unobserved, and whenever he makes a visit of more than ordinary length—and to discover who dwells at the palace. Also to seek the favour of the Chancellor Becket’s domestics, and without seeming to enquire, gather all that can be known of his actions, designs, and secrets.”

“That is not all,” said Uggleshred after a deep pause, and fixing his deep-sunk eyes on the Queen as he spoke,—“I must know why you wish me to do this—become acquainted with the secret you seem so anxious to obtain, and even the very suspicions you harbour against the King: without this knowledge, I may hunt in a wrong slot.”

The Queen glanced darkly upon him, and was about to burst into one of those fits of passion which she too frequently indulged in. But she well knew the character of the man before her, and had trusted him too deeply to break with him on trifles; and she thus proceeded: “If I err not, Henry hath found some



one among the pale-cheeked daughters of this cold island, in whose company he taketh more delight than becometh a wedded king."

"A fault common to both kings and queens," answered Uggleshred looking more than he seemed to express, and half speaking to himself.

"Speak no more on those matters," replied the angry Queen, her conscience taking fire at the slightest allusion to the subject of her divorce, and too often construing things in her own mind to that purpose, when the thoughts of the speaker were wandering on matters the most remote to what she imagined, — so constant an accuser is conscience. "Speak no more on that matter," continued she, raising her voice, "if thou lovest thyself. Thinkest thou that I should slumber the less easy if I even shared my couch with my rival? Marry, not a jot. But let him once become a slave to her beauty, and she will soon share his power; this alone is what I dread. I care not if a thousand share his love whilst I direct his thoughts. I will be king as well as queen, and to obtain

this power, I must become acquainted with all his secrets."

"Is your highness sure that a knowledge of these things will accomplish the objects at which you aim?" inquired Oliphant; "bethink you, he hath banished his high-minded and meddling mother Matilda to Normandy. He is no hawk to be blinded like Louis of France, and left to beat his wings on the empty air, and come at the first whistle that reclaims him. I did but steal unawares upon him and Becket a day or two ago, and, by the horned hoof of Beelzebub! he struck me such a blow with only his hawking glove, that if he had chanced to have worn his gauntlet, (and there is any truth in the doctrines which these lazy monks teach,) I should now have been reaping the rewards I have earned in your service in penal flames."

"And callest thou thyself a man," said Eleanor with unutterable scorn, "and fearest a blow?—By St. Paul and I were thou, I would hover over the quarry a whole moon, but I would find out my time to pounce upon it in safety,

were it but to cry quits for such an insult." So spoke this loving consort.

"My vengeance hath never long arisen before me as an accuser," replied Oliphant with a bitter frown, "and gone to slumber ungratified; but it behoveth even the serpent to keep aloof from the paw of the lion. But what wouldst thou that I should do?"

"Hie thee to Woodstock," said the jealous Queen, "and dog the steps of the king at a safe distance; here is gold," added she, presenting him with twenty marks: "spare it not; neither neglect the slightest chance that offers itself of working thyself into the confidence of Henry's followers. Begone, and when thou hast gathered aught that may be worth communicating, speed hither thyself, or send some trusty messenger. Be bold, yet cautious, and as thou conductest thyself, look to be rewarded."

Oliphant Uggleshred shrugged up his shoulders, deposited the gold in the slip of his gaberdine, promised to fulfil the Queen's wishes without daring to look in her face,

and with eyes fixed on the floor, left the apartment.

Eleanor watched his departure with such a glance as is attributed to the fabulous basilisk, and her dark eyes seemed rivetted upon the massy oaken doors through which he had passed, as if her fierce glance would pierce even the thick barrier to clear up her mistrust. "There goeth a wretch steeped up to the very brow in villany," muttered she to herself, still keeping her full black eyes rivetted on the door; "one too, who hath dived to the bottom of my heart, and fathomed its every secret; who knows that which might undo me for ever, and is conscious that I hate him with the very hatred of hell. Yet so schooled is he in deceit, that he can read men's thoughts at a glance, and drag off the vizard from the face of the deepest dissembler. Yet with such weapons only can the ambitious work; they are the scaffolds by which we are enabled to complete the high building; but if we threaten their removal when the work is done, have power to drag down the whole

fabric ; they stand until they become a piece of the work, and cling to it in spite of their unsightliness. And can I, who am thus plotting against my liege lord, love him after all ? Down, heart ! and debase not thyself. Would that he were any other than the young, the handsome, the valiant Henry of England ! But, alas ! he never loved me ; and to be thus excluded from his presence whenever it is his pleasure. Ah, there the armour bites ! But woe be unto the harlot that steppeth between me and his affection ; 'twere better that she had never been born ; and should it prove that yonder blue-eyed, sleek-cheeked damsel is the object, by the soul of my father ! I will tear open her cheeks with my nails, and mar her beauty like a target."

Such were the various and contending passions that had taken root in the heart of the beautiful and high-souled Eleanor ; and although the taint was at first small which had settled upon her, and might with but little perseverance have been speedily eradicated, yet

she believed that it was visible to all eyes, and in place of exterminating it, nourished the disease in private, until it spread through every artery and ramification and pervaded the whole system. Conscious that her own life had been far from blameless, she conjured up a thousand fancied neglects and empty suspicions, which, first seen through a diseased vision, appeared in whatever colours her own imagination clothed them, until to her they became realities. Her pride knew no boundaries—her ambition no limits; and the various tools which she snatched up so hastily and thoughtlessly to accomplish her work, through their increase, began at last to alarm. If she chanced to spy two of her trusted emissaries in conversation together, she instantly fancied that they were plotting against herself, and either endeavoured to sow dissension and mistrust between them, or place others as a guard upon their actions. She seemed like one who has long plotted and laid trains of powder to undermine some lofty fabric, and never discovers until the match is

lighted, that they must all be fired from the centre; and that in the haste for revenge, she had never once meditated her own escape. Such indeed might be the summary of all that she did; for when she had even raised up the sons to wage war against their father, she met with her own deserts in a prison.

## CHAPTER V.

Verily,  
I swear, 'tis better to be lowly born,  
And range with humble livers in content,  
Than to be perk'd up in a glittering grief,  
And wear a golden sorrow.

*King Henry VIII.*

OUR scene now changes to the ancient palace of Woodstock, the favourite retirement of so many of our English kings. Like all the buildings of any note at this period, it was surrounded with a moat, and only accessible by a draw-bridge, which was flanked by two strong towers, and further defended by both barbican and portcullis, the latter of which fell in the grim and gloomy archway. The architecture was a mixture of Saxon and Norman, branching and mingling together in all those fantastic forms, which have so long puzzled the antiquary to reduce to a regular order, and which are be-



yond the power of any but the most skilful author to unravel. Men in armour from head to heel, were pacing the battlements, while cross-bow-men were mounted on the turrets, and archers and bearers of partizans guarded every loop-hole and postern. Richly-clad menials were also seen passing to and fro, along the different courts and galleries, which communicated with the various apartments, all denoting that this was the abode of royalty; for Henry the Second had already chosen it as a retirement from the weighty matters which he was compelled to carry on at Oxford.

Within in a lower room, the windows of which opened on a small pleasance or garden, that sloped down to the very edge of the moat, stood a tall imposing figure, dressed in the very extreme of fashion of that period. He had thrown off the rich mantle, called the cloak of Anjou, which is said to have been first introduced by Henry the Second, and as it lay carelessly on a table and caught the full stream of sunshine, it made the eye ache while viewing

its splendour, for it was nearly covered with half-moons and stars of silver, while the edge was furred with the whitest and richest ermine. His chausses or drawers were of a rich purple cloth, scarcely distinguishable in colour from the sandals, or leg bandages, which from the foot were richly gilt. The tunic was rather short, but richly indented on the border, and slit up before and behind for the convenience of riding, and from the various splashes which disfigured his nether garments, it was evident that he had but just returned from a journey. He had doffed his Phrygian-shaped cap, and his fine intellectual brow was bared, and denoted at a glance that he was no common man. His countenance was calm, handsome, and commanding, with just as much pride imprinted on the open brow, and curved nostril, as became so manly a figure : there was also a compression about the lips, which bespoke great decision, and the whole face possessed a noble firmness. Something, however, there appeared in the clear deep eyes, rather at variance with the rest of

the features, not that they then displayed aught in opposition to the general appearance of the character, but there was such strength in the bold pupils, and such a sharpness in their glance, as would have left the beholder to conclude that he was a man of strong passions, had not that calm and dignified face seemed at variance with their expression.

From the liberties taken by two or three large stag-hounds, which reared up against him, and attempted to pass their long tongues over his face, it was evident that he was no stranger at the palace. While he was stooping down to pat one or other of his shaggy companions, king Henry entered the apartment, his countenance still wearing traces of anger, for he had but just returned from his unexpected interview with Eleanor.

“Welcome to Woodstock, my gay chancellor,” said King Henry, embracing his companion, who was none other than Thomas à Becket, “I had never more need of thy counsel, for the she-wolf hath already had her eye upon my sweet white-doe.”

“Then doth it behove your highness to look out a place of shelter for her,” said Becket; “for believe me, my liege, your consort is keen-eyed, and will but ill brook so fair a rival. Would it not be wisdom to bury her in one of your castles at Normandy, where she would be safe from all harm?”

“Had I been guided by thy wisdom,” said Henry in a mournful voice, “this had not been; but now I have gone too far to retreat.”

“Despair not, my liege,” said the chancellor, in a way which bespoke that he had really the interest of his sovereign at heart; “trust me, we will yet devise some means to ease your highness of this load; you can but put this lady aside at the worst.”

“Becket,” said Henry, planting his hand familiarly upon his favourite’s shoulder, “thou art my chancellor, and I know thou art my friend, and as such I have no fear of my secret being safe in thy keeping. Sooner than I would put aside Rosamond Clifford, I would, were it possible, sink the domains of Poictou

and Aquitaine to the bottom of the ocean, and return Eleanor to the old dotard of France, in whose hands I would to Heaven she had remained! Rosamond shall be mine if even I have to share my kingdom with her, and make her a partaker of my crown."

"And never could a crown be placed on a brow more becoming," said Becket; "but this must not be, my liege; some plan we will devise for her safe keeping. Meantime let her abide within the palace."

"I will leave all to thy management," replied Henry, "for never had king a more faithful servant. As for this our marriage with Eleanor, I fear me that it forebodeth nought but evil; even my own heart revolted at the deed; for her very name had become a by-word in the camp of the crusaders, through her intrigues with the dark-browed Saracen. And thou knowest well that love could but weigh lightly in the balance when counterpoised by her vast possessions. But even these were as a feather compared to the power

which I aimed at possessing over Louis of France.”

“It becometh a king to marry more for the glory of his nation than for his own happiness,” said the wily chancellor, “and assuredly, whilst he giveth up his own comfort for his country’s honour, it behoveth not his subjects to look too narrowly into his private matters, nor those measures by which he seeketh to counterbalance the sacrifices which he maketh for the weal of his kingdom.”

Leaving Henry and his chancellor to discuss the best means for keeping his marriage a secret, and for blinding the keen-eyed and jealous Queen, we will return to Rosamond, who had now become fully aware of her position. She loved Henry too fondly to take any advantage of the situation in which she found herself so unexpectedly placed, and was moreover of a disposition so much inclined to peace, that she never once thought of making use of the secret which she had so unexpectedly obtained. All tenderness and trust, she could

not for a moment think of accusing Henry of what he had done, and was at times scarcely conscious of the position in which she stood. Hers was a disposition the very reverse of Eleanor's ; she seemed like a lovely landscape, over which sunshine and cloud alike career without injuring its beauty. Eleanor, on the other hand, resembled a jagged and mountainous country, breaking the light of heaven in a thousand ways—whole masses sleeping in shadow, and possessing many an unsunned depth which the eye of man could with difficulty fathom.

Rosamond would have been content if her life had glided away like a gentle river, that rolls along through its own native banks, happy in the music which it throws out from its own bosom, and delighting in the few trees and flowers that are mirrored in its own calm surface. Eleanor was like the sounding sea, ever bearing a wild tumult upon its own bosom, never at rest within itself, and but rolling towards the shore in search of deeper caverns, or waging war with every jutting headland, and trying its strength against



every opposing rock. No wonder then, if Henry, after the toils of state, preferred the smooth champaign to the "hill of storms,"—that he chose rather to glide along the smooth river of peace, than subject himself to the constant buffetings of a rough sea, where every moment his attention was called to the breakers a-head, or the hidden quicksands which were so constantly shifting. He was one of those who mingled enough amongst daring and valorous spirits in the field, without needing their presence constantly around his pillow; who however much he loved to hear the war-banner rustle and shake its folds above the stormy camp, would choose the flag of peace to droop over his hearth; and who, although mated with the eagle, loved to rest an hour beside the timorous dove; to forget the thunder-cloud which he had pierced, and the giddy regions into which his ambition had prompted him to soar.

Rosamond returned to her chamber and wept bitterly when she reflected upon what had



passed ; she now saw why Henry so anxiously wished to keep her marriage a secret, and regretted that she had so long estranged herself from her father, who from grief at her absence, it was rumoured, had betaken himself to Palestine. "Henry knew my love," argued she, "and might assuredly have trusted me with his secret, well knowing that I would never weigh my own happiness beside the welfare of his kingdom." But amid all these reflections, one thought came to her relief, and that was, the firm conviction that she was still in possession of his love. Neither was she ignorant of the character which Eleanor bore, for her intrigues with the Saracen (by some strange anachronism considered to be the celebrated Saladin,) had already become known to the minstrels, and as it had been chaunted in many a castle hall, no marvel that it at length reached the ears of Rosamond, for her attendant Maud was ever ready to listen to the newest lays of the troubadours.

Now, however, Rosamond having wept her fill,

sat gazing over the lovely chase of Woodstock, watching the shade and sunshine alternately career over the green grass, and for the first time in her life, finding a resemblance therein to her own fate. Nor could she after having twisted every argument that she could bring to her aid, consider herself fully entitled to that high honour to which she was elevated. "What possession have I brought him? None," argued she to herself. "Yet I gave him all I had to give, — a faithful heart, and at his wish allowed my fate to be kept a secret from my father. Nor would I have yielded my hand, had I known that it was Henry, Prince of Anjou, who rescued me from a watery grave. He hath deceived me, not in his love, but by his greatness; would to God I had known this secret!"

"Thou art ill at ease, lady," said Maud, looking affectionately at her mistress, "what aileth thee? Heaven send that it be not too weighty a matter for thine handmaiden to hear; may I not know what grieveth thee?"

“Nothing Maud,” replied Rosamond with a deep sigh, pressing her white hand to her fair forehead; “nothing in which thy kindness would avail me.”

“You love me not as you were wont, dear lady,” said Maud with a sorrowful look, “or you would not thus keep your sorrow secret.”

“’Tis that I love thee well,” answered Rosamond, “which makes me keep this sorrow to myself; why should I share with thee a misery, the knowledge of which would only make thee sad?”

“I am unworthy of thy favour,” replied Maud with deep emotion; “if there is any sorrow gnawing at thy heart on which I may not pour a comfort, any secret in thy bosom which I may not partake, any danger hovering around thee, of which I am not apprised. I fled from thy father’s castle to share thy fate, braved his anger and bore his censures rather than reveal thy secret, although I was the child of his companion in arms, and loved him, next to thyself, beyond all whom I have ever

known. I have been thy companion from childhood, and loved thee like a very sister. Oh tell me then in what I have offended of late, that thou deemest me unworthy of sharing thy secrets?"

Although curiosity might have its share in Maud's eagerness to get at the bottom of Rosamond's sorrow, yet her solid attachment to her fair mistress, and an earnest wish to share her sufferings that she might sympathise with her and be prepared for any sudden change that might occur, were the chief reasons for pressing her enquiry. Brought up together from childhood, they had broken asunder all that diffidence which springs up between rank, nor was Maud's original position much inferior to Rosamond's; but her father had perished in the civil wars between Henry and Stephen, and all his possessions had fallen into other hands.

"Maud," said Rosamond, extending her hand to her fair attendant, "I have done unwisely in thinking to harbour my secret

from thee. My husband is no longer a knight, but the King of England ; and I, to you at least, must appear free from all dishonour ; to the world and to future ages I shall but be known as the concubine of King Henry of England ;” she paused a few moments and wept bitterly, then continued, “ I have seen Queen Eleanor,” and again pressed her hand to her brow as she spoke and sank into her seat, while the tears oozed out from between her long white fingers, and falling on her rich tunic, glittered like drops of pearl.

“This then clears up all the mystery,” said Maud with a firmness that seemed unusual to her character ; “this accounts for our residing at Woodstock ; the numerous messengers that pass to and fro, the secrecy with which we have been so long secluded. Rosamond, weep not, you are the bride of a king, what should you fear. Think you that the daughter of Walter de Clifford will be allowed to pass away her days in disgrace and seclusion, while her father can command every lance in the

shire of Hertford, so trust me he will not let thy claims slumber."

"Alas! he hath betaken himself, I wot not whither," said Rosamond: "I had hopes that the day would come when I should look upon his noble countenance without shame, and appear before him as the bride of a brave knight. But now, these hopes are consigned to the tomb; I must reign like a queen in a sepulchre, my greatness will be overshadowed by sorrow, my honour sealed up like a dreadful secret, and nought left to comfort me but Henry's love."

"This then is all thy reward," said Maud, with the true spirit of a Norman daughter: "Oh that my nails were long enough to reach his cheeks, I there would scratch thy wrongs. This is thy reward for the sleepless nights passed in his absence; for the prayers thou hast offered up for his safety; for all the tears thou hast shed for him in silence. While he was dallying with a cast-off infidel's mistress,—with a disgraced and divorced queen;—a morsel which the milk-livered mongrel of France

disgorged, did the Lion of England lick up; one who has been handed like a leathern flask from tent to tent among the Crusaders, and gone in turn to every lip. And thou didst give up home, and kindred, and peace of mind, even until thy very honour tottered between men's lips. Thou must make way for this lady of many lands, this harlot of Aquitaine, this Saracen's strumpet,—this French cast-away. Ah! I could spit upon her for thy sake, and trample upon this mean-spirited king, who hath been inveigled into a marriage with a doxy almost old enough to be his mother;—who hath sacrificed his own honour and thy peace of mind to his ambition, and broken down every tie that became a man, much less a king.”

“Peace, Maud,” said Rosamond, sobbing as if her very heart would break; “spare Henry for my sake, if thou lovest me. Doubtless he hath had evil counsellors to persuade him to this, or peradventure the safety of his kingdom needed it, for rest assured after all he loveth me;



and while I am innocent in the eyes of Heaven, I will learn to bear my burthen in patience."

"I cannot love thee and be silent, while I witness such wrongs," said the high-spirited Maud. "Thou who wouldst not harm a lamb, but with a soul all tenderness and love, wouldst readily lay down thy life for this hollow-hearted king. But I will stand up beside thee, and champion thy wrongs. I will proclaim King Henry's infamy throughout England, and so thunder it into men's ears, that he shall be glad to pack off this proud daughter of a sing-song duke, (who learnt to shape her virtues by the immoral lays of her father,) to her own country again; and to shake off her possessions as if they were vipers clinging to his wrist."

"Not a word of what I have uttered to thee must thou ever breathe again," said Rosamond; "the secret must find a grave in thy breast and mine. Nay, Maud, let his own conduct be what it may, I will fashion mine as becomes an honourable wife; but I wot well that he will lay no heavier burthen upon me than I can bear,



and which will weigh even heavier upon his own heart than it doth on mine. Remember that thou hast lost a father in the bloody wars which have of late deluged England, and that all we could do would but be to awaken anew the carnage that hath so long slept. And assuredly, if I bear this load in silence, thou mayest learn to look on, if it be but to take an example from me."

"But thou shalt not thus sit down tamely to suffer," said Maud with a spirit that might have become Eleanor herself.

"Speak not thus of my lord," said Rosamond; "an' thou lovest me. Remember what the seer foretold at my birth: thou hast often heard my father ponder over the rhyme: part of the prophecy is already fulfilled.

Once thou wilt be nearly drown'd.  
Almost queen—but never crown'd.  
Poison and death hangs in the air,—  
Of a rival queen beware!  
From thy love shall spring thy sorrow,  
Thy griefs shall grow with every morrow.

Thou seest, Maud, that it is useless waging war

with fate : we must undergo that which Heaven hath ordained.”

“ Alas ! thou speakest truly,” said Maud in a dejected tone ; “ we must submit in silence to the will of Heaven ; nevertheless I will watch the cloud that hangs over thee ; the dark sky is not always fraught with thunder.”

“ Nor misery prolonged beyond the grave,” said Rosamond with a deep sigh ; “ Maud, I would that we were what we have been ; but it boots not grieving for the past.”

Maud replied only by heaving as deep a sigh ; and burying her face in her hands, they sat apart in silence, each busied with her own thoughts, as if they had calmly bowed to that fate which neither could avert.

## CHAPTER VI.

Why I, in this weak piping time of peace,  
Have no delight to pass away the time ;  
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun,  
And descant on mine own deformity ;  
And therefore,—since I cannot prove a lover,  
To entertain these fair well spoken days,—  
I am determined to prove a villain,  
And hate the idle pleasures of these days ;  
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous.

*Richard the Third.*

OLIPHANT Ugglethreð reached the pleasant chase of Woodstock towards the close of the day, and about the same time that Rosamond usually walked in the pleasance, for such was the name given to the first rude approach to a garden. The primitive English pleasure ground, in which the lady and her attendant were enjoying the cool of the day, was the remains of an immense forest, and although many of the huge trees had been felled, the

dense underwood still remained, and through this was cut a variety of winding paths, which, by much labour, were prevented from being over-run by the shrubs and creepers. The blossoming may, sloes, crab-trees, hazels, and woodbine, grew in rank luxuriance in the midst of these circling ways ; and while man formed the footpaths, Nature was the only gardener. Maud accompanied her fair mistress through this wilderness, and they were also followed by a kind of half-page and half-minstrel, for such were the offices of Pierre de Vidal, (a native of Provence, and a troubadour of great genius,) whom Henry had sent to attend upon Rosamond ; for the king was well aware that after what had taken place, it would require considerable skill to bring back her feelings to their former calm. Pierre de Vidal had come over in the train of Henry, and attached himself to that monarch out of a feeling of respect, mingled with a little rivalry against Bernard de Vanteveur who was troubadour to Queen Eleanor ; for both Henry and his consort were

great patrons of the minstrels, and their names and praises are still to be found in many an ancient lay. The countenance of Vidal was uncommonly intellectual : there was a deep fire in his dark eyes, which gave a kind of wildness to his almost olive features; and, together with his long ringlets of a raven blackness, gave him what is termed a "foreign" look. His lips also were remarkably fine, and somehow kept naturally apart, even when he was silent, and revealed teeth of the most pearly whiteness. His forehead was high and ample, and so smooth, that where one or two of his dark ringlets fell upon it, they seemed as if resting upon a brow of polished marble. His dress was also of the most costly description; his short cloak of Anjou, which was of the delicate azure of the heaven, and of costly velvet, was embroidered with silver, looking like a blue cloud interlaced with the most dazzling light; his chausses were of the finest cloth woven in the Flemish looms, and being purple, contrasted richly with the bandages of gold cord which

secured his sandals, and were crossed on the ankle so as to resemble net-work; his upper garments were almost entirely concealed by his short cloak, but from what was revealed, they appeared to be of the richest materials. He carried his cap, which was of that shape called mortar, in his hand, but whether out of courtesy to the ladies, or to show his beautiful head of hair, we will not venture to decide.

Pierre de Vidal walked in the rear of the ladies through this wild and natural shrubbery; and Maud, who was a-breast of her mistress, moved along with her head averted, as if she could not keep her eyes from the figure of the handsome troubadour. Rosamond only turned her head from time to time, as she occasionally held converse with him.

“And you would fain persuade us, sir minstrel,” said Maud with one of her sweetest smiles, “that there can be no love without your lays to create it; no sincerity but what shapes itself into song, and no region so

favourable for the growth of the muse as your own fair Provence, and the sunny South?"

"An' I would do this," replied the minstrel in a rich mellow voice, every sound of which sank into the heart of poor Maud: "I would after all, award victory to this fair island; and if I called the sweet South the seat of song, I would name England the bower of beauty; and were I a prophet, would venture to fortell that here will valour and poetry one day fly with lance and harp, and bask in the starlight eyes that bring down all the splendour of heaven upon earth, and people these flowery valleys and dove-haunted woods with forms more beautiful than the ancient goddesses."

"Ah! sir minstrel," continued Maud, "if hearts were won with words, what a victory would be yours; many a maiden in fair Provence, I dare be sworn, hath gone home with a heart-ache after listening to your lays; and many an eye which your poetry hath compared to diamonds has been dissolved in tears."

“Thou strikest too hard, Maud,” said Rosamond; “but I will wager the ruby rose in my hair, against the last rose thou didst embroider, that sir Pierre outruns that nimble tongue of thine.”

“Did the contest, fair lady, rest between the roses that adorn these wilds, and those which gather grace from cheeks worthy to give name to the choicest of all flowers,” said the minstrel; “they would sink ashamed, and bury themselves amid their own leaves, and resign the victory to cheeks which my unhallowed lips are unworthy to name.”

Rosamond blushed deeply as she found herself caught in the midst of a compliment which she had innocently given rise to, and if ever a rose could assume the human face, it would have looked just like hers. Oliphant Uggletred who had been attracted by the sound of their voices, and had overheard their conversation from the thicket in which he had concealed himself, chanced to obtain a view of Fair Rosamond at this moment, and his eyes



blazed amid the underwood like the glance of an amorous lion, when he first sees his shaggy bride in the forest glade.

“The diamonds, the diamonds, sir minstrel,” said Maud, a little chagrined to hear the compliment paid to the name of her mistress when she herself was attempting to win his praises: “trow you that I am to lose my gems for your roses, which the first blast will shed. What say you in answer to the eyes which your flattery hath so often compared to crystals, and which I maintain have been many a time dissolved in tears?”

“And so would the costliest that ever lighted the dark mines of the East,” replied Vidal, “dissolve with sheer envy that they could not attain the splendour of eyes that I have lately looked upon.”

The minstrel fixed his piercing glance upon Maud as he spoke, and while her heart beat with a new and strange sensation, she blushed, averted her head, looked on the ground, and

pulling to pieces a sprig of blossoming hawthorn, remained silent.

“Ah, sir minstrel,” said fair Rosamond, shaking her head, “if we women were but to persuade ourselves that we were such creatures as your lays would make us, earth would be beneath our treading, I trow, and we should aspire to walk above the stars.”

“And the stars,” answered the minstrel, “would no longer shine on the earth, but turn their blue eyes upward to gaze on the beauty above them, or peradventure their rays would be for ever eclipsed, and appear dim beside the brighter orbs which would then cast their dazzling light below. Nor should we need moonlight then, for there could be no darkness where such eyes beamed, nor would the sun be able to complete his course through the sky, but pause before so much beauty: no human eye would ever again look on the earth, while so sweet an attraction was above them.”

“We shall be all the merrier for thy company, sir minstrel,” said Rosamond; “and are

deeply bounden to his Highness, for this kindness. But we would not make thy attendance upon us a labour, although we will make free to command thy presence occasionally, that is, when his grace needeth not thy services."

Rosamond waved a graceful adieu, and retired, while Maud, plucking a wild rose, threw it at the minstrel, who was not long before he placed it in his vest, and would probably have gone half through a sirvente, had not Uggleshred crept from his hiding place, and making a circle, drew up in front of Pierre de Vidal, as if he had but just arrived from some considerable distance.

Uggleshred, in spite of his forbidding features, when he had any object to attain, could assume the most winning manners, and was one of those deep-sighted men, who catch the weak points of mankind at a glance, and by some kind of devilish superiority are soon able to lead their victim whithersoever they will. Already prepared for the character he was about to accost, through what he had gathered while

screened in the covert, he thus commenced the conversation.

“I crave pardon for thus unceremoniously approaching one whose fame hath already been wafted to every region, where genius is truly valued, and whose lays are chaunted by the sweetest lips that breathe over this island. Nor need I to add my own praises to swell the loud acclaim that already rings through hall and bower throughout every land which you have now deigned to honour. Praises that have been echoed by the lips of Queen Eleanor herself, and which although, through some request of her father's, she is bound to lend her countenance to Bertrand de Vanteveur, she hath through so humble a medium as myself, requested your acceptance of this slight guerdon as a token that she acknowledges Pierre de Vidal, the chief of all troubadours, and the true harp of Aquitaine.” Saying which, he bent one knee before the minstrel, and with a humble grace, which no one could better affect, presented him with ten golden pieces and a lock of his own hair, which

he had cut off while in the covert, intimating that it also came from Queen Eleanor. Uggletred had struck the true string, for Pierre de Vidal, with all his talent, possessed the most capacious stomach for flattery; and so nicely was the bait gilded with his rival's name, that he swallowed all praise, and pay, and even pressed the greasy lock of Oliphant Uggletred's hair to his lips, believing it to be Eleanor's.

“I will wear this ringlet next my heart,” said the minstrel; “for never did head bear a lock more beautiful; 'tis bright and glossy as the choicest jet, and every separate hair, distinct and beautiful as the dark lines we trace in the choicest flowers. It well became a queen; each hair is stronger too than those which grow on common heads,—but yet more beautiful with all their strength, than the most silky threads which maidens weave. So is the oak larger than common trees, yet hath a peculiar beauty of its own, that marks it as the monarch of the forest.”

Whilst Vidal was apostrophising the lock of hair, Oliphant Uggleshred was grinning like an arch-fiend, and would have laughed outright, had he not managed to stifle the rising chuckle by an affected cough, and when the minstrel looked upon his face again, it was calm and unmoved as at first, and seemed to rest upon his own with the most intense veneration.

“Sir squire,” continued Vidal, “I accept of the rich guerdon which your royal mistress hath been pleased to honour me with, unworthy though I am of such high favours; and also of her praise, she being sprung from a line of minstrels, and a legitimate string of the harp of Aquitaine. I will wear her token, and hold it as sacred as I would a plume from Apollo’s wing, albeit I am chosen to pour out my lays before King Henry, and have also to strike up my song before as sweet a bird as ever roosted in bower.”

“No one so meet to chaunt a bower-lay as yourself, Prince of Minstrels,” said Uggleshred, “and many a heart in this fair island sighs for

the instrument that sends forth such sweet sounds, and would not care a hawk's feather if their lords slept in the castle moat, so that they were but with the minstrel in the turret. Even Queen Eleanor, when she cut off that lovely lock with her silver shears, sighed, as if she regretted that she could not send herself in its place." Although this was spoken with an apparent seriousness, yet one who was not so blinded with flattery as Vidal, would have detected the look of sly mockery which sat in Uggleshred's eye, and that constant shifting of the pupils while he spoke, piercing as if into the very soul of the minstrel when not observed, yet resting upon the ground the instant his glance was detected.

"Thou art a keen observer of woman's heart, Sir Squire," said the unsuspecting and vain minstrel, "and ill betide me, if I deny that I have seen the glance of lady fair alight upon me in hall or bower, and with so serene a light that I half loved, half hoped, yet feared it might but be the power of song, and that their thoughts were far away from myself."



“Thou art too modest, far too modest, worthy minstrel,” replied Uggleshred, “and although thou mayest never have seen me before, yet have I listened to thy lays ere now; and they have so rung in mine ears, that I could think of nought beside for days together. And at such times I have seen, when thou couldst not, an hundred bright eyes wanton over thy face, until their deep-drawn sighs waved the long ringlets that fell athwart their lips. Ah! minstrel mine, thine is a happy life, beauty and gold showered upon thee like April rain; and then thou art set to watch the choicest fruit that the garden bears; and who dare blame thee if thou temptest these fair Eves with an apple. Ah! minstrel, mine,” added he with a sigh, “thine is a happy life, and kings may sigh in vain for thy power.”

“Pleasant at times, I grant thee,” answered Vidal, rubbing his hands with delight, so heartily had he fed on Uggleshred’s villanous flattery; “thou art a boon companion, and I care not if I crush a cup of real Gascon with thee,



such as might gladden the hearts of the gods, and such as no lip can touch without becoming inspired with song. Nay more, 'tis such as King Henry himself quaffs, and he would not that his minstrel drained a worse goblet than his royal self."

"Noble minstrel," said Oliphant, "you offer me an honour at which kings might feel proud, and princes would be glad to kneel for. But I would fain crave not to be permitted to encroach upon your privacy, if it would be breaking in upon moments which you would otherwise be dedicating to the muse,—lest I should deprive the world of your immortal lays."

"Not a jot wilt thou infringe upon my pastime," replied the flattery-fed minstrel; "what thou art pleased to call grave matters, are to me but toys thrown off, as a fair lady gives the cast to her hawk,—just a jerk of the mind, and away go the thoughts into their own sunshine. No, I have nought serious on hand, but just to keep a watch at the foot of the turret stair, and see that no foul kite pounces on the nest of the fairest of ring-doves."

“ Ah ! a fair lady then is no serious matter,” said Uggleshred, placing his hand as familiarly upon the minstrel’s shoulder as if they had been old acquaintance. “ Beauty, wine and song are the whole business of thy life, gay troubadour ; and I dare be sworn that amid thy watch thou findest time to visit the treasure thou art set to guard.”

The minstrel smiled, and showed the whole lines of his pearly teeth, willing to be thought a villain, rather than disavow himself a gallant ; a strange trait in human nature !—but one which is still kept alive in the present day ; for the coxcomb of fashion would be miserable if forbidden to boast of his conquests.

Vidal led the way, and they passed through the shrubbery into the park, crossing the moat by a single plank, which led through a small postern, and communicated with the palace, —a way which was only known to those who were familiar with the ins and outs of the building. They passed without interruption through the various courts and galleries, and at length entered a low room adjoining the turret stair,

the winding steps of which led to the apartments occupied by Rosamond and her attendants. The room into which the minstrel introduced his guest, was but indifferently furnished, it having been the residence of the chief soldier of the guard; and, saving a pallet of straw, an ancient oaken table, and two rude benches of the same material, contained nothing worthy of observation. From a small recess, the door of which was so contrived as to resemble one of the wainscot panels, Pierre de Vidal drew forth a large leathern bottle, and two drinking horns, saying, as he placed them on the table, "Here is a drop of the true Gascony; better was never rocked upon the bosom of the sea, or torn from a wreck by the deep-throated Tritons. I drink to thee:" so saying, he emptied the deep drinking horn at a draught, and having recovered his breath, smacked his lips together by way of approval. UGGLETHRED followed his example, taking, however, a much more moderate draught. The minstrel then trimmed his lamp, for the day was fast drawing to a close, and fixing it in

the drooping chains, they sat down on each side of the table, and prepared for a bout at drinking. After a few cups and much conversation, the minstrel, who was growing drunk apace, struck up a short stave in Norman French, having before given several brief samples of his talent.

“What thinkest thou to that lay, Sir Squire,” said he, his voice much altered through the large potions of wine he had swallowed, “never heardst its like from Bertrand Venteveur, I dare be sworn, didst thou? It will be a long day ere she will call him the harp of Aquitaine, and send him a lock of her own dark hair. Fill up! fill up! I will drink a bumper to Queen Eleanor, the dark-eyed daughter of Aquitaine; we will pledge her while there is a draught in the flagon.” And he again emptied the drinking-horn at a draught.

“I have drunk thy pledge, worthy minstrel,” said Oliphant, who had himself become somewhat flushed with wine, but only sufficiently so to make him ready for any daring deed, and

not to affect him in the way it did his companion. "And after so sweet a lay as you have sung, and so rare a beauty as we have toasted, I would fain propose this fair Rosamond, if I name aright the fairer perfection that you keep a guard upon."

"I will answer thy pledge, Sir Squire," said the minstrel, rocking too and fro in his seat as he spoke, for it was with difficulty he could now keep his sitting: "I will answer thy pledge, though it were five fathom deep, and will match her beauty against the wide world:—eyes like roses, you knave," continued he, spilling the wine, which he was unable to hold steady;—"cheeks like stars;—no, stop—cheeks like rubies; eye-brows brown,—yes brown, hanging down her neck in long ringlets—like—like,—and her neck white as—Vanteveur would say snow,—but I wont snow it, no, beshrew me if I would not say a cloud,—a blossom,—sunrise,—or daisy, snow, Vanteveur—harp of locks of Queens!"

And after uttering much more of such con-

fused nonsense, he fell down upon the floor, and was soon fast asleep.

The eyes of Oliphant Ugglethred (which now glared with a wilder brightness through drinking) had narrowly watched every motion of the minstrel; and no sooner did he see him fall from his seat, than a grim and savage smile passed over his hideous features, and when he arose and held the lamp over his fallen comrade, the red murky blaze, as it flashed upon his own features, gave him the look of a demon triumphing over his fallen victim.

The villain laughed outright as he bent over the minstrel; but it was such a laugh—a hollow mockery, as even startled himself—and he held up the lamp and narrowly surveyed every nook of the apartment, as if he expected to see the echoes personified which had mocked him.

“Ah! ah! ah!—a dose of praise, a lock of ragged hair, and a few cups of wine,” said he, placing the lamp upon the table, “and down topples my man of genius, and there he

lies like a very brute ; his throat as much at the mercy of my dagger, as the deer's which has been pulled down by the hounds. Marry ! a pretty sentinel to be placed over a fair lady,—a fellow who hath no more guard of his tongue, than a boy over his blackberries, who sets them down to run and play, and leaves them at the mercy of his companions. A pretty choice hath this English king though," added he musing, "and showeth some taste in leaving this hard-rinded Eleanor for such a piece of dainty fruit, which looks ready to melt in the mouth. And she, I doubt not, awaiteth his coming, unconscious that he is battering away at yonder castle, a league hence. By St. Dennis ! it would be a charity to steal upon her while this drunken minstrel lies here snoring like a swine ; for never have I seen a figure so well worth risking a few thrusts of the dagger for, as this Rosamond. Up heart ! and we will make the venture together ; she is a prize worth striking for, and come the worst that may, it will but be flying to Eleanor for protection ; and assuredly, two



women are more than enough even for a king. She shall be mine;" continued he, setting his teeth as he spoke, "what if she rings an alarum through the palace—why, I have quieted many a noise ere now with the point of my dagger." So saying, he took up the lamp and quitted the apartment, with a flaming eye, and an unsteady step.



## CHAPTER VII.

Our Tarquin thus  
Did softly press the rushes, ere he wakened  
The chastity he wounded. Cytherea,  
How bravely thou becomest thy bed ; fresh lily !  
And whiter than the sheets ! That I might touch !  
But kiss ;—one kiss !—Rubies unparagoned !  
How, dearly they do't !—'Tis her breathing that  
Perfumes the chamber thus.

*Cymbeline.*

As King Henry was in the habit of visiting his beautiful wife at all hours when he could either steal from his jealous queen or business, Rosamond paid but little regard to the security of her chamber, well believing she was safe amid those who guarded the palace. Nor was it an uncommon thing to leave out the plank all night which extended across the moat, and as we have before described, communicated with the wild shrubbery and the park ; thus pre-

venting the clattering of chains, and all the tumult consequent upon lowering the draw-bridge and raising the portcullis, whenever the sovereign approached. Such was the state of defence at Woodstock on the night that Uggleshred stole like a wolf into the fold, and was bent upon making the fairest lamb in the flock his prey. King Henry was also compelled to attend to matters which called him away rather suddenly, and with which the reader will in due time become acquainted. He had, however, a brief interview with Rosamond before his departure, and—but what boots it to dwell upon the scene ; the worst matters are speedily righted where true love steps in between as a conciliator.

Bold and daring to the highest degree as Uggleshred was, yet his heart misgave him for a moment ere he ventured to ascend the turret stair. Although he had been nursed amid dangers, and when he once made up his mind to accomplish a deed, was not to be driven back by any trifling obstacle ; yet, as he called to

mind the beautiful features of Rosamond, something from within seemed to tell him, that such loveliness was far too high for his ruffianly grasp. "And yet," argued he to himself, "what thief was ever yet daunted by the value of the treasure which he sought to filch; or what more risk do I run than if I only sought the chamber of her meanest serving-wench. Many a time have I wagered my life over-night for the few gold pieces, which before sunrise were wasted on some wanton revel; and shall I now shrink when the richest prize for which I ever ventured, may be won for a trial? No; ill betide me if I play the coward! And what if she surrenders as soon as I commence the siege; who can better protect her from the daggers of Queen Eleanor than myself,—and, by all the saints! she looks like a woman who cannot lack gratitude. May Beelzebub pound me beneath his horned hoof, if I do not venture for such a dainty morsel." He held up the lamp, and looked carefully around; but not a soul was astir, for the guards were stationed on the

turrets and at the different posterns, and nothing, save the lovely moonlight, slept upon the pavement of the court-yard on which he gazed.

Slowly and cautiously did he steal up the winding stairs, and when he had gained the first landing, he planted the light in an angle of the door-way, that its beams might not be seen through the cracks and crannies. Before, however, attempting the door, he paused, and rested by the topmost loop-hole, through which the night air blew with a cool and refreshing current, fanning for a moment the mad fervour of his cheek. His heart misgave him while he looked out on the tranquil night-scene below, and contemplated the purpose which had drawn him thither. He felt that the low murmuring of the trees,—the faint and far-off plashing of the waters of the Glyme,—and the deep serenity that reigned over the starry heaven, but ill accorded with the evil passions that seemed to wither his very frame; and for a few moments his resolution entirely forsook him. He rested his burning brow on the ledge of the narrow

shot-hole, and while the refreshing breeze blew briskly around the high turret, and uplifted his dark locks as it rushed through the outlet, and dried the moisture of his brow, he reflected again on the deed which he had meditated, and determined within himself to retire.

Just as he put out his arm to take up the light and depart, he heard the lovely inmate murmur in her sleep; the words she uttered were inaudible; and while he stood listening in silent suspense, he was assured by her gentle breathing, that she still slept soundly. Low and faint as were those sounds which had escaped the lips of fair Rosamond, they came fraught with all that sweetness which gave such music to her voice when awake, and he stood like one who had been charmed by the song of a syren, while his eyes, as they caught the uncertain and flickering light, seemed to blaze with almost an unnatural brightness. He drew in his breath deeply, and set his teeth together, as he applied his hand to the latch, and when he felt that he had uplifted it, and set the door

ajar, and saw the light gleam through the narrow opening on the opposite wall of the chamber, and not till then, did he again venture to breathe.

He snatched up the iron lamp, and opened the door inch by inch, until at length the light fell athwart the lower part of the couch on which Rosamond slumbered, and his lips involuntarily uttered a low "hush," as he planted his footstep in the chamber, the weight of which caused the oaken floor to creak. Another step and he was fairly in the room, and he closed the door gently with one hand, while with the other he shaded the light, ere he ventured to turn round and look at the sleeper. As he stood with one foot firmly planted on the floor, and the other resting a tip-toe, while his hand shaded off the glare of light,—the bed was thrown into a rich mellow shadow, and but just darkened behind where the folds of the drapery were drawn down, revealing the outline of the lovely sleeper. As he gradually withdrew his hand from the flame, it flashed fully upon the

bare face, neck, and bosom of fair Rosamond, and rested on their transcendent whiteness, which put to shame the light by which they were seen.

Her long hair was unbound, and fell over the spotless snow of her bosom in rich clusters, or now and then rose with the undulating motion, like flowers just stirred by the white foam-bells of the river. One of her bare arms was cradled on the deep purple coverlet, and showed amid the costly velvet like a galaxy, on the pall of midnight; the other fair hand partly imbedded her cheek, with the thumb resting under her bell like chin, as if she had fallen asleep while musing. A kind of clouded light seemed to play about the eye-lids as if they were too thin, or the lustres beneath were too strong to be concealed. Even

“The flame o’ the taper  
Bowed towards her, as’t would under-peep her lids,  
To see the enclosed lights, then canopied  
Under those windows.”

The gentle breath stole over her parted lips with a seeming reluctance, and appeared to



sigh at leaving so sweet a mouth. But a pearly tear lingered on her silken lashes, as if it had stolen forth while she was asleep, and was waiting there to be admitted to its former home. Sometimes a faint sigh escaped, as if it tried to awake her, or warn her that evil was at hand. Even Uggleshred stood over her wonder-struck, as if he had stolen into a treasure chamber, and amid so much unexpected wealth, despaired of carrying off a millionth part of what he coveted. She seemed like a goddess reclining in the midst of her own temple, almost too beautiful to look upon.

Her beauty was also the more striking by its strong contrast against the villanous features of the ruffian, whose face, flushed with wine, and heightened by passion, resembled one of those satyrs which the old masters so often place in their pictures, glutting his gaze on some sleeping nymph. He held the lamp aside with one hand, while the light flashed redly upon his flushed features, and his eyes glared again with fierce delight, and bending over the bed,



he pressed his burning lips on the cheek of fair Rosamond.

“Hast thou come, my lord?” muttered she, scarcely awake, and without unsealing her lovely eyes.

“I have, my sweet cup of muscadine,” replied the ruffian, placing the lamp upon a table.

“Villain!—help!—Maud!” exclaimed Rosamond, springing out on the opposite side of the bed, like a bird darting from its nest, and folding a loose mantle hastily over her night-dress, “Who art thou?—how camest thou hither?—help! help!”

“An’ thou callest out again,” said the villain, planting one hand upon the bed, as if about to spring across, while with the other he drew the dagger from his belt, and fixed his dark and deep-set eyes fiercely upon her,—“An’ thou callest out again, by the blazing home of Beelzebub, I will silence thy voice for ever! Speak lower, sweet,” added he in an altered tone, “and I will do you no scathe but what you shall thank me for. I have come to save you

from Queen Eleanor;—know you not a friend by his looks?”

“Your looks alarm me,” said Rosamond, trembling from head to foot, and not daring again to raise her voice: “Do but retire until I render myself becoming to receive your tidings, and call up my attendants, then will I listen to you.”

“Nay, marry, I may not follow thine advice,” answered the villain with a fiendish grin. “I am no such foolish huntsman as to give the doe distance, which I have once run down. Nor canst thou render thyself more becoming than thou art; that sweet confusion sits prettily upon thee. Come, lie thee down, and be not alarmed. Thou shalt find me true friend; hand and glove will I pledge myself to thee,—and trust me, thou wilt need one.”

“Holy Virgin!” exclaimed Rosamond, “look down upon me in my hour of need.” Then turning to the ruffian, she added, “Do thou but leave me for a little space, and if thy intentions are honest, I will reward thee; and even

shelter thee from this rash deed, which may cost thee thy life."

"My life, fair lady, I weigh but lightly against thy favour," answered the villain with matchless effrontery: "come, thou wilt but be granting me that which, in spite of all parley, it is now in my power to possess."

"I dare not understand thee," answered Rosamond, at a loss what to say; yet willing to gain time by any subterfuge, and arranging her confused robes; for she saw the ruffian's purpose written in his brow. "Thou sayest that thou hast come to me as a friend; shew thyself as such, and threaten not an unprotected lady in a lone apartment. Leave me, and I will forgive thee for this intrusion, and forget thy threats."

"I may leave thee to worse hands," answered Uggleshred. "I have told thee that it is in my power to shelter thee from a most deadly enemy, one who never hits upon the spot, without pursuing the victim to death. Be wise, then, and give me thy love, and thou shalt have my protection even to the death."

“Villain,” answered Rosamond, no longer able to conceal her anger, “thinkest thou that I would preserve my life at the price of my honour? Leave me this instant, or I will throw open the lattice, and call hither the guards that man the turrets.”

“And talkest thou so proudly of honour, my dainty doe?” answered the hardened ruffian; “when we know the hart that leads the herd, and have discovered where he harboureth in the thicket. Preach up thine honour before Queen Eleanor, my mincing hind, and thou wilt soon see at what a high rate she values it. But I waste words with thee,” added he, drawing nearer. “Nay, menace me not, thou mayest as soon drive a ravenous wolf from his prey, as me from my firm purpose.”

Rosamond saw that there was not a moment to be lost; and throwing down a heavy oaken chair which stood between herself and Ugglethred, she sprang like an affrighted fawn across the couch, threw open the door in an instant, and closing it behind her with a loud bang, hurried down the winding stair, across the court,

and through the postern, over the moat, nor paused a moment until she had gained the shrubbery.

A man in armour, who guarded the gate as she passed, and stood in a niche unobserved by Rosamond, threw down his partisan in affright, and hurried off to his comrade, who watched the opposite postern, where, with his teeth chattering in his head, he regaled his ears with a long tale, about the white spirit which had startled him from his post.

So sudden was the departure of Rosamond, that ere Oliphant Uggleshred had recovered himself from the shock of the heavy oaken settle, the back of which struck his breast, she had shot out of the room. Nor, when he descended the stair with the lamp in his hand, could he discover a trace of her footsteps. He placed the light cautiously in the apartment where the minstrel still soundly slept, then ventured forth into the court-yard.

His presence, however, attracted the attention of the two soldiers, who were talking over the

appearance of the supposed spirit. Uggleshred soon saw that he was observed, and with his usual hardihood drew up to them at once, just as the soldier was saying, "Neither did its feet awake a sound, as it passed over the single plank that stretches across the moat, and saving the rustling of the drapery, it moved by as noiselessly as a ray of light."

"Ay! name ye then the figure of a woman that but now shot by?" said Uggleshred, catching at once the drift of their conversation. "By St. Dunstan, it made my very flesh creep with affright, and yet I dare be sworn, after all, it was but a woman, stolen forth to meet her lover in the chase."

"And who art thou?" said the man-at-arms, whose senses had not been shocked by the appearance of Rosamond, and who half doubted whether his comrade had not lost his wits. "Who art thou, that darest to wander amid the courts of the palace at this hour? What is thy business here? speak truly, or my duty will lead me to secure thee in the donjon."

“My business hath been the emptying a few merry cups with the minstrel, an’ it please you,” answered UGGLETHRED, “whom I have drank down to the very floor. And by the mass, an’ I had not come forth into the moonlight to swallow a few mouthfuls of the night-air, my head would so have rung with the dregs of the wine stoup and his jovial lays, that I should have thrown myself beside him for company.”

“An’ that be all,” answered the soldier, “thy presence concerneth Pierre de Vidal and not me; but what sawest thou, for by the rood, thou lookest not to have dived so deeply into thy cups, but that thou hast preserved more of thy wits than my comrade-at-arms, who hath not wetted his lips since curfew?”

“Marry, and it somewhat puzzleth me to tell thee what I have seen,” replied the ruffian; “but while I stood by the postern at the foot of the turret, a figure as of a female darted by me, barefooted, and with her hair flying loose, and I will be sworn that she came down the winding stair, unless she could spring out of



the massy wall, which I hold to be no easy matter."

"No easy matter sayest thou?" echoed the superstitious soldier; "marry thou knowest but little of the power of the white spirits that haunt these forests. Why, I can tell thee that Christopher of the Crag, as brave a fellow as ever buckled on an hauberk, or struck a blow in the wars of stiff Stephen, saw a white witch leap out from a massy oak; ay! and never a bit was the bark frayed. Nay, he once stuck his lance through a white woman while he kept watch at Northampton, but he vowed that it was only like piercing a mist."

Ugglethred had much ado to keep himself from laughing outright, for he felt not the slightest remorse at what he had done; or if he had any regret, it was that he had not completed his base purpose. "I will venture forth," said he, "into the chase, and see if I can find any traces of this bahr-gheist, which, after all, may but be a woman."

"We will first accompany thee to arouse

Pierre de Vidal," said the man-at-arms; "for it behoveth him to look narrowly to his charge in yonder turret. Or woe be to his minstrel-ship when next he looketh upon King Henry."

"Your will shall be mine in this matter," said Uggleshred: and without changing countenance, or betraying a symptom of his villany, he crossed the court yard with the guards, passed the western wing of the palace, and stepping through the dark shadow which the turret threw across their path, revealing all the outlines of its quaint tracery in the moonshine, they entered the minstrel's apartment.

Vidal was aroused with but little difficulty, for he had slept off the chief effects of the revel, and he no sooner heard their tale, than he sprung up the turret-stairs without a moment's hesitation, determined at least to knock at the door of Rosamond's chamber, and from her own lips receive answer of her safety. But when he saw the door wide open, the couch empty and disordered, and the oaken settle prostrated, he felt certain that villany was somewhere

a float, and ascending the topmost flight of the turret, he thundered loudly at a low oaken door, and awakened Maud.

Meantime Oliphant UGGLETHRED deemed it wisdom to decamp, and stole forth into the park, through the outlet we have before described, hoping thereby to escape the investigation of the minstrel, and peradventure meet with Rosamond, whom he was determined should not a second time escape him. But leaving the din and tumult which was raised in the palace when Maud appeared and was apprized of her mistress's absence, and making no mention of the complainings of the minstrel, we must pursue the sad fortunes of the fair fugitive in another chapter.

## CHAPTER VIII.

A poor soul sat sighing under a sycamore tree :  
O willow, willow, willow,  
With her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee ;  
O willow, willow, willow.  
Sing O the green willow shall be my garland.  
The cold streams ran by her, her eyes wept apace,  
O willow, willow, willow :  
The salt tears fell from her, which drowned her face,  
Sing O willow, willow, willow,  
Come all you forsaken and sit down by me,  
And sing, willow, beneath the sycamore tree,  
O the green willow shall be my garland.

*Ancient Ballad.*

THE pale moonbeams fell coldly upon the sylvan shades of Woodstock park, when fair Rosamond bare-footed, and bare-headed, rushed through the narrow postern that opened into its wooded solitudes. The chilly dew also lay heavily upon the greensward, and as she had nothing to cover her from the cutting night-air, saving the thin mantle which she had snatched up in her haste to escape, her lovely

and fragile frame shivered again as she faced the piercing wind. Regardless of the path she pursued, she struck into a thicket, and forcing her way through the dense underwood, which was like fording a river, so saturated was the heavy foliage with dew, she at length gained a little eminence, and throwing herself down beneath a gigantic oak, endeavoured to pull out the thorns with which her bleeding feet were pierced. Her heart beat faster at every rustle of the branches, and in every gust that blew, her fancy conjured up the steps of her pursuer, and while the tears flowed down her lovely cheeks, and impearled her beautiful but disarranged tresses, she offered up a deep and silent prayer to the Virgin.

Although her heart felt more at ease after this, and she attributed her escape to her guardian saint, nevertheless a strange consciousness of her loneliness crept over her spirit, which, together with the pain she had suffered, and a feeling of weariness, made her wish for death. She felt a kind of foreboding that her life was

doomed to unhappiness, and that she was but then tasting of the cup of bitterness, which in the end she should be compelled to drain to the dregs. Then she thought of the past and sighed, regretting that time could not be recalled, and thinking what she would now do had she but those days to come over again. The thoughts of her father also came strongly upon her memory ; the knowledge that he had left his old mansion, and departed to join the Crusaders on her account, preyed heavily upon her mind. Then her memory travelled back to childhood, and a thousand little incidents long forgotten, and which at the time they took place scarcely made any impression on the mind, now rose up before her clothed in strange charms, such as despair only can colour the objects with, that are beyond its reach. At last her mind wandered back to Henry, and reflecting upon all that she had undergone for his peace and honour, her heart accused him for a moment of neglect in leaving her thus exposed to the attacks of such a ruffian. But the thought remained with her

no longer than the moment that it passed through her mind, like a tiny cloud, that moves hastily over the sun; and when it is gone, his rays seem to beam forth stronger; and she wept for having allowed such a thought to possess her.

So strongly did these ideas follow each other up, that she was scarcely conscious of the situation which she occupied, and as that drowsy feeling which is so often produced by extreme cold, stole over her, she watched star after star as they gleamed through the network of boughs overhead, until their brightness seemed to diminish, and she fell asleep. The moon which had long been struggling through a mass of light clouds, now broke forth and threw her sloping and silvery beams full upon the stem of the massy oak by which she slumbered, giving to her pale and beautiful features, an almost unearthly loveliness, as if she was bound under the mighty spell of some enchanter, into whose power she had fallen. The mantle which she had hastily thrown



around her, had also fallen from her shoulders, and revealed her bare neck and bosom, on which the cold moonlight streamed in an uninterrupted flood of light, leaving only a shadow here and there where her clustering tresses had fallen. Around her reigned a solemn silence, which was only broken by such sounds as seemed to make the air stiller; for the drowsy rustling of the foliage, as it swayed to and fro at intervals, and the far-off murmuring of the waters of the Glyme, came so subdued and softened, that it was like the "hush" of nature whispering the world to sleep. Even the deer moved along the moonlit glades like shadows, or fed on the dewy herbage without a sound; and a night-hawk that was wheeling between the moon and the earth, seemed to proclaim by its startling shrieks, that all above was as silent as below.

The silence was however suddenly broken by a herd of deer, rushing affrighted down the steep on which Rosamond slept: then came a rattling of arrows, some of them striking the

boles of trees into which they stuck, quivered for a moment, then remained still. Others again pierced the flying herd, and brought their lofty antlers to the earth ; but not a human voice was heard, and so thickly was the spot carpeted with luxuriant grass, that the footsteps of the marauders were inaudible until they rushed down the green declivity to seize the fallen deer. At length the hauberks and steel head-pieces of the archers glanced brightly in the moonlight, as they descended the steep eminence on which the fair sleeper was seated ; and she was no sooner observed by the two foremost of the party, who were bearing off a dead buck, than they threw down their load, and pointing out the object of alarm to their companions, the whole group, amounting to at least half a score, fled as if Satan himself had been at their heels.

On they rushed with a speed which was truly marvellous, considering the weight of their breast-pieces, and so closely together, that to use a phrase of the turf, a blanket would have

covered the whole of them. They speedily gained an open space not far distant from the lofty wall of the park : here they halted, much to the astonishment of three knights, who, armed from head to heel, with only their visors open, sat like statues in their saddles. Several sumpter horses also stood at hand, and were in readiness to carry off the spoil.

“How now,” said the tallest knight, riding out from between his companions, and lowering his lance. “Are we beset?—speak knaves, where lurk the ambuscade? muster they strong?”

The men looked at each other with fear, for no one seemed to have courage enough to reply. At length, one bolder than the rest said, “We have seen the white woman seated beneath an oak.”

“And is this all ye have met with, to raise such an alarm !” exclaimed the knight. “Better had ye face the whole legion of horned fiends than return to the castle empty-handed. Some white doe, browsing, I dare be sworn, hath smitten your cowardly hearts with fear.

Back, knaves! and bring in every hide ye have slaughtered, or by the true Lord, I will run a few courses at your craven breasts."

"Nearly every head which we have struck down," said another, "lie where the white fiend is seated; and I would sooner face a score of lances, than set foot on a spot where I am sure to be torn limb from limb."

The knight made a plunge forward with his steed, as if intending to ride down the archer; but a moment's reflection caused him to tighten the reins; and so much had he the noble animal under obedience, that although his lance point was within a foot of the speaker's face, the horse fell back on its haunches without doing him any injury. He well knew that many a cheek would turn pale at the sight of a falling-star, or the croaking of a raven, which had never been blanched in battle; and as one or two of the soldiers were Saxons, he was fully aware of the impossibility of reasoning them out of their superstitious notions, which they clung to more closely than even their creed.

“Hugo,” said he, after a pause, addressing one of the bowmen, who had hitherto shrunk back, as if ashamed of what he had done, “thou wert wont to be watchful when matters of so great import to the beleaguered garrison, as the present were on hand. Now tell me, as thou hast hopes of one day becoming an esquire, sawest thou aught to cause this unnecessary delay?”

“By the Holy Mother of Heaven!” answered Hugo, “and as I value your knightly favour, Beowulph hath but spoken the truth. We have seen the white woman, and I have stood within a lance’s length of her, and she seemed asleep, with all that look of winning misery, which leads mankind to pity her, when she seizes on them, and sinks into the deep earth.”

“Talkest thou also of such folly, Hugo?” replied the knight, sternly; “but what boots it to be angry with such boors? lead on, knaves, at least so far as I may gain sight of

this dreaded object, which I dare be sworn is some love-lorn damsel in distress, and may need the succour of a knight."

The men obeyed, although reluctantly ; and the knight signing to his companions in arms to remain stationary, rode in the direction from which the affrighted bowmen had fled, while they gathered so closely to his steed, as almost to impede its progress.

They were not long, however, before they reached the acclivity where Rosamond was still seated, wrapped in profound slumber. The brave knight rode beyond his companions, and reined in his palfrey within a spear's length of the broad oak, and in such a position as to command a full view of her figure,—for the moon now shone forth in her greatest brilliancy. Nor did he gaze upon her, without a feeling allied to fear, for she looked more like one of those beautiful statues of the ancients, than a living object : neither was he entirely free from those superstitious notions for which he had censured

his followers. Pride, however, came to his aid; and offering up a prayer to his patron saint, he ventured to touch her lightly with the butt-end of his lance.

Springing up like a startled wood-nymph, she hastily gathered the flowing drapery closer around her, and stood erect and silent before the armed knight. Her first thoughts were to flee; but when she saw the assembled archers in the distance, she became conscious that there remained no chance of escaping. She also shook from head to foot with the cold.

“Tremble not, fair lady,” said the knight, in none of the firmest tones; “but tell me how I may render you such service as may be tendered by a true knight to a fair maiden in distress.”

“Alas! I know not whither to betake me at this hour,” replied Rosamond, in a voice tremulous with fear and cold, yet sweet as the thrilling notes of the nightingale, and every word of which caused the heart of the knight to tingle.



“It would ill become one wearing spurs to leave a fair form like thine to shiver in the cold night-blast,” continued the knight, gaining confidence: “But might I crave to know the cause which hath driven you abroad at so unmeet an hour, that I might the better be enabled to give counsel on the matter.”

“That may not be, noble knight,” answered Rosamond, in the same sweet, but mournful tones: “nor need I make an appeal to one of your order to be permitted to keep my secret. Meantime, if you would conduct me back to the lodge of Woodstock, and permit a few of your followers to keep guard until the morrow, it should be service which I would well requite.”

“I will myself escort you thither in safety, fair lady,” answered the knight, “although my doing so may endanger mine own person; but I dare not leave a man behind to keep watch, nor may I bide longer than such times as you reach a place of safety; for we have sallied forth to forage for a beleaguered fortress, in which

famine is making deeper inroads than battle. Nor will I crave to know your secret in return; but I must be speedy in what I do, as the lives of many of my companions in arms depend on this night's success."

"May I crave the name of the castle that is thus closely beleaguered?" inquired Rosamond.

"It is called the White Fortress," replied the knight "whither I will bear you, should such be your fair pleasure."

"Filled with the enemies of King Henry," murmured Rosamond to herself: then speaking aloud, "I have heard of its beleaguerment, and may find friends amongst the besiegers;—would you in all honour convey me to their camp?"

"I will, so far as it may be done in safety to my companions," answered the knight, "but King Henry hath himself sat down before our walls to-day; and it will need some caution to escape the vigilance of his sentinels. Nor should I have spoken so openly of the besieged, had I hit upon your request."

“Your secret is safe in my keeping, Sir Knight,” replied Rosamond, “and it may be that I shall find means to requite you according to your deserts, when I reach yonder camp in safety.”

After some demurring on the part of Rosamond, she was at length seated before the knight, who with one hand lifted her into the saddle, with as much ease as if she had been a child; and so refined were the true feelings of chivalry at that period towards the fair sex, that Rosamond placed the firmest reliance on his word; nor did his courtesy exceed any becoming bounds. When he reached his companions in arms, he obtained a thick Norman cloak, which one of the archers had thrown over him when he went as scout, to conceal the glittering armour, and in this she was speedily enveloped.

At length the slaughtered deer were placed on the horses which had been brought thither for that purpose, and the whole party were speedily in motion, and left the park by a postern gate, just high enough, and of sufficient

width to admit two horsemen abreast bearing lances. Once without the park, their movements became more guarded, and they proceeded along with great caution, keeping an unbroken silence. Another knight was also added to their party, who had been on watch beside the postern.

They moved along like men who were apprehensive of danger, but determined to make the best of their little forces, which were so arranged as to be in readiness for any sudden surprise. Foremost, and at a considerable distance from the cavalcade rode the warrior who had kept watch,—his lance poised,—his triangular shield hanging around his neck,—and his battle-axe ready to be assumed at a moment's warning. Next came six archers moving three a-breast,—their bows ready bent for action; behind these followed the two knights, armed like their companion with their visors down, and ready for an instant charge; next came the warrior bearing fair Rosamond, enfolding her waist with the

same arm which held the reins ; and grasping the lance firmly in his right hand. Then came in order the horses heavily laden with the carcasses of the deer, and they were again followed by six bowmen who brought up the rear.

The scene which they now traversed was in some places deeply wooded ; and therefore well calculated to shelter an ambuscade ; but so thickly were the open spaces covered with grass, that the tramping of their war-horses scarce awoke an echo. Where the country was open, they seemed to travel in greater security, and with more speed ; and whenever a thicket or a clump of trees appeared, the same guarded caution and silence was observed. The heart of Rosamond beat quicker in her bosom while riding along the gloomy woodlands ; for whenever a chance offered, the party availed themselves of the shade, and she soon became conscious of the danger to which she was exposed. The knight had, however, thrown his own shield around her neck, so that she was in a great

measure protected from any random shaft, should they chance to encounter an enemy. But thicket after thicket was left behind, and no sign of danger appeared as they moved securely along, now in the shadow of some hill, then in the depth of a valley, down which a full flood of moonlight streamed; and anon through rich pasture lands, clear enough, however, of either hoof or horn. At length they gained an eminence which overlooked the castle with its massy towers and keep, and imposing battlements; some parts slumbering in deep shadow,—others again clearly revealed in the broad moonbeams. A vast space of smooth meadow land also stretched along the base of the castle, and was covered with the tents of the besiegers, which in the distance resembled masses of fallen clouds;—the winding Thames was also visible, as its tranquil waters flashed and sported in the silver light, until they were broken by the massy shadows of the castle. All was, however, silent; not the foot-fall of a

sentry broke the tranquillity of the night; nor was the slightest sound from the camp audible in the distance when they halted. The procession struck into a winding road (if such that might be called, in which the greensward appeared to have been cut up by cavalry), which was screened from the camp of the besiegers by a kind of embankment, here and there overhung with trees.

They had not, however, journeyed far along this grassy path, which led direct to the barbican of the castle, when they were challenged by a horseman, to whom one of the knights was about to reply with the point of his lance. But the warrior, as if aware of his purpose, struck the spurs into his steed, and instantly alarmed the camp. A low buzzing sound was then heard in the distance, as of men's voices in consultation. It drew nearer; and the tramping of steeds was also heard in motion. "We are discovered," exclaimed the foremost knight; "bowmen, hasten on with your plunder



to the barbican." The party was not above two arrows' flight from the postern, when the order was given, and the archers, hurried on their laden steeds, and came within shelter of the gateway, ere the besiegers rode down upon them.

"It will be but throwing away thy life," said the knight, who held Rosamond before him, to put thee down here; for thou mayest be trampled to death beneath the feet of their war-horses. And it will be a vain attempt to make thy voice heard through the uproar that is about to break forth. Speak quickly, what would you have me do amid the approaching danger?"

"Let me alight here," said Rosamond in a sorrowful voice; "if some random shaft strikes me, I will welcome it to my bosom as a friend."

"Nay, by my knighthood!" replied her protector, "it shall not be said that I left thee in harm's way; for, peradventure some bolt from our own battlements might alight on thee, for I

see our soldiers are already astir on the turrets that flank the drawbridge." So saying, he struck the spurs into his steed,—delivered Rosamond into the hands of the foremost archers, who were just entering the barbican,—then galloping instantly into the rear with lance in rest, unhorsed one of the foremost assailants.

The skirmish might have proved fatal to the little party of foragers, had it happened at a greater distance from the castle; but fortunately for themselves, they were under shelter of the cross-bows and mangonels, that plied so briskly from the neighbouring turrets, as to keep the chief body of the assailants at a wary distance. The four knights drew up boldly abreast before the grim gateway, and drove back a double number of armed horsemen, who seemed bent upon passing the drawbridge to recover the spoil. But no sooner did the archers see their plunder safe across the moat, and within the inner postern, than they turned bravely around, and bending their bows to the

full stretch, discharged a volley of arrows on the besiegers, then retreated over the drawbridge. One by one did the knights follow their example, now backing their steeds within the shadow of the postern, then again rushing forward with their lances couched, and driving back the assailants. One warrior, in his eagerness to gain the open gates, made a dash at full speed, and passed under the archway with such force, that ere he could recover himself, he had gained the centre of the drawbridge, and while attempting to retreat, horse and rider went head foremost into the deep moat. He was, however, rescued from drowning by the archers, just as his heavy armour was drawing him under the waters.

The four knights who had so boldly protected the rear of their companions, had also by this time gained the gloomy gateway, and the ponderous portcullis, rattling like thunder, as it fell down the deep groves, again divided the besieged and the besiegers. Had it stood uplifted

another minute, a score of armed warriors burning with eagerness for the affray, would have rushed through the barbican, and at least have made themselves masters of the out-works of the castle ; as it was, however, they drew up in the pale moonlight, stood a shower or two of bolts and shafts which rattled on their armour, then rode off in disappointment to the camp.

## CHAPTER IX.

Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature  
To such a lowness, but his unkind daughter.  
Is it the fashion, that discarded fathers  
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?  
Judicious punishment!

*King Lear.*

THE beleaguered castle to which we have now drawn the attention of our readers, was one of those which the old chroniclers have denominated "dens of thieves;" and improbable as the number may appear, it is on record that Henry the Second, swept several hundreds of these formidable strongholds from the face of the land. Where they stood we know not; their very ruins are forgotten; the besieged and the besieger perished together in the same moat, or were crushed beneath the fallen turret, and many a forgotten harvest has been

reaped over their graves. No one can now point out the mound whereon the banner was planted, or the spot where the tent of the chieftain stood. The wild flowers wave where the struggle of battle was most terrible, when the last brave handful of warriors rushed through the postern with lance in rest. Many of these, be it remembered, were held by foreigners at the time of which we write,—brave men who had been allured over by the promise of possessions,—who had fought the battles between Henry the First, and Stephen, and had even taken up arms at the summons of Matilda, and waged war for the very monarch who was now laying them waste. But Henry well knew how insecure would be his throne, while so many of these strong fortifications stood, and as he was determined to sway the scepter with a sterner grasp than his weak predecessors, he at once struck at the root of that power, by which they had too frequently been overwhelmed. Many a terrible battle took place before this mighty

task was accomplished, and numbers of these brave but savage barons perished in defending their castles, and in very few instances gave up the struggle, before they were either taken by storm, or reduced by famine. Nor were they even in the latter case subdued without much bloodshed, and in many of these sieges Henry boldly perilled his own life, and was only preserved by the daring devotion of his own followers. Many of these storms and sieges must be familiar to every reader of history ; and as we only profess to narrate the few incidents in this important reign which bear immediately upon our story, we are prevented from entering further into the events of the period, than what is sufficient to satisfy the reader, that the scenes portrayed are in keeping with the time of which we write.

The castle, as we have before stated, stood beside the Thames, and within an hour's ride of Woodstock park, and consequently no very great distance from Oxford.



Near, however, as it stood to the royal residences, it had hitherto baffled every attempt made by the besiegers to carry it either by stratagem or storm; and so much time had been wasted in fruitless siege, that Henry himself, with a powerful band of his boldest knights, at last sat down before its walls.

The little garrison soon knew with whom they had to deal, when they beheld the royal standard, with its grim golden lions, floating above a lofty pavilion, and heard the "silver snarling trumpets" ring out their loud defiance over hill, valley, and river. Nor was the adventure which we described in our last chapter accomplished so secretly, but that it had by this time aroused the whole camp, which was now astir in the moonlight, ready to press the besiegers anew.

Two large breaching-towers, so high that they overlooked the tall battlements of the castle, had also arrived since sunset, together with mangonels, and the heaviest trebuchets

which were then in use for hurling stones ; and as these were already at work, the loud crash which from time to time was heard within the walls, rung frightfully upon the still night, and told too well the destruction which they were spreading among the besieged.

It was a gallant sight to behold those brave knights drawn up in battle-array before the barbican, or to see them moving along from one point of attack to another, their armour flashing in the moonlight like pillars of silver. Nor were the besieged backward, but showed themselves at every point of the embrasures, and boldly gave back shot for shot : but as yet the storm of battle seemed only awakening, like the first faint burst of distant thunder, growling and announcing its approach, and bidding us to prepare for the coming tempest.

Chief amid the assailants was seen the form of King Henry riding from point to point and giving the order of attack, for his blood was aroused when he heard that a party of foragers,

had, in the very teeth of his camp, entered the sallyport in safety. Shunning however the outer barbican, generally the first point of attack in this system of warfare, he drew up before an angle of the moat which faced one of the turrets that guarded a corner of the castle. Here the besiegers had blocked up the moat, and numbers were still busily employed in beating down the earth and fallen trees, with which they had formed a solid road up to the very walls of the castle. This had been the labour of some days, and was done that they might draw up the breaching-tower level with the battlements. Nor had this been accomplished without much bloodshed, for although the archers kept almost incessantly shooting from behind their pavisors, yet the besieged never ceased hurling missiles, or otherwise annoying them from the battlements.

All was, however, at length prepared; the tall breaching-tower, — consisting of six stories, and each compartment filled with armed men, who

could ascend to the upper story as the topmost landed on the battlements, by means of ladders which communicated with each floor,—began to rumble on its heavy and solid wheels, as they sank deeply into the new-laid earth with which they had filled up that part of the moat.

The mangonels also stood in readiness, with men ready to work both winch and lever, and throw huge masses of stone, some of them as much as two men could place upon the machine. A score of gallant knights also were drawn up behind the mantelets, and, well backed by archers, only awaited the signal to attack the outer barbican with their heavy battle-axes. Men were also seen moving to and fro along the walls, their armour gleaming in the moonlight between the embrasures as they paced along, or paused in uncertainty of where the storm was first to begin. Numbers had, however, flocked to the corner turret, where the breaching tower was stationed, ready to strike down the first who should plant foot upon the

parapet. Just as King Henry had exclaimed, "Trumpeters, sound the onset—advance, banner-bearer in the name of God and Saint George!" a knight approached, followed by his esquire and a prisoner.

"How now?" said the monarch, waving his arm to delay the charge, "whom have we here, sir knight?"

"A captive to my sword and spear, my Liege," answered the knight,—"one whom I took in the act of crossing the moat, bearing letters that crave the assistance of Thorold de Thilmon and his rebel lances, and urging to come up with day-dawn and charge the rear of our camp; here, your highness, is the epistle."

"Thou art a daring knave, and a bold," said the king, looking at the prisoner sternly; "what thinkest thou, that because the foragers escaped our guard, we were to be entrapped by such treachery? What could induce thee to peril thyself in this adventure?"

"My love to a brave chieftain," answered

the prisoner, undauntedly; "one who hath fought thy mother's battles, proud king, and whom thou wouldst now deprive of the castle which he has bought at the price of his own blood, and the lives of so many of his followers."

"Ah! by the mother of God! thou repliest boldly," said Henry, the blood mounting his cheek and brow. "Muster the rebels then so weak, that they are compelled to seek aid from other hands?"

"Thou wilt find enow to throw a tower full of thy fellows from the battlements," replied the prisoner in the same fearless tone, "should they be daring enough to lower the platform of the breaching tower upon the embrasures."

"Ah, sayest thou so?" answered the King; then giving vent to his anger; he exclaimed, "By the fiery ford of perdition! thou shalt carry back our message to these traitors. Seize him, knaves; place him on the trebuchet, and cast him over the battlements. But first," added he, "tie the letter around his neck, that he may carry it back again."

“Bethink you, my Liege,” said the knight, “this will but be setting a sorry precedent to our enemies, and they may retaliate with the same cruelty upon ourselves, should we fall into their power.”

“Fear not that,” answered Henry sternly; “thinkest thou if they had sounded parley on the walls, and demanded safe passage for man and horse, to crave help of their comrades, I would have refused their request? No, by the rood of our Redeemer! but would have delayed the attack until they gained reinforcements, were they willing to give up the fortalice, if none should arrive. But trowest thou that I will pardon this unknighly ambuscade?—no, by the mass, he shall go body and soul, and tell them all the aid they may expect. Up winch, until the very rope cracks.”

Two of the soldiers placed the unfortunate prisoner on the point, from which the stone was usually thrown, and keeping a fixed eye on the men at the windlass, watched the moment when



it was wound to its full stretch, and, catching a signal from King Henry, when the catch was loosed, they sprang aside. The ponderous lever struck the cross-bar with such force, that the sound was heard far around the outstretched camp, and the figure of the victim rose in the moonlight, with twice the speed of an arrow. For a moment he was seen flying over the battlements, with no more motion in his body than a log of wood, until at last he fell, with a sound, which although only just heard above the surrounding silence, fell coldly upon the heart of the bravest warrior that was sheathed in mail.\*

“Sound trumpets, to the onset!” exclaimed Henry, in a voice which was heard by both the besieged and the besiegers. “To the barbican, gallant knights! let not a mangonel stand idle; pavisors advance, archers shoot together; let neither a shot-hole nor an embrasure be

\* A similar scene occurs in Froissart; and the old chronicler also mentions that during some siege, they threw the dead and putrified bodies of horses into the castle, from these dreadful engines.

clear of your shafts. Banner-bearer, to the breaching tower—shout, soldiers, for God and St. George, and follow your king !”

A loud deep blast pealed from every trumpet, and ringing along the blue and moonlit vault of heaven, was answered from the battlements, and before the echoes had died over the wide waters, and the distant valleys, “God and St. George,” rolled from a thousand voices, and mingled with the war-cries from the citadel.

Followed by his bravest knights, men of good chivalry, stout of heart, and strong of limb, Henry entered the breaching tower, and ascended flight after flight, with as little dread, as if he had been bound for a banquet instead of a battle. Every apartment of the machine was instantly crowded, and many lingered on the ladders which led from floor to floor, that they might be in readiness to ascend, as soon as their comrades fell, or make good their entry into the barriers. The loud clattering of heavy footsteps, and the ringing of their armour

against each other, was heard as they ascended; while the rush with which they approached, caused the tall machine to rock again.

Leaving the assailants to continue the storm they had so boldly begun, we must return to Rosamond, who was so unexpectedly borne into the castle, both against her own wishes, and the will of the knight, who had no intention to break his word with her. She was carried through the outer bailey without her appearance seeming to draw forth any particular attention, but when the archers entered the inner court, and placed her before the donjon keep, Rosamond found herself in the midst of a group of men-at-arms. Other objects, however, seemed to attract their attention, even more than her beauty, at that time; for it was long since many of those weather-beaten warriors had broken their fast, and they were as ready to fall upon the slaughtered deer, as a pack of famished hounds are to feed after a hard chase. Fires had been already kindled in the court-

yard, in anticipation of the foragers providing them something for supper, and nothing could exceed the facility with which some of the old veterans cut up their allotted share of the venison, and devoured it raw, while they watched with a vulture's glance, the portions which they had thrown upon the embers. Nor could the threats of their leaders keep the men at their posts on the ramparts; for as they scented the roast flesh, one after another rushed from his station, and seizing upon whatever came first to hand, tore it asunder like dogs. Meantime the knight had taken the trappings from his steed, and making a seat for Rosamond, placed her before the largest fire; and while he held converse with two knights who appeared to be the leaders of the party, left her to witness the scenes which we have so faintly described.

“Enquired you not the maiden's business at the camp of the besiegers?” said the oldest knight; “bethink you, it would but be folly to part with her now, after having witnessed the state of our famished garrison.”

“That were but a trifling matter,” said the knight who had escorted the lady thither; “for they are by this time well assured that we are not over-provisioned, while we made this sally in the very throat of their guards.”

“He speaketh but the truth, Sir Walter,” said the other knight. “It will avail nothing keeping the maiden here, when she hath perchance some lover or husband without; let her depart, in God’s name; there is no fear but that any of our men-at-arms will find safe escort both for himself and her, amid the enemy.”

“Pity but we had hit upon this matter earlier,” replied Sir Walter: “for I but now lowered one of my esquires from the western turret, with letters craving the aid of Thorold de Thilmon: for so late did our foragers linger, that I feared they had fallen into the wolf’s mouth. I will, however, with your permission, first see if aught may be gathered from parleying with her. It may be that she knoweth somewhat of the disposition of those without.”

To this the knights made no objection, but stepping aside to see that all was right at the various posts, left an attendant to summon Rosamond, who without demur readily obeyed, and was instantly in the presence of the baron.

“To whom wishest thou safe conduct in yonder camp, damsel?” said the knight, in tones which rather softened the abrupt question, although he spoke without once looking on her countenance: as to his own features, they were partly shaded by a buttress.

“To the King,” replied Rosamond, “an’ it please you to allow me an escort to his tent, whose honour I will wage for his safe return.”

“Humph! canst thou make sure of possessing influence enough with him on that point?” enquired the knight in a colder tone of voice, and one which, without her knowing why, thrilled to her very heart.

“An’ thou fearest for his safe return, gallant knight;” replied Rosamond, “Let me tarry until he hath carried tidings that I am here,

and I doubt not but that, with your leave, Henry will send a speedy escort."

"That were a wiser plan," murmured the knight, "what token wilt thou send that he may be sure of thy presence, and what name may we crave for our messenger to bear?"

"The token this braid," said she, unloosing a rich gold band from her beautiful tresses, which was covered with seed-pearl: "The name Rosamond, should it be needed."

"Rosamond!" echoed the knight, turning his eyes upon her for the first time, as he stepped forth from the shadow of the buttress; and fixing such a look upon her, as would have annihilated her, had they possessed the power of the fabled basilisk. But she remarked him not, for her glance at the moment was fixed on the ground.

"Rosamond!" continued he, raising his voice, as his countenance seemed to kindle like a fire, while gazing upon her: "Art thou then the harlot that fled from her father's castle, to



bring infamy upon his grey hairs, and an eternal disgrace on his honourable name? Look up, if thy guilty glance dare again to rest upon these features."

She obeyed him, and uttering a loud shriek, which was echoed back by donjon and postern, exclaimed, "Oh my father!" and fell upon the ground.

The stern old warrior stood beside her with folded arms, the same savage expression still pervading his countenance; for not a hand did he stretch out to her assistance, nor did a gleam of pity break upon his deeply-furrowed brow.

Not so, however, with the young knight who had brought her thither, and had been a witness, although at some distance, of the interview, but without being able to hear the conversation;—for, leaping forward, and overturning the esquire, who was busied with the fastenings of his armour, he was in an instant at her side.

"Touch her not," said the angry baron,

stepping up and releasing the knight's hold from her drapery; "or if thou must needs bear her away, throw her carcase over the ramparts into the moat, and I will hold it good service."

"Better that he never were born of a woman," replied the young knight, his fine features flushing with rage, "who dareth but to injure a single hair of her head. She came hither under my pledge for her safety, and by my hope in the Mother of Heaven! I will bruise the bones of him who dareth to molest her."

"Hear me, sir knight," replied the stern old man, in a deep sepulchral voice; "she who lyeth there was my daughter, was once the pride of my home, the image of her sainted mother. She is now the concubine of the very man against whom we are in arms;—nay, she is the cause of my taking up arms against Henry of Anjou, judge thou if——"

"I am not what thou hast named me," replied Rosamond, aroused by the harsh language of her father, which pierced like a dagger

through her heart. "Spurn me from thee, crush me like a reptile beneath thine armed heel, hew me limb from limb;—but oh! call me not by such a name. I invoke heaven and earth to witness, that were these the last words that my tongue may utter, I am not——"

Her heart was too full to speak more, and burying her lovely face in her hands, she gave vent to her feelings in a flood of tears, while her deep sobs seemed as if they would tear her bosom asunder to escape.

"Liar!" muttered the baron between his teeth: "but no, they may have found another name. Or, it may have become the fashion of court, since even Queen Eleanor intrigued with a Saracen; and Henry married the divorced——"

Just then the body of the unfortunate victim, who was cast from the trebuchet with the letter around his neck, fell within a few paces of where they stood, and was crushed out of every shape resembling the human form."

"I will yet act a Roman's part," said the

baron, taking his daughter in his arms, after having glanced at the crushed and lifeless body of his own esquire, "Hither, knaves!" continued he, calling to his followers, and approaching a huge mangonel which stood by the embrasures; "to the windlass, and draw it as if you were about to hurl the castle from its foundations. I will send Henry of England such a token of my love as no father ever before gave to a king."

The men obeyed with fear and trembling, for they heard but the order indistinctly, as the sound of trumpets, and the loud clamour to which we have before alluded had began. Nor had he relinquished his hold from his beautiful daughter, or placed his hand upon the dreadful spring, which once loosed, would have hurled her far beyond the camp of the besiegers, when a massy stone, cast from some trebuchet by the assailants, shot through the embrasure, and laid him lifeless within the battlements. He fell just as the young knight was springing forward to rescue her from his grasp,—for so sudden

had been his motion, that it was not until the last moment that he became aware of his intent. As it was, however, sire and daughter came down with the speed of a thunderbolt together, and he died with his arm around her, pressed firmly in the deep and sudden agony of death. Nor had Rosamond offered any resistance, or even breathed a word for help; but closing her eyes that she might not witness the horrid death, of which she scarce seemed conscious, she remained motionless in his grasp; and when he had fallen, pillowed her unconscious head upon his breast, while her tresses were steeped in his gore.

## CHAPTER X.

Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head,  
Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood ;  
Amaze the welkin with your broken staves !

*King Richard III.*

I am not mad ;—I would to heaven, I were ;  
For then, 'tis like I should forget myself !  
O ! if I could, what grief should I forget !—  
Preach some philosophy to make me mad,  
And thou shalt be canonized.

*King John.*

MEANTIME, the storm had begun in right earnest at almost every angle of the castle, which so distracted the attention of the besieged, that they were at a loss, as to what part they should carry their greatest force. The combat, however, as yet raged hottest at the western turret, where the breaching tower was already drawn up to within three yards of the ramparts ; for, as we before stated, the moat had here been filled up, in spite of the showers of missiles

which were continually poured upon the workmen from the battlements. King Henry, with at least a score of his boldest chivalry, stood ready for the onset in the topmost floor of the tower, and only awaited the signal for the ponderous platform to fall, which would at once form a kind of bridge to the battlements, and leave them fully exposed to the enemy.

Two or three large stones from a mangonel in the inner bailey, had already thundered loudly at the iron-bound door, and threatened speedily to procure their own admission, unless it was lowered. The scene had now become in the highest degree animated; it was the painful suspense wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement, more impressive than even the combat. On the ramparts stood the besieged, with axes and swords uplifted, ready to strike, for they well knew that almost at the instant the platform fell, the assailants would be upon the battlements, unless kept back by dint of arms.



The archers from below, sheltered by their pavisors, shot so quickly and close together, that not an helmet could overhang the embrasures, without almost instantly becoming the mark of an hundred arrows. Nor was there a shot-hole in the wall of the castle that escaped their shafts; for the besiegers, who occupied the middle divisions of the breaching tower, kept up an incessant charge of arrows through every loop-hole where a shaft could search.

At length the chains were unloosed, and the massy platform fell upon the high battlements, with a force which shook the whole breaching tower from base to roof. "God and St. George!" shouted the invaders, which was answered by the war-cry of the besieged, "*Guerre à mort!*" and both parties sprung upon the wooden pathway at the same instant of time.

The huge platform in its descent had, however, crushed two of the soldiers to atoms as it fell, who were bending over the embrasures, to hurl fragments of stone upon the archers. The

meeting of the combatants was terrible: they closed upon each other with the fury of tigers; they wrestled and struggled together, and many a bold warrior fell from the steep height to the depth of an hundred feet, clutching his enemy in his grasp, and crushing the archers in their fall.

It was a grand but fearful sight, to behold that terrible combat,—to see such brave men giving and receiving blow upon helm and corslet, without once regarding the horrid depth which yawned beneath them, and down which the slightest falter of a footstep would precipitate them to instant death. Foremost, but in the very centre of the temporary bridge, stood King Henry wielding an immense battle-axe, the head of which glittered in the moonshine as it rose and fell, and dealt the death-blow on many a proud crest. Thrice had he been driven to the very verge of the platform, which was now slippery with blood; and more than once was he caught by the hands of his gallant knights,

just as he had lost his balance, and was within an hair's breadth of toppling head-foremost from that giddy height, down which so many of his bold chivalry had already fallen. Still the platform was crowded, for as one after another fell, their places were instantly filled up by others, who ascended from the lower apartments, like bees rushing from the hive, and in more than one instance, was their eagerness to crowd to the affray, the cause of pushing down their comrades.

One warrior, who fought by King Henry's side on that fearful night, achieved wonders, and received many a blow on his own triangular shield, which was aimed at the monarch, and which, had they not been parried by his powerful arm, would have sent that sovereign to sleep with his fathers. He was the first to rush upon an opponent, whose prowess had hitherto equalled his own, and struck down every knight who had ventured to leap upon the parapet, until he was almost hemmed in by the bodies of

those which his own arm had slain. At length these two doughty champions met, and the loud clangour of their blows, as they rung upon shield and corslet, sounded high above the din of the surrounding battle.

Foot to foot, and hand to hand did they fight; each more eager to deal than avoid a blow, until portions of their mail were hacked away, and the polish of their armour was dimmed with blood. They closed,—they coiled round each other like serpents,—they rocked to and fro like huge oaks bowed by some mighty storm. They threw down their battle-axes at the same instant of time, and grappled each other by the iron band that secured their helmets, until at length they fell together with a force that shook the whole platform. The knight who fought under King Henry's banner, fell uppermost, and by an effort of almost more than human strength, rolled his enemy to the very edge of the platform; and as he drew up his leg to spurn him over with the force of his

foot, the other, just as he was in the act of falling, clung around the projecting limb of his foe, and hung in the air, clinging to his hold with the tenacious grasp of a falcon. Nor could the warrior, who still lay on the platform, have withstood the weight of the shock, had he not thrown his arm around King Henry's legs. Two or three knights who were rushing past,—for the battlements were now won,—observed the danger, and by the King's order, released the warrior, and gave the daring enemy quarter, after he had sworn himself true prisoner. Still the work of death raged along the battlements; and many a daring defender was hurled into the moat, as the besiegers advanced, and won post by post, until not a man remained of the foe that flanked that side of the walls.

Onward rushed Henry, crying his war-cry, and bearing down every opposing obstacle; while his followers chased the routed garrison from court to court, and through many a postern, the thresholds of which were slippery with

blood. While the king stood giving orders to three knights who were hacking with all their might at an iron-studded door which had been closed by the defenders as they rushed into a tower to escape their pursuers, his ear was arrested by the sound of voices near at hand, and looking round, he perceived two of his knights supporting the figure of a female between them.

“They have slain him!” said Rosamond, springing forward and seizing the king’s hand; “Oh, come and see how cold and still he lieth!”

The monarch gazed upon her with affright, while his whole frame shook, and his eyes seemed ready to burst from their sockets: he held Rosamond from him at arm’s length, and the full moonlight showed her pale features stained with blood; with which her garments were also dyed. He attempted to speak, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth; and to such a pitch was superstition carried at that

age, that he verily believed the ghost of his murdered love stood before him. But when she threw her arms around him, and he felt her tears trickling down his own cheeks, and her warm breath falling upon his face, he gradually became himself again, and in a voice of thunder said, "Who hath done this?"

The knights briefly stated the situation in which they found her, lying prostrate on the dead body of a warrior. The eyes of the king flashed angrily while he listened to their narration, and for a moment jealousy haunted his thoughts; it was, however, but for an instant, and he demanded to be led to where the dead man lay. Preceded by two soldiers bearing torches, and with Rosamond leaning unconsciously on his arm, her naked feet stained with the blood of the slain over which she had passed, they crossed the inner bailey, and halted beside the corse of her father. Henry snatched a torch from one of the attendants, and waving it athwart the features of the dead, exclaimed,



“ Mother of God ! it is Walter de Clifford ! ” he cast the torch upon the ground, and folding his hands together, bent over the form of the lifeless warrior in silence and deep grief.

Meantime Rosamond had again thrown herself down beside the bleeding corpse, and held one of its cold hands between her own, while her hair fell wildly around her face, on which the red light of the torch flashed, and also gilded the cold armour of the dead, as she thus kept up her bitter complainings : “ Awake ! dearest father, awake ! Knit not thy brows thus angrily upon me. Oh ! look as thou wert wont to do in bygone days, when thou didst call me thine own Rose. Alas ! ” continued she, changing her tone, “ he heareth me not ; he cannot hear me ! he will never more awake to call me his own dear Rose—never open his eyes upon me again ! His lips are a-cold,” said she, kneeling lower and kissing them ; “ his lips are a-cold, and return not my caress ; his very looks accuse me of his death.”

“Dry thy tears,” said Henry, unconscious that his own were falling in big drops. “Soldiers, retire; it is not meet that ye should be witnesses of her sorrow. Oh God!” added he, “is there no one can tell me how this sad mishap hath befallen? Why my own Rosamond is found bleeding and bare-footed within a beleaguered castle, when I had dreamed that her fair limbs were outstretched in slumber.”

“Would that I had fallen in place of thee,” continued the fair mourner, unconscious that Henry still stood beside her; “or that thou hadst lived to have heard from Henry’s lips that I am not the vile thing thou didst deem me. And yet I do thee wrong; many beside thee believe that I have mixed thy noble blood with shame. But my mother, who hath bent over me a-nights, will tell thee all in heaven. Oh, speak to me, say that thou art not dead; look wrathful on me, chide me with angriest words, and I will bless thy tongue, and call it sweetest music. Alas! he hears me not;

but sure thy spirit is yet hovering near; it cannot have yet escaped the sound of my voice: bid it come back; in pity bid it come; where will it find a nobler tenement, or so fair a frame to dwell in? No; it but sleeps, it hath not gone away."

"Oh! drive me not mad with misery," said the monarch, striking his mailed breast with his gauntleted hand. "Ill betide the hour that led me to follow ambition at the sacrifice of honour. Rise, my love," continued he, stooping and raising Rosamond: "look on me, and dry thy tears; lean on me, my heart's best love."

"Am I not thy wife?" said Rosamond leaning upon Henry and looking wildly in his face, which was half shadowed by the castle walls. "Tell him, that his angry ghost may fly appeased to heaven."

"Oh, heaven knows thou art," answered the king, clasping her madly to his bosom: "would that my soul was as freely purged from guilt as thine own! Ambition hath lured me on to dis-

honour: the love of power hath made me a degraded wretch, even in mine own esteem."

"Wilt thou not unbend thine angry brow, and smile upon me now," said Rosamond, averting her head and looking upon the face of the dead, on which the moonbeams now fell with a ghastly light. "Alas! he moveth not,—he doubteth thy royal word,—he seeth no crown upon my brow,—he frowneth because I hold not the sceptre in my hand—he hath not yet beheld me seated upon my throne. Haste Henry,—speed my love, and lead me forth in all my regal dignity! Maud bind up my hair, we will be seated in royal state. Sound trumpets, for Queen Rosamond is approaching. Yet sound not loudly, lest he should awake. Oh God! how my poor heart doth ache."

"Oh Heaven! if thou hast one bolt in reserve for the guilty," exclaimed Henry, looking up to the starry heaven, which stretched above like an ocean at rest; "hurl it upon my accursed head! Alight here, thou dark-winged messen-

ger, — the gloomy Pity that attendeth on death, and show me that mercy which the grave refuseth not! Oh bury me not with living misery; or, if thou wilt, gather up all the sorrows of mankind, and pile them above me for a sepulchre. Now heap every grief upon my own breast, and I will perish under the load, and undergo the mighty penance without a murmur.”

“Let us be gone,” said Rosamond, her unextinguished love sympathizing in Henry’s sorrows. “An thou talkest of death, then have I nought more to do on earth, but kneel down and scratch my own grave. Let us depart lest my limbs refuse to bear me away, or ere I lie and strangle the envious breath that draws my spirit earthward.” Saying which she half-led, half-dragged the king from her father’s corse; retreating, however, with averted head, until the dead body was hidden in the shadow of the battlements.

While the events took place with which we

have attempted to make the reader acquainted, the battle still raged with all its fury, at the outer barbican, and within the walls around the castle ; for the assailants were as yet only masters of the spacious court-yards, the defenders having retreated into the keep, every door of which they had doubly barred. The outer barbican fronted a large postern, which was flanked by two strong towers, between which the draw-bridge stood ; and even if this were won, a massy portcullis grinned under the gloomy gateway, triple cased with iron. Two or three heavy mangonels were battering at the outer postern, and had already splintered one of the ponderous gates in several places ; nor could those who manned the ramparts above do much execution amongst the assailants, for not a man could make his appearance at any of the embrasures, but a cloud of arrows instantly rattled upon his corslet, or the heavy bolts from the cross-bows poured around him like hailstones. Foremost in the attack was

Thomas à Becket, who little dreamed then that a few more moons would see him stride into the Primacy of England; or that the man who then was crying his war-cry in moonlight, would one day have his name recorded amongst saints and martyrs. Regardless of his present dignity as Chancellor, and forgetting all other estates in that of the warrior, he had approached the heavy postern, and sheltered in a great measure by the over-hanging arch, was dealing such blows upon the doors as were heard at the remotest corners of the castle. While he stood battering with all his might, for the mangonels had now ceased to work, a partizan was thrust through a wide rent in the postern, and having a hook beneath the head, which was used at this period to pull down the cavalry, it fastened in the back part of his gorget, and he was instantly drawn up with his head close to the postern. A lance was, however, as speedily thrust through by one of Becket's followers, and piercing the throat of the soldier who



grasped the partizan, he fell a dead man. Meantime the knights had placed scaling-ladders before the barbican, and as numbers of the defenders had fallen, the struggle, although severe, lasted not long. True to their companions in arms to the last, no sooner did the soldiers who manned the towers across the moat perceive the besiegers within the outer barbican, than they threw open the inner postern, and let go the ponderous drawbridge. The besieged and the besiegers instantly made for it, and the heavy portcullis, when it fell, admitted several of the assailants, who met with instant death. Even Becket narrowly escaped, for just as the portcullis dropped with a noise like thunder, he sprung back, or in another instant he would have been crushed beneath its fall; as it was, however, it only severed the long lance which he had hastily snatched up in the charge, and crushed the shaft in the groove, to the compass of parchment.

It would, however, but weary the reader to

dwelt longer upon the struggle, which lasted until sunrise, and even then found the defenders in possession of the castle keep, and the inner works of the draw-bridge; for the portcullis was proof against all their attacks, and yielded no more to the heavy stones which were hurled from the mangonels, than if they had but been pebbles from the brook. Nor have we a wish to torture the reader's feelings, by describing the scene of slaughter on which the sun arose, as it gilded the moat, already crimsoned with blood. One archer there was amongst the wounded, and only one, who murmured at the approaching death; and he had been struck by one of his own arrows, which the besieged had shot back again, for they had emptied their own quivers. Poor fellow! he knew it again, for the feathers had been cut in a peculiar shape; and while he held it before his fast glazing eye, he faintly murmured,—“ My poor Blanch! thou didst but little dream, while helping me to feather my shafts, that the very one which thou

didst cut so quaintly would be whetted in my own heart's blood."

The storm of battle seemed at this time almost to slumber, for many a gallant knight was seen resting beside his steed, having slackened the girths; and many a bold archer lay stretched upon the green-sward, watching with drowsy eyes, the bright sunbeams, which shone on the lofty turrets of the keep. Meantime, a trumpet was blown on the turrets that flanked the drawbridge, and a parley demanded on the part of the besieged, that all further hostilities should cease until high noon, and not until then was a blow to be struck on either side. This was agreed to on the part of King Henry, within the inner bailey, which he yet possessed, and ratified by a herald sent from Becket, who was admitted without molestation into the keep;—for so binding were the pledges of chivalry, that a promise given on either side was held as sacred as a vow made to Heaven; and although a pledge to the latter was often broken, yet

the word and honour of knighthood, never. Even the portcullis was at last uplifted, and those who but an hour before were thirsting for each other's blood, mingled together like friends, and assisted one another in removing the wounded and the dead ; and the very soldier whose hand had perhaps struck down the wretched victim that writhed at his feet, was seen kneeling beside him, and giving him drink.

Such was war in those barbarous ages,—such it is now. The man who might to-morrow be summoned to strike down his fellow-being in the ranks of battle, would, if left to his own feelings, mingle tears with his blood. They bear no hatred in their bosoms toward each other ; they fight for territories on which they never set foot ; but they decide a quarrel to keep the ambitious in power,—and the tears of orphans and widows are shed, that a few human brutes may fare more sumptuously every day. But the lines of blood are all marked in the great map of Heaven, and the finger of the Highest will one day point

out the great sources from whence these rivers flowed ;—will bare the dark head-lands from which they sprung, and point out the deep ocean-chambers,—the eternal store-houses of blood which they have filled, and which until then, the huge rocks will seal up.

## CHAPTER XI.

Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths ;  
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments ;  
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings ;  
Our dreadful marches, to delightful measures.  
Grim, visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front.  
*Richard the Third.*

FIGHTING and feasting followed each other so naturally in these barbarous ages, that it almost appeared as if they won a victory merely to show after-kindness to the conquered. Numerous are the instances on record of those who were opposed hand to hand in the morning, sitting down by the same festal board at night. Nor did King Henry ever push his revenge to the extent of his power on those who had so stoutly held out their castles against him ; but having once conquered them, he endeavoured, by courtesy and fair promises, to retain them

as friends. It was his policy also to extend the greatest favours to those who had shown the most resistance in defending their possessions, rightly judging that such brave warriors were dangerous enemies, and in that restless age, the friends to be most valued. Acting upon this politic principle, he had prepared a large feast at the palace at Woodstock, and invited the chief knights amongst the prisoners, to share it, together with the different nobles who were leaders of his armed forces, taking care, however, that the numbers of the latter should at least double those of the conquered.

Great preparations were of course made for the occasion ; the Thames was dragged with nets to furnish its share to the feast ; steers and sheep were slaughtered ; and many a buck that had carried his antlers stately enough the day before, fell beneath the shafts of the foresters. The huge hall of the palace was strewn afresh with green rushes ; the ponderous oaken tables were removed from almost every other apart-



ment, and brought thither to accommodate the guests. Seats also, each formed of a solid oaken plank, and supported by tressels of the same material, were ranged on each side the tables, and covered with haubergettain, a kind of coarse cloth of mixed colours, for the tables were not so much as smoothed with the plane. The walls of the immense hall were decorated with arms and armour, and sylvan trophies mingled with banners, and lances placed cross-wise over hauberks and helm, and many a shield, that bore the dint of former frays. On the doors, and by the upper table, which was set apart for the chosen guests, stood a rich canopy, emblazoned with the arms of England, two lions blazing in gold ; this was set apart for the king. Drinking-vessels of silver and gold also glittered upon every table ; yet amid all this barbaric splendour, there were not those real comforts which the meanest cottager now possesses. The huge loaves of bread were neither half kneaded nor half baked, and bitter as aloes with the dregs

of beer with which they were mixed ; and also heavy as lead, and not freed from a tenth portion of the bran. Even some of the wine was so thick and full of dregs, that the barons were compelled to filter it between their teeth, and spit out the thick sediment upon the floor. Their repasts seemed to resemble their armour,—heavy, showy, and cumbrous ; but possessing little or no comfort.

Henry entered the hall from a private door, followed by Glanvil, the great law-giver of the age, and Thomas à Becket: the Chancellor, was seated on the right of the monarch, and the judge on the left. At the sounding of trumpets, the guests took their seats ; those at the upper end of the table placing themselves according to their rank, which each one seemed perfectly to understand ; those at the lower tables took their places as chance offered, or seated themselves beside their companions in arms. Although there seemed more of chance than order in this arrangement ; yet, by some

nice stroke of art, it was so contrived that one or other of King Henry's trusty followers sat between the knights they had so recently conquered. The dishes were handed from guest to guest by the attendants, each carving off that which suited his taste. Many a dagger which dealt the death-blow the day before at the siege, was now making deep inroads into boars' heads, barons of beef, and haunches of venison, which they placed upon their wooden trenchers, and having cut it into such mouthfuls as would choke any modern gormandizer, they helped themselves with their fingers; for forks were unknown, and therefore never wanted.

A few rather delicate dishes there were at the upper table, where the King was seated; but even these were spoilt to preserve a show; peacocks half roasted, that the beauty of their trains might be uninjured; and cranes served up with their heads and necks raw, and so propped up that they looked murderously on their devourers, and seemed ready to leap off

the dishes. Even the boars' heads grinned hideously, and showed their horrid tusks and deadly eyes (which were thrust into their heads again after they were dressed), as if they were ready to rend every knight who brandished his dagger over them. Wines there were in abundance; but many of these were spiced, and retained none of their natural flavour; even those that were drunk in their original state, were drawn from massy hogsheads with a spigot and faucet, much after the manner that an English peasant, in the present day, draws his home-brewed and muddy beer. Hipporcras, pigment, morat, and mead, were served up in large vessels, into which each guest plunged his cup as he pleased. Ale and cyder were also plentiful, and stood in large open tubs along the sides of the hall. More than one attendant, when a chance offered, knelt down and drank his fill out of these huge wooden vessels; for King Henry was not so plentifully supplied with drinking-cups, but that two or three knights were compelled to

drink from the same vessel. One knight at the lower end of the table, who had thrice called on an attendant to bring a drinking-cup, was at last told that there was not one but what was in use, filled his helmet from a huge vessel that contained mead, and having drank himself, gave it to his comrade.

Although many of the huge joints were not half cooked, yet there were no squeamish stomachs, but what could each bear their two pounds of solid flesh ; for, as Peter of Blois says, (and he fed many a time at Henry's court) "their stomachs, by the help of powerful exercise, got rid of everything."

But the whole scene was in keeping with the characters there assembled. The high-pillared and vaulted hall, with its richly painted windows, comported well with the broad-breasted, deep-voiced, and mail-covered guests, that sat beside the massy tables. Even the ponderous drinking-cups, which they from time to time uplifted to their lips, seemed only made for such strong

steel-covered arms to upraise. And when they reached over the table to converse with each other, between the huge mountains of meat, the beholder felt assured that the men who fed on such pastures could fight. Nay, some there were talking apart on the late blows they had dealt, who pointed with their daggers to the immense joints, running lines with the point, and saying, "An thus were his gorget, thus I brought my battle-axe, as it were, on this point of the haunch, striking his neck as I now separate this joint." Or, pointing to a round of beef, into which another would stick his dagger, saying, "So came the point of my lance, cleaving the fastenings of his acteon through; and I hold it a good stroke, if the head of the lance can enter a-slant in this wise," again mangling the joint, to show how he had dealt his blows on the enemy.

But deem not that all who met there were alike unfeeling; some there were who conversed together in low voices, and talked over the

virtues of those who had fallen in the fight. How nobly they had dealt with the foes they had in their day struck down ; how their shields had interposed between their companions, when the death-blow had all but fallen. How they had sheltered their enemies in the late wars, setting at nought the menaces of either Stephen or Matilda, when weighed beside their own honour. How beautiful maidens, (whose names have been for ages forgotten,) sought out their lovers from amid the slain,—how some wept, and others shed not a tear, but buried themselves in the solitudes of their ancient castles, and died broken-hearted.

But all are now gone ; the mourned and the mourners are forgotten ; even the grey and the weather-beaten turrets of their castles have long ago mouldered to dust. Those with whom they fought, and those whom they loved, and wept over, have not left even their ashes upon the earth. Nearly a thousand harvests have been gathered over their graves. Summer and



winter, day and night, storm and sunshine, have gathered over and passed away, from their silent beds; and we cannot now point out the spot where they sleep; for even cities have sprung up over the solitudes where they fought, fell, and were interred! A few of their names, worm-eaten and mouldered, are all that we have left to tell that they once lived, that they possessed lands and dwellings in spots, which even the scholar is now puzzled to discover,—that they married—and time has even erased the fair name of her they loved; a worm has eaten out what we shall never again discover.

But they thought not of these things; even Glanvil, as he remained silent, and from time to time forgot his meat to ponder over some clauses in the Doomsday Book which he had that day been referring to, thought not that his wisdom and learning would only be known to future ages, through the industry and talent of a poor monk. Henry, too, little dreamed that Peter of Blois, who was

laughing among the merriest at the lower end of the table, would, after seven centuries, hand down his very features on a soiled strip of sheep-skin. Nor did Becket at that moment, while he sat with his hand pressing a slight wound which he had received in the arm during the siege, then think that he one day was doomed to become a saint, and that miracles were to be wrought by that very body which he was then so freely supplying with wine.

But never did a summer sunset brighten over a merrier or noisier group, than were that day assembled in the hall of Woodstock. They "fought their battles o'er again," while the wine-cup passed gaily from hand to hand. They drank healths "three fathoms deep;" fomented new quarrels and buried old ones; pledged beauties whose names will never be heard again; spoke of tournaments and gallant deeds, of brave steeds and generous hawks, and hounds deep-chested and good at the chase.

The crusade,—stormy voyages,—castles which had stood long sieges,—mangonels which took ten men to work them,—armour of proof, and a thousand other matters which are only now to be found in ancient chronicles, were to them matters of the greatest importance in the world, for they never knew trade, science, or study.

But the giver of the feast was ill at ease; and neither the wit of Becket, as he from time to time pointed out some scene of humour and folly which was going on at the lower table, nor the wisdom of Glanvil, as he struck out some new and weighty matter of the law, could chase the dark spirit from the King. His thoughts were troubled about Fair Rosamond, for he had that day had a stormy interview with Queen Eleanor, and he well knew from her threats, that danger hovered over her he loved. Nor did he doubt for a moment but that the individual who had intruded into her chamber was one of the queen's emissaries,

but he knew not that it was Oliphant Uggledred ; nor had Pierre de Vidal since then dared to show his face before his sovereign.

“ But mark yonder knaves at the lower end of the banquet,” said Becket, endeavouring to arouse Henry from his reverie; “ saw ye ever such monsters at a feast? See how those two take hold of the wings of a crane, and are attempting to rip it down the middle, as if it had no more bones than an ell of broad-cloth.”

“ I see,” answered the king with a faint smile, and again sank into forgetfulness.

“ Your highness hath scarcely tasted of the wine-cup,” said Becket, keeping a watchful glance on the king, and speaking in a low tone; “ will not this be attributed as a sorry welcome to the guests. Come, my liege, endeavour to rally yourself; all eyes are upon the clouded sun.”

“ Thou meanest rightly,” replied the king, emptying his golden goblet at a draught: “ I will endeavour to arouse myself, although the

effort will cost me some pain. I feel strangely thoughtful to-night."

"So it becometh one who hath such a mighty load upon his shoulders, as your Highness," replied the chancellor; "but shift your cares upon me for a little space, and I will ponder over them. Trust me, it behoveth you not to bear such a load of trouble, without making me a partaker."

"Nay! thou hast borne more than thy share of late," replied the king, "and I have been thinking how I may best reward thee for thy service. What sayest thou to the Primacy of England? I am serious, and will make thee Archbishop of Canterbury. The See has been vacant long enough, and I know no one on whom I could bestow it, that I love so well as thyself."

The eyes of Becket kindled for a moment, while he remained in deep thought; then lifting up a corner of his rich surcoat, he said laughingly, "A pretty Archbishop should I make,

my liege, and mayhap slip from the midst of a sermon to a siege. Or, thinking that I was again in converse with your grace, hold forth on the power of hawks, whither of the long or short wing. Or peradventure forget my homily, to dwell upon the noble qualities of hound or horse; or unwittingly lifting the chalice to my lips, pledge you again in a bumper, thinking of some one or other of your Highness's witty sayings, while offering up mass, and laughing outright in the midst of my grave brethren."

"If thou art but as merry a primate, as thou hast been a chancellor," said King Henry, "thou wilt smile upon our sins, and ordain us many a pleasing penance."

The cup-bearer re-filled his goblet, while Henry laughed, drank deeply, and seemed to recover his spirits.

"Then my liege, what shrewd guesses I should form as to whether or not thy confessions were true," continued Becket, glad to

see the king shaking off his moody habit, "knowing the number of thy peculiar sins."

"Which thou couldst occasionally see did not outrun their old date," said the king; "and out of pure love might appoint such a penance as thou thyself wouldst share."

"And strike out such clauses of the law," said the grave Glanvil, entering into the humour of the monarch, "as were beyond absolution, that you might sin up to the statue."

"Then your Grace must work a miracle," continued Becket, "giving me a plurality of persons; for I could not list a confessional, and empty a cup at the same moment. And I fear should be apt to don my sancity with my garments, and doff it at your highness's bidding. And many might marvel at my turning saint on so short a notice, and vow that I took such time to think of my conversion, as while your Grace drew on your surcoat. Then, when I came to give you ghostly consolation, would you not laugh outright in my face, and swear that, as



I was a Saracen on my mother's side, it would be natural to find a little of the heathen in me, making that an excuse to drink deeper, until I could not even steady my steps by the help of my pastoral crook."

"And knowing mine honour," continued the king, "thou couldst give me credit for a goodly catalogue of crimes; or mightest thyself, at leisure, repeat for me half an hundred credos, that I might the sooner get to horse and share thy company."

"Bethink your highness of the long list of saints and apostles I should have to commit to memory," said Becket; "of the aves, credos, complins, and placebos that I must learn. And that when your grace, as was your wont, should call upon me for a merry stave, should have your royal ears regaled with a penitential psalm. Or that when following the hart, instead of breaking forth into the cry of the chase, I should burst forth into my homily;

or blow the notes of our matin song on the bugle instead of *a-mort*."

"Faith, an' I think I should laugh at thee," continued the king, looking affectionately upon his chancellor, "when I saw thee robed in cope and stole, and that merry brow of thine shadowed by a mitre, and in especial if some of thy mirthful sayings came into my head, or a few of those tricks which thou knowest I wot of."

"I will be no archbishop," said Becket, "where I must perforce listen to every confessional; know every woman that is not honest, and be acquainted with all the corners in which sin is committed. Or if I am, I will have written tables with the crimes named under their proper heads, and blanks left for figures. So that the number of times a man trespassed into his neighbour's enclosure, should be put down at once. How often he got drunk, with the number of the cups he emptied, should appear in round numbers. Nine times covet-

ing, should number as one of real transgression. I would have your little sins bundled together as the Flemings pack their cloth, so many ells to a bale. And thou, Glanvil, shouldst draw up my tables of penance."

"Beginning with the Assizes of Woodstock," replied the great lawyer: "and keeping separate volumes for his grace and my lord chancellor; and, out of courtesy, reserving the larger volume for his highness; calling the lesser, *Dooms-day Book*, and the larger, the *Book of Night*."

"Ah! ah! well struck, my grave judge," said Henry laughing; "but remember that Becket's volume must be of goodly dimensions, as he is the keeper of my conscience."

"Which is ever ready to embrace any reasonable matter," said Becket, "rather than give your chancellor much trouble; and which, through your grace's good training, will now leap an hedge, where before it boggled at a bush."

"Now out upon thee," said the king laugh-

ing and striking Becket smartly on the shoulder, for he had perfectly regained his gay humour. "I will make thee primate, whether thou wilt or not: and, on my soul, if thou ladenest my conscience heavier than thou hast done of late, I shall say that thou hast lost thine own."

"But what if I should become possessed of an archbishop's conscience, when I have lost the chancellor's?" said Becket, half seriously; "might it not prove less accommodating?"

"Methinks it hath done too much service to become now an over-tender one," said King Henry; "but, like some of the clauses in Glanvil's codes, may make a highway for the King, where it would be trespass for a subject to tread."

"And where even the King himself might sometimes get wrong," replied Glanvil, "did not his own laws render it impossible, attaching all blame to the roads, and immediately making new ones."

"And many of these so intricate," said the Earl of Leicester, now first listening to the con-

versation, "that even those who made them are puzzled to find their way through the forest."

Pledges were now drunk in rapid succession; and from the loud tumult occasioned by the number of voices which were uplifted at a time, it was evident that the huge drinking-cups had almost finished their labour for the night. In more than one place the attendants were seen busied in shaking down heaps of straw and rushes in readiness for the knights as they fell one by one from the benches, overcome with drinking. Some of these were already occupied; and the lamps which had long been lighted, flashed here and there upon many a manly form in mail, now snoring soundly on these simple couches. Henry and Becket arose from the table together, each, however, entering different apartments; but ere they separated for the night, the King enquired if he had seen Rosamond safely conducted to her new residence, and receiving an answer in the affirmative,

Henry embraced him, and bade him think over the subject of their recent conversation, adding, "Rest assured that I was never more in earnest."

Becket was lighted to the apartment allotted him, by his own attendant, Edward Gryme, as faithful a monk as ever left a monastery to serve a master, and the only one who remained true through every change of fortune. "Bring me water, said Becket to the attendant, "and let me wash off all traces of this revel;" then muttered to himself,—“Ay, the Primacy of England is worth soaring for; I will climb, now the ladder offers itself.” Gryme placed a silver ewer on the table; and the Chancellor having performed his ablutions, threw himself into a seat, and remained several moments in silence. His thoughts, however, were busily employed, and ran nearly as follows :—

“Better would it be, were he not to extol me to this giddy height. I love the king; but not more than my own honour;—would be true

subject;—but ruler of my own church; and rate the King of Heaven higher than a king of earth. I should watch as jealously over the holy privileges, as Henry does over his throne. I feel that I am ambitious; and our powers would clash together. No; I would extend to him no more favour, than I would to another child of the church. I would grasp my pastoral crook with as firm a hand as he does his sceptre. Strange that these thoughts have long haunted me like a never-to-be-forgotten dream. Strange, that even in sleep I have felt the mitre weigh heavily upon my brow, and swept through the long vaulted aisles of Canterbury in the proud robes of office. It must be the hand of Heaven;" muttered he aloud, "and I will prepare myself to obey its call."

"Heaven always dictateth aright;" said the monk stepping forward from the shadow of the door-way, where he had stood waiting Becket's orders to retire for the night, "obey her call, my Lord, and you cannot err."



“ Ah !” exclaimed the Chancellor, springing up from his seat, “ but what if those dictates, which we take for the voice of Heaven, are whisperings of the evil-one ? What,” continued he with energy, and pacing the apartment as he spoke, “ what if they spring from pride, ambition, a love of power, or that common human weakness, a wish to be great ? Ought they not to be torn from the breast, even as one would drag off a serpent that was in the act to bite ?”

“ It becometh not me to reply to such interrogations ;” answered Gryme, folding his hands together, “ you possess more knowledge on such matters than your unworthy servant, and the answer must come from your own heart.”

“ Ah ! ’tis there that the armour pinches,” replied Becket. “ I would soar fairly abreast with the proudest hawk that ever beat his wings in the empty air ; but let him once attempt to overtop me,” added he to himself, “ and I would wing my way with him into the

very bosom of the highest cloud. Gryme," continued he, "bring me a cup of wine, that I may look on the things which spring up before me through a mist, believing that they find birth in the juice of the grape. They leap up too fixedly before me."

The attendant obeyed, and Becket drained the goblet at a draught.

"Thou hast seen me climb step by step," continued the ambitious Chancellor, his speech scarcely affected by the liquor he had drunk, "overtopping every prejudice against my Saxon birth. Thou hast seen me surmount all envy; humble the haughty Norman nobles, and keep such a train of attendants, that they even outshone the king's. Another step I can but climb, and shall then be equal to Henry himself. What sayest thou Gryme?—the king hath all but planted my foot upon it,—shall I ascend?"

"If by so doing thou canst benefit our oppressed race," replied the monk, who was himself a Saxon, "ascend in Heaven's name."

“Thou knowest not all! my faithful follower,” said Becket, pacing the apartment in great excitement: “Thou canst scarcely dream of the wide door which this would throw open to my ambition. Once Primate of England, it is but a step to become a cardinal; and I am then at once at the foot of the Papal chair, and——”

“Primate of England!” echoed Gryme in amazement; “assuredly you aim not at so high a station? And yet,” added he, “could you once shake off this gay court-life, I know no one worthier of so great an honour.”

“The king forgets,” continued Becket, following the dictates of his own thoughts, “that I could acknowledge no earthly superior but the Pope; that I should then become the servant of the sovereign of Heaven. No!” added he, after a long pause, “he would find me no clay to be fashioned to the fancy of the potter. I would that he would place this honourable

load upon more yielding shoulders, but the will of Heaven be done !”

“ Amen !” responded the monk. “ And thou mayest be assured that Heaven never permits its weighty burthens to rest on unworthy shoulders ; but that if thou art to fulfil this holy office, it is the will of God, and that He hath selected thee as the great instrument by which to work His will.”

“ Unmeet instrument do I feel myself for the mighty labour,” replied Becket : “ but Heaven tempered the heart of Saul for its holy purposes, even when he went forth to destroy the chosen of Christ.— Would that I loved Henry less, or Heaven more !” added he again, throwing himself into the seat, where he sat, with his brow buried in his hand, in long and deep silence. The monk disturbed him not ; but throwing himself on a lowly pallet beside the Chancellor’s couch, soon told by his deep breathing, that he slept soundly.

Overpowered by his thoughts, and the drowsiness which crept over him, through having drunk so much wine at the banquet, Becket soon fell asleep. But his was no tranquil rest ; for the busy brain still pursued the same thoughts which had haunted him when awake. The form of King Henry also rose before him in slumber, and eyed him with an angry aspect : then passed long processions through the cathedral aisles,—priests chaunting anthems, and mitred forms in sweeping mantles,—crosses and shrines, on which holy tapers cast their trembling light,—all mingled in splendid confusion, as they passed.

He awoke, but the lamp was extinguished, and the round moon only shed her tender light over the apartment. He threw open the lower part of the richly-stained casement ; never had moonlight appeared so calm and lovely before : he looked out over the extensive park ; and saw the deep tranquillity that reigned without. He sighed deeply, and half whispered to himself,

“How unlike is this holy repose to the tumult which rages within myself! The weary world is now at rest, the houseless beggar hath forgot his hunger and raggedness, and sleeps soundly in the shadow of the cold hawthorn. The captive is no longer conscious of his chains; the serf forgets that he is a slave, and he who is to perish with the morning light, now enjoys a peace which I seek in vain.” He closed the casement, knelt down beside his couch and prayed fervently, then retired to sleep; but amid his slumbers, he was still haunted by visions of future greatness,—dim, and dreary splendours.

## CHAPTER XII.

The king therefore for her defence  
Against the furious queen,  
At Woodstock builded such a bower,  
The like was never seen.  
Most curiously that bower was built,  
Of stone and timber strong,  
An hundred and fifty doors  
Did to this bower belong ;  
And they so cunningly contrived  
With turnings round about,  
That none but with a faithful guide,  
Could enter in or out.

*Ancient Ballad of "Fair Rosamond."*

THE scene of our story now shifts to the wonderful labyrinth of Woodstock, so celebrated in old ballads, and well known to every reader of history, and lover of antiquarian lore. Bromton is perhaps the oldest authority on this matter, but he has left us no further account of it, than stating that it was the shelter of Rosamond ; and it would form a curious volume, were all



the opinions and descriptions of this famous retreat to be collected. Not a trace of it, however, now remains, even the very mound under which all its intricate mazes wound is swept away, and the spot where it stood is no longer to be traced, nay, its very existence has at last become a matter of doubt.

It had long stood neglected and solitary at the time of which we write, and although it had often afforded shelter to the defeated party, during the wars between Matilda and Stephen, yet, when these were over, it again sunk into neglect. Even at the time of which we write it was all but forgotten, for saving Henry and Becket, and one or two trusty attendants, the secret of its existence was unknown. Becket, however, during his sojourn at Woodstock, had explored many of its secret windings, and it was the crafty chancellor that first suggested it as a place of abode for Rosamond. Many alterations were therefore necessary, before it was brought to a fit state to receive this peerless

beauty, and all these were carried on in the most secret manner, either under his own eye, or beneath the inspection of Gryme and Pierre de Vidal.

The place itself was worthy of ranking among the wonders of the world; for never was such a winding and mysterious mansion before erected. Nothing without indicated its existence. A green ascent arose before the eye, covered with jagged underwood in some places, and crowned on the summit with numberless trees. On the opposite side, stretched what seemed the remains of an ancient forest, but the embankments were in some places so steep, and the trees so closely planted together, that even the most adventurous huntsman turned aside his steed in despair, when the stag took shelter in that gloomy covert.

The hill-side bore no striking sign of ingress, saving a cavern-like entrance, here and there overhung with trailing ivy and brambles, and grey withered grass. And did any curious

wanderer, while rambling through the chase, chance to pause before it, he generally turned away satisfied with its darkness and gloomy appearance, and fearful that it might prove the lair of some wolf. Even if the acclivity was ascended, the adventurer was compelled to tread cautiously, for here and there gaped deep chasms, in some places overgrown with grass and various vegetable matter, and when looked into, nothing was seen but a deep cavern of darkness.

Even Becket, when his curiosity first led him to enter the mouth of the cave, was about to retreat, but when he had stood some time gazing on the jagged roof of the vault, he became conscious that a faint ray of light gleamed in the remotest corner. He groped his way to the spot, and soon discovered that the light was admitted through an opening of the hill, and saw another feeble gleam like that streaming through a tunnel, in the distance. After having passed several of these wind-

ing and nearly dark passages, he at length came to where a larger opening admitted the light, and where three of these winding passages again branched off. Fortunately he selected the one which led farther under the hill: had he taken either of the others, they terminated in dark and deep wells, the secret of whose depths had never been explored.\*

\* The author had himself a narrow escape last spring, while exploring the subterraneous ruins of the ancient palace of Lincoln, which stands adjoining the Cathedral. At the end of one of these vaulted and pillared caverns, he came suddenly to the edge of a deep well, which, owing to the dim light, (only admitted through cavities in the roof,) cannot at first be seen. A stone thrown down, was a long time ere it reached the bottom; and an attentive ear could but just distinguish the plashing of water when it fell. Several other winding and mysterious passages, terminated in deep and dark donjons, without any sign of steps, or any visible means either to ascend or descend in safety. Whoever ventures to explore these too-little known, but magnificent ruins, will do well to "look before they leap," for most of these dismal donjons, are at the end of dark and winding passages, and to come upon one of them unawares, produces a fearful sensation: a step further, and there only reigns the unbroken darkness that has hung there for centuries. What they were originally intended for, we must leave the antiquarian to decide.

After having passed several similar galleries, and been compelled to retrace his footsteps many times, and had several narrow escapes from pits and donjons, which he only saved himself from by feeling his way with a pole, he at length came to a huge iron-studded door. This he opened, and great was his surprise, when he discovered a beautiful and natural amphitheatre, at the farthest side of which stood an ancient Saxon building.

Becket had taken a narrow survey of the spot, when king Henry expressed his fears for the safety of fair Rosamond, he immediately pointed it out, as a secret and secure retreat. It was also settled between them, that she should possess it without delay. Maud had long been removed thither, and Rosamond was also placed there, after her return from the beleaguered castle, for as the reader is already aware, the palace of Woodstock was no longer a fitting place of security from the evil agents of Eleanor.

Whether this labyrinth had been erected by Alfred at the time he was compelled to seek shelter from the Danes, or it belonged to a period more remote than that of the wise monarch, history is altogether silent. But it is not improbable that he dwelt here while translating Boetius, which it is on record he accomplished amid the retirement of Woodstock. Leaving, however, all these conjectures, and the rust of past ages which has gathered over, and eaten away all that once remained of this mysterious mansion, we will describe it, as it stood at the period of which we write.

The building, to which access was so difficult, and where Rosamond had now taken up her abode, was altogether of Saxon architecture, and had at the first glance the appearance of a strong stunted tower, the angles of which were broken by turrets. Nor did the tower rise so high as the steep, but was overtopped by the arena in which it stood.

Strength alone seemed to have been the great

object of the architect; and the vast buttresses that widened out at the base of the building, and climbed high on each side, were of themselves large enough for modern apartments. The windows appeared small from the outside, looking like mere loopholes, although they were of considerable dimensions within. One, which overlooked the doorway, had evidently been enlarged and supplied with a Norman casement. The tower consisted of three floors, besides smaller chambers, excavated in the thick or double walls; also a ground apartment, which contained various recesses, and offices, many of them formed in the buttresses. Excepting the second floor, which was better lighted, the whole of the apartments were gloomy and comfortless, having a dull, prison-like appearance: they were only accessible to each other by steep and narrow flights of steps, badly lighted from some narrow shot-hole. The doorway consisted of a cluster of retiring arches, the outer arch ornamented with a kind of zig-zag carving; the inner one dwindling with a pleasing perspective



to the size of the ponderous and iron-studded door. Several subterraneous passages communicated with the winding galleries which stretched under the hill; some of them leading into deep dungeons, from which ascent was gained by rope-ladders, which fell so closely to the sides, that they could scarcely be distinguished. Behind the tower, a passage had been excavated, and opened upon a beautiful pleasance, which was skirted by the river Glyme, being here both wider and deeper than in any other part. Nor was the pleasance or garden accessible from any other quarter, without crossing the river, and it was so thickly hedged in with tall trees and dense underwood, that both eye and foot sought in vain to penetrate it.

To describe the whole of this wondrous labyrinth and ancient building minutely, would add nothing to the interest of our tale; we must, therefore, leave it to be unravelled in the forth-coming part of the story; and for the present, conduct our readers into the apart-

ment occupied by fair Rosamond and her attendant. Every room, be it remembered, had been fitted up in a becoming style of splendour, under the superintendence of Becket, and no expense was spared to render this romantic seclusion as comfortable as wealth and circumstances could make it. But in spite of all this appearance of outward comfort, a silent sadness seemed to overhang the fair inmates of the tower, such as they had almost hitherto been strangers to. Rosamond had put on mourning robes for the death of her father, and although she had in some measure regained her former composure, yet a new source of sorrow awaited her, and one to which she had hitherto been a stranger. Owing to her absence, and other circumstances which the late tumult had occasioned, on her return she found her first born child on the point of death. Maud had done all, but what a mother only could do, for its preservation during her absence; yet it seemed to droop hour after hour while Rosamond was away:—and while Henry was seated at the

banquet which we have described, the fond mother was bending over her beautiful babe, in expectation that it would soon breathe its last.

It seemed as if sorrow had but waited to usher her into a new scene of grief, as if her life for the future was to be nothing more than a varied scene of misery; for she had scarcely passed a peaceful moment since her brief interview with Queen Eleanor in the park. To be so suddenly and miraculously thrown into the arms of her father, and then, after a few moments, to see him stretched at her feet a bleeding corse: to be hurried from a beleagured castle to her apparently dying child, with the remembrance of the miserable night she had passed in the park barefooted and barehead, were heavy trials for one so young and beautiful.

She sat by the window in her lonely tower; a fair babe cradled upon her fairer bosom, and her long eye-lids drawn downward, gazing with a mother's love on that innocent face, on which the cold moonbeams then fell. On the other side of the window sat Maud, watching

the quick and heavy breathing of the beautiful babe, whose little spirit seemed hovering between two worlds, as if loath to exchange a mother's love for heaven. The little white hood which she had partially drawn around its sweet face, caught up and threw back the rays of the moon, making a kind of glory around the arm on which it was cradled; and she herself, in the solemn agony of her beauty, looked even more divine than those glowing sketches which do all but breathe on the canvass, and represent Mary Mother, bending over her God-like child!

There was something so solemn, and holy in that still and melancholy scene, that it scarcely seemed to belong to earth, and not inaptly resembled one of those silent apartments, of which some great enchanter kept the key, and only ventured in alone in the still moonlight, to see that no opposing spirit had broken the power of his slumberous spell. Nor did the motion of the agonized mother, as she swayed her beautiful form to and fro to lull the infant at her breast, break the repose of the scene, for it

seemed uncertain whether the motion belonged to her or the trembling moonbeams, that fell upon her white drapery. A "dim religious light," also diffused itself through the vaulted and ancient apartment, broken into a variety of sad colourings as it streamed through the stained window, and fell on the rude devices of cross-winged seraph and full-cheeked cherub, mingled with many a saint, whose cold stony eyes looked deadly out from their ornamented niches. It seemed indeed a meet anti-room for death, a crowding together of the twilight-forms which spring up in cathedral aisles, half shadowy and half real, and waft the spirit unawares to other worlds, peopled with shapes which no longer belong to the earth. Neither was the scene broken by any sounds, saving the deep breathing of the infant, and the low unconscious hush of the fond mother, which seemed like silence whispering for all around to be still. Maud kept a steadfast glance on the beautiful pair before her, as she sat with folded hands, and that painful look of resignation,

the chiselled workmanship of the heart, every stroke of which leaves on the brow a settled and marble despair, the sculptured agony that never deigns to murmur.

“He sleepeth,” said Maud, in a whisper so low that it might only have been the breathing of the sleeper.

“He sleepeth but lightly,” replied Rosamond, catching the faint sound, while a fainter smile passed unawares over her lovely but sad features, so pale with long watching. That look, however, was given back by the little sleeper, who unconsciously smiled in his slumber; it was but a moment, and it faded over his innocent face, like the moon just revealing herself between two clouds then passing again into darkness.

“The angels are whispering to him,” said Maud, in the same scarcely audible tones, “he seeth the guardian spirits and smiles.”

“They have long hovered around him,” replied Rosamond, with a deep sigh, “and will soon snap the string of love that links him to my heart; they but wait to bear him to a better

world, his fever increaseth hourly, his breathing waxeth feeble." As she spoke, a bright tear lingered for a moment upon her eye-lash, then stealing down her cheek, fell upon the face of the little sleeper, and caused him slightly to stir. "I would that it had pleased heaven to take me away, when I were young and sinless as this sleeping babe," continued she; "how much agony should I have escaped, what a load of suffering should I have spared my father! And yet it is the will of the Holy One that we should endure; and oh! Maud, how little are all our sorrows, when weighed in the balance beside His, whose brow was wreathed with sharp thorns, and who shed his blood drop by drop on the cross, for our sins. What mother hath undergone such agony?"

"None, lady," replied Maud, "most true it is."

"Hold thou my child but a little while," said Rosamond, arising and placing the infant gently upon Maud's lap. "My heart is full, and



would fain pour forth its feelings before the holy cross."

She went to the further end of the apartment, where hung the figures of a Madonna and Child, and kneeling down in the pale moonlight before a silver crucifix, which flashed back the bright rays of the queen of night, and fell upon her long silky hair, thus prayed, with her hands folded.

"Holy Mary! mother of God, Queen of Heaven, and sovereign lady of the angelic hosts,\* hear me and intercede in my behalf. And thou her almighty Son who suffered in most cruel-wise for our sins, bend down from thy dwelling beyond the stars, and hearken to my orisons. Stretch out those hands to help me, through which the hard nails were so mercilessly driven, bend that brow which once bled beneath a crown of piercing thorns, and let pity enter into that tender side which the sharp lance pierced thorough. Oh! take not yet my blessed babe to that place which thou hast provided for those

\* The Virgin Mary was formerly mentioned and invoked by these titles. See Sharon Turner's valuable "History of the Middle Ages," vol. v. page 45.

thou dearly lovest: leave it with me a little longer, if it be thy holy pleasure, that from its sufferings I may learn to bear, even as thou thyself didst suffer. Holy mother! intercede in my behalf; by the remembrance of the God-child which once fed on thy breast do I implore thee to pity me. By the great love which thou didst feel when watching over his holy slumber. Oh! be not an angered if I pray not to thee aright, but behold me as the supplicating priest pleading for mine only child. I have suffered much of late, but, if it be thy blessed will, let me endure more of thine anger, but oh! merciful mother, spare my dear child.

“Holy Mary! leave me not to weep a-nights, and feel for the baby at my side when it is gone; place not yet its little head on the cold pillow of the earth, leaving my heart a-cold for its presence; slay not my tender love. Almost all that were dear to me have been taken away: my heart yet bleeds with the wounds which were made when those I loved were torn from it: leave me then this

little one to weep over in the long dark nights, that I may not lie alone and tremble at the thoughts of death. My heart is fast breaking with sorrow,—my eyes are a-weary with shedding tears. I cannot pray at times for very weeping. Oh make me stronger to bear, or portion out my sufferings in fitting measure for my feeble frame. Mother of God, my heart is bowed before thee; should it be thy pleasure to take away my child, let me at least sleep in the same grave, that its father's tears may fall upon us twain.

“ Spirit of my poor dear mother! soul of my father, that fled in anger against me! sainted sister now in heaven, oh! plead for me a sinner. Kneel and supplicate for me with tears and prayers, even as my heart would bow for your sakes, were ye sufferers like me below. Alas! they hear me not; they will not hear me; they have made complaints at the throne of heaven. They believe I have thrown a stain upon their graves. But thou, Holy Mother, knowest my heart is innocent; all

secrets are revealed before thine all-seeing eyes: my guilt will, with thy mercy, only darken the eyes of those on earth. Alas! my heart is no longer in a fitting mood to approach thee; it clings too closely to earthly remembrances. It is even unwilling to resign my child to an easy death, when thou didst give up thine only Son to suffer. Oh God! forgive all that my tongue hath uttered, and my soul hath done amiss; purify my feelings from all earthly dross, and mould my nature to thy holy will."

She ceased, and the moon which now rested full on the centre of the window, cast all her splendour upon the Madonna and the silver crucifix, and threw a glorious halo around the bending figure of Rosamond.

She arose more resigned to the will of heaven after praying, for rude as it was, it came like the refreshing shower; which, accompanied by the wind, maketh the green things appear lovelier when the tempest hath subsided.

Just then King Henry entered the chamber;

he spoke not, but drawing a seat towards Rosamond, gently clasped her fair hand in his own, and sat beside her in silence. Nor could he, while gazing upon the mournful group before him forget his own littleness. The consciousness that a word from his lips could change the destinies of nations, — could awaken the deep throat of war, or spread peace over the land — seemed but like the mockery of power; while, with all his greatness, he could not even pour comfort into one heart, or make happy the only one he sincerely loved. While he gazed upon her in speechless sorrow, he remembered not that he was the ruler of a mighty people; his cares for the time were wholly centered in that silent chamber; and when he awoke to the full consciousness of his weak estate, he only sighed to think others had as great a claim upon his regard as Rosamond, and cursed the fate that had destined him to rule.

He spoke not, for his mind wandered back to the scene he had just quitted, and the stormy shouts of the banquet seemed still to ring upon

his ears. It appeared like a dream ;—the awful and breathless stillness which reigned over the ancient tower ; the gloomy galleries, through which Pierre de Vidal had just lighted him ; the lonely walk through the still and moonlit park, — were strange contrasts to the uproar of the feast, to the glare of lights which flashed upon many a mailed warrior, and their loud-throated revelry.

He drew the beautiful face of Rosamond almost unconsciously to his bosom, and while he brooded over the misery which his ambition had drawn down upon one so lovely, a tear stole unawares along his manly cheek, and fell upon her neck. Although he moved like an undaunted lion in the presence of Eleanor, yet before Rosamond he was peaceful as a lamb. Her patience under all wrongs, her silence under all suffering, subdued his haughty spirit, and he felt himself unworthy of her love.

He gently unwound the arms of Rosamond from his neck, arose from his seat without uttering a word, and stood for several moments in

silence, bending over the infant which still rested on Maud's lap.

"Rosamond," said he, after a long pause; "dry thy tears, my own heart's love; our child will not die, he now breathes freely, and his fever hath much abated during the short space which I have been with thee."

"The Holy Virgin be praised!" exclaimed the fond mother, "who hath heard and answered my prayer. I vow to burn waxen tapers before her sacred shrine for a whole moon. Hast thou," inquired she, in a voice which faltered with emotion, "had the remains of my beloved father conveyed to where my mother is interred?"

"Thy wishes are, ere this, fulfilled, my sweet love," replied the King. "I have dispatched a score of my most trusty followers to do thy bidding."

"Bless thee for thy kindness," said Rosamond, "had it not been for the ill state in which I found this babe, I would have followed his bier."

"Better remain where thou art, my sweet Rose," said the King. "Here thou art secure,



and with all my boasted vigilance, we have had one narrow escape from the enemy. There are those who love me less for thy sake, and it behoveth me to be watchful over thee. Pierre de Vidal is faithful and trust-worthy if kept from the wine cup; and there are now those around thee, in whose hands I dare trust my own life."

"Oh, it is kind of thee to let my safety occupy so much of thy thoughts, when weightier matters call for thy wisdom," said Rosamond; "but will not your Grace, at times look in upon our dwelling, which will be all but a prison-house without your presence?"

"Sweet Rose, few shall be the minutes that I will waste, when chance offers, without seeing thee," replied the King, "but call me not by any other name name than Henry. I would forget that I am any other than the fond lover, that saved thy beauty from the arms of death; and gave thee a heart, then uncontaminated by ambition;—call me only thine own Henry. Alas!" added he with a sigh; "would that I

were now as worthy of thy love as when I first clasped thee to my bosom. But now I dare not even defend thy fair fame from evil whispers, lest our secret should be discovered."

"They who speak evil of me," replied Rosamond, "will one day answer for injuring my fame. If to love faithfully is a crime, then am I indeed guilty; but it is, I trust, a guilt that heaven itself will pardon."

Just then the door of the chamber was thrown open, and a strange wild-looking figure rushed into the apartment, followed by Pierre de Vidal. He seemed to be a youth of about twenty summers, lean and sallow, and of a cadaverous complexion. There was a wild glare in his eyes, which bespoke him half idiot, half savage, and while he ran to and fro in the apartment, moving his long skinny arms as a bird does its wings when flying, he made a loud humming noise with his lips, not unlike the buzzing of bees. The minstrel was about to strike him with an ashen twig, when the idiot clung to the side of Rosamond; and, softening

his loud buzz to a plaintive kind of humming, seemed to implore her protection. Maud had retired to an inner recess, to lay the infant on its couch.

“What have we here?” said the King, turning first to the idiot, then to Vidal; “speak, sirrah, how came this poor wretch hither?”

“By the mass,” replied the minstrel, “I can scarcely tell your Highness; but the old gardener says that he is akin to the owls that haunt the ivy in the old labyrinths. They call him Gamas Gobbo the bee-eater, for he does nothing but run about all day long in the wilderness, making that buzzing noise, and catching bees to feed on their honey bags.”

“Strange!” muttered the King; “I do remember having heard mention made of this youth, and gave orders that he should be cared for by our Reeve in the town of Woodstock.”

“The worthy Reeve did obey your Grace’s orders as far as could,” replied the Minstrel, “and hath, together with several of his neighbours, been chasing the youth since sunset.

For no sooner was the door opened and the sunshine let in, than out darted the bee-eater like a bird, shot down the long street, scaled the park fence, and was soon in quest of his favourite food among the wild-flowers. I chanced to be abroad in the chase when the Reeve entered to reclaim his prisoner; but never did a hart-of-ten so baffle his pursuers as this idiot did the Reeve and his followers; and while the puny pursuers puffed and perspired, not a drop of moisture stood on the idiot's brow, and they gave up the chase in very despair."

"But how gained he admittance here?" inquired the King.

"Even as the owls return to their nest," answered Vidal; "he drew to his old haunts at moonlight, scaled the hill top, and dropped himself through one of the crevices, that let in the light, and had coiled himself up in the arbour, where I aroused him from his slumber, for he was buzzing in his sleep, as if his dreams were of bees and flowers, and his thoughts like sunbeams ——"

“ Reserve thy metaphors until I call for thy minstrelsy,” said the King; then looking on the poor idiot, who still clung to the side of Rosamond, and from time to time cast an imploring glance on her sweet countenance, he added, “ Poor wretch, I pity thee, and thou seemest determined to take up thy home in this solitude whether I will it or not.”

“ Let him remain with us,” said Rosamond, casting a glance of pity on poor Gobbo, which he seemed to understand, for he clung closer to her kirtle, and burying his face in the folds, kept up a low humming, not unlike the purring of a cat when it is pleased. “ Poor creature !” continued she, “ it were a pity to drive him from his old haunts, I will see that he cometh to no harm, leave him to my care ?”

“ It shall be as thou willest it,” replied king Henry ; “ and thou, Vidal, wilt keep an eye on his actions. Remember I have forgiven thy negligence once, let me not remind thee of thy duty again.”

The minstrel hung down his head ashamed,

and by his silence and the colour which darkened his olive cheeks, admitted his guilt, but replied not.

“ I know thee to be faithful,” continued the king, extending his hand to the minstrel, which the latter pressed to his lips, “ and only wish thee to watch over this lady’s safety, as thou wouldst, and hast done over mine own. Fear not, but that in due time, we shall discover the villain, who ensnared thee over thy cups. I need not tell thee to be more guarded or the future. Lead the poor idiot to his repose, and deal kindly with him, as thou wouldst obtain my favour.”

Pierre de Vidal beckoned Gamas Gobbo to follow him, and the bee-eater, looking first at Henry and then at Rosamond, seemed convinced by the kindness in their countenances, that they intended him no harm, and buzzing in his kindest key, he placed his hand in that of the minstrel, and they quitted the apartment together.

“ I must again leave thee, my sweet Rose,”

said the king, pressing her fondly to his bosom. "The moon is already bending westward, and matters of great import require my presence at an early hour on the morrow."

"Thou wilt be with me again speedily," said Rosamond, returning the king's embrace. "I crave pardon for disturbing thee at the banquet, but I feared that the last moments of my child were numbered."

"From the council or the camp," answered king Henry, "I will fly on the wings of love to obey thy summons, be it noon-day or night; my greatest grief is in parting from thee, my only pleasure in thy presence. As for the child, it is now, thank heaven, past all danger."

"Thou art ever kind to me," replied Rosamond, again clinging to Henry, but his heart was too full to reply, and gently unwinding her fair arms from his neck, he imprinted a fervent kiss on her sweet lips, and hurried from the apartment.

Pierre de Vidal, conducted him, by the light



of a torch, through the winding and gloomy labyrinth, and the monarch retraced his footsteps, alone, in the pale moonlight, to the palace.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Unclasp the ponderous volumes ! We will see  
The ancient laws their time worn leaves contain ;  
The tenures that men held in the olden times,  
When every homestead paid its price in blood.  
When Sock and Villein tilled the hedgeless hides,  
And Norman William made the Book of Doom.

*Ralph the Red-handed.*

And pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
With mask and antique pageantry ;  
Such sights as youthful poets dream,  
On summer eve, by haunted stream.

*Milton.*

OUR story again shifts to the pleasant palace of Oxford, at that period one of the chief residences of the English kings. It was on the morning after the banquet, that King Henry had appointed a meeting between two opposite parties from the wild forests of Hampshire, to settle some dispute regarding the just distribution of lands, which was to be decided by a reference to Domesday Book. Becket would have

taken a share in the business of the court, but other urgent matters called him to meet the King of Scotland at Lincoln, and he was busied in preparing his splendid retinue ; for it was his royal master's pride to see him move with a train that even outdid his own. Ranulph de Glanvil was therefore compelled to meet these "Hampshire hogs," for such was the epithet bestowed upon them by the king, taking care, however, that it was not spoken within their hearing. Although the scenes which we are about to describe may appear like episodes in our story, yet being highly illustrative of the manners of the period which we are attempting to shadow forth, we are bound, like true tale-tellers, to portray them.

The large hall of the palace was set apart for this decision, and great numbers had assembled to witness so novel a trial; for never since the days of the Conquest had any monarch openly offered to do justice between the Saxons and the Normans, on such matters as the present. The multitude assembled were

of all ranks, from the mailed baron, to the well dressed franklin, and down to the poor Saxon who tilled the few acres, which he held at heavy service from the greater landholder. Every variety of costume worn at the period was mingled together, from the surcoat of simple sheep-skin, to the mantle of *haubergettain*, or cloth of mixed colour; and on to the costly coat of rich velvet trimmed with minever. All these huddled together, had a pleasing appearance as seen by the clear sunshine which streamed in through a thousand varied dyes from the painted windows.

Above the assembled crowd sat the grave Glanvil, in the seat of justice; his long white beard contributing to his look of venerable wisdom, and giving him altogether an imposing appearance. Beside him sat King Henry, and around the table which the high seats of the monarch and judge overlooked, were placed the scribes and men of law, who endeavoured to look as wise as Glanvil himself. On a lofty desk before the judge, were placed the

two volumes of Doomsday Book, each bound in wood, and secured with strong brass clasps. The larger volume was laid open at the page commencing with "HANTESCIRE, TERRA REGIS." And while Glanvil pondered gravely over the antique writing, or glanced from time to time on the assembled group before him, the mind could not help picturing to itself the Great Judge unfolding the Book of Life, and about to deal forth sentence upon all mankind according to their good and evil deeds. Many a Saxon cheek blanched as they heard the crackling of the vellum leaves turned over, and thought that those volumes contained the destinies of a great people. They looked upon the records of bloodshed and rapine with a melancholy glance, and sighed as they thought of the thousands of homes which had become the spoil of the invaders. But these regrets passed away as the business proceeded, the opening forms of which we shall altogether omit.

Great was the astonishment of the parties

when they found the dispute was not to be settled by oaths, for they had hitherto been accustomed to terminate all such matters by the number of witnesses which each party could bring forward, the value of every oath being weighed according to the possessions of the individual. Thus it required the oaths of several franklins to be equivalent to that of one baron or knight. But Glanvil had, in a great measure abolished this barbarous mode of trial; and by weighing and comparing the diverse statements, had reduced all decisions to the human judgment, calling in also a judicious jury to his aid. This the Saxons looked upon as worse than the trial by ordeal, by which they believed the matters were decided by the judgment of God. They were at a loss to imagine how justice could be given by parties who had not witnessed the whole transaction brought before them, and who preferred hearing both sides state their cases, in preference to taking the opinion of the majority of witnesses; they murmured at it as a Norman innovation.

However, as the trial proceeded many of them

began to alter their opinions. "What is the cause of that knave's complaint?" inquired the King, turning to Glanvil, and pointing out a bluff double-chinned miller, whose garments were white over with meal; and who, from the unsteadiness of his step, and the peculiar expression of his eye, left no doubt but that he had drank pretty freely before coming to court. Glanvil inquired his name, and the grounds of his complaint.

"Cola, the son of Hugo, surnamed *Barbatus-with-the-long-Beard*," replied the bluff miller; "and I come to complain of Humphrey Wigot, called *Wolf-face*, our villanous bailiff, who hath raised the rental of my mill to eighteen pence, when it was but charged sixteen pence by the year, at the time that William the Norman parcelled out the kingdom,—like a thief as he was," added the miller in a low voice.

"Humphrey-of-the-Wolf-face, step forth," exclaimed Glanvil; "and answer by what right thou didst add two pence to the yearly rental of the miller?"



“Please your learned Justiceship,” said the bailiff, a huge tun of man, “Cola the son of Hugo refused to pay the King’s geld, or to furnish two hundred eels to the lord of the manor, according to the tenure which was recorded by the commissioners, sent down by his Mighty Highness, King William, heaven rest his soul! Further, when I came to demand the geld a second time, he had undermined the bank by his mill-dam, which gave way, and let me into the mill-stream.”

“That is a lie, as big as the bailiff himself!” exclaimed the miller, “for it was the constant motion of the mill-wheel which undermined the bank; and I warned the bailiff to look to his steps when next he came for his geld. Nor would I pay the tax, because he gave Saul, the fisherman, the power to fish in the mill-stream, which was against my tenure, as I held my land and mill by demesne. Beside the big bailiff wanted to claim meal enough for a pudding once a week, for which he swears he holds Sidwolf the steward’s seal; but he hath never shown the grant, and wants too big a

pudding for my hopper, which is scarce the dimensions of his own huge paunch. Marry, he would keep one man constantly grinding for him, as he himself is grinding down every one." Henry had much ado to keep from laughing outright in the miller's face, but Glanvil moved not a muscle of his grave countenance, while he referred to Doomsday book, and thus proceeded.

"Clere Hundred, Hugo-with-the-long-Beard, holds half a yardland, and a mill in demesne, assessed at nothing; for which, however, he pays one solida and a third, besides furnishing two hundred eels to the head-borough of the hundred,—formerly it paid nothing. The hundred swear that it paid nothing since King Edward's time.'—How, miller, you have made no mention of the half yardland of meadow," said Glanvil; "who now holdeth it?"

"The bailiff," replied the miller, "layeth claim to it, through having paid the tax; which was never demanded in my father's time; nor is it mentioned in my grant, and Alaric-the-Aged, who is now here, and lived in the

hundred of Clere at the time the survey was made, can testify to the same."

"Let Alaric-the-Aged step forth!" exclaimed Glanvil, glad to see a man who had been witness to the proceedings of the commissioners sent down by the Conqueror.

A venerable old man, whose long white beard swept down his bosom, and whose aged features expressed great intelligence, in spite of his dim eyes, now came forward, supporting himself on a staff. He made a low obeisance before the judge, and awaited his interrogation.

Glanvil paused a moment ere he spoke, so so much was he struck with the appearance of the old patriarch; he also ordered one of the scribes to arise and resign to him his seat.

"How old art thou?" inquired the judge, in a kindlier tone of voice than that in which he usually spoke.

"One hundred and two years, come the feast of St. Michael the Archangel," answered the venerable patriarch.

"You remember the commissioners sent

down by King William," inquired Glanvil: "what year was that?"

"Four of them came to Warneford in the hundred of Clere, in the year of Grace one thousand and eighty-six," answered the old man. "It was on a fine evening in Hay-monath. I was then a young man, and had been mowing in the meadows held by Hugo de Porth. I remember pausing with my scythe on my shoulder, and marvelling who such fine folks could be, for we had not many strangers then to visit the little Thorpe of Warneford."

Glanvil rubbed his hands with delight, when he discovered the old man's garrulity, for he had long endeavoured to ascertain the correctness of Doomsday book, and was glad that the evidence of one so uninterested had at last appeared.

"Know you the names of those who came down to make a return of the hundred of Clere?" inquired Glanvil.

"Yea, an' it please you I can name them all," replied the old man, unabashed by the assembly.

“There was William de Owe, whom we called William-the-Liar, for sure never did man so cram us poor villagers with false tales. And Durand de Cave, whom we nick-named Dury-the-Drunkard, for he was seldom or never sober. Ernulf de Hesding, a very fat man, who used to sit in the sunshine and fall asleep. And Walter-with-the-Wooden-Leg, for he had left his real leg on the field of Hastings, but he could not write, and had a very red face, and swore awfully. What his other name was I have forgotten.”

“By the mass!” exclaimed king Henry, laughing outright, “I would give my handful of broad pieces, an’ Becket were here to list this description of the bastard’s commissioners. It would serve him to laugh at for many a moon.” Ranulph de Glanvil, could scarcely forbear smiling, as he said, “An’ every county had such vouchers, my liege, we could scarce trust the judgment of these volumes.” Then turning to Alaric-the-Aged, he said. “How trowest thou they accomplished their duty? Did they to the

best of thy knowledge make full and fair returns, without showing any favour?"

"So far as they took the judgment of the head-men of the hundred," answered the old man, "the returns were honestly given. But it is known that Dury-the-Drunkard, put down the possessions of Amos, who kept the Scot-ale, at nearly double their value, stating that what had before been held at twenty shillings, was then worth sixty. All because Amos would not allow him to get drunk at free cost."

"Knowest thou any further instances of this kind?" enquired Glanvil.

"Ernulf, whom we surnamed the Sleepy," continued Alaric, "put down the lands of Rudolph the son of Sefrid, at only two hides and a yardland, when they had time out of mind paid Danegeld, as three hides and a half, nor did he record the woods which furnished five hogs, but stated that it paid sixty shillings, but was not then worth more than thirty. Whereas it had never before been of such value.

But this he did because Rudolph procured him store of good eating and drinking, and his pretty wife also administered to his wants—further causes were also assigned; but Rudolph's was folk-land, and was formerly held by *petit sergeanty*, some presentation of horns if I err not."

"Did they then never measure the lands," inquired Glanvil, "when the quantity was doubtful?"

"They did once determine to settle a question by this means," answered the old patriarch. "But Ernulf fell asleep under an oak, while Walter was endeavouring to free his wooden leg from a bog into which it had sunk. The sleeper caught cold, and the soldier was compelled to get Crutch the carpenter to make him a new leg. So ever after they found a greater increase of faith, and took all matters on hearsay. One night too they were frightened by the appearance of a monk, who swore that he would carry them off to purgatory, if they did not make a return of the Abbey-lands, much



beneath their true value; fear compelled them to obey.

“Ingulphus, the Abbot of Croyland,” said Glanvil, turning to the king, “records an instance of a like nature. But why,” he continued, “were they not received in the same manner as in other shires?”

“There was a feeling against enclosing so much land for the new forest,” replied the old man. “The people could not forget that many of their hamlets and churches had been swept away for this purpose. And had the commissioners been any other than jovial and careless fellows, they would never have lived to make any return to the king.”

“But how come the returns which yourselves have made, to be so different from these recorded in Domesday Book,” inquired Glanvil. “The very names scarce bear a resemblance.”

“The commissioners were Normans,” answered the old man, “and spelt the names, which were given them by the hundred, after their own fashion. Holding it unworthy of their

dignity to search our ancient Saxon records, therefore setting down such matters at a venture, as if they were only anxious to eat, drink, sleep, and obtain their pay."

"And what land do you hold in the hundred?" inquired the judge.

Half a hide," answered old Alaric, "which contains wood for one hog, pasturage for one ox, yielding herbage, which, at the survey, was valued at fourpence, a copse for mending fences, rated at three-pence, one messuage worth sixteen-pence. But great part of the wood has been blown down, and it is not worth so much now. I hold it allodially of Hugo de Porth. The whole was returned as worth four shillings. My father held half a ploughland in demesne, but it was never so held by me."

"You doubtless remember the tenures by which many in the hundred held their possessions at the time of the survey," said Glanvil. "I will crave you to name a few which have not been changed."

"Nigel the physician held half a hide of

Hugo de Porth," replied Alaric, "for bleeding the serfs at spring and fall; his son holds the same. Herbert the goatherd held two yardlands for furnishing two gallons of goat's-milk daily. Walernan the smith held his furnace and half a hide of land, for shoeing the baron's palfreys. William the son of Man, held three ploughlands for dismembering malefactors. Croch the huntsman held one hide of land, with wood for six hogs, for furnishing one-hundred conies, and behaving kindly to lame Hugo. But he beat the poor cripple without cause, and Turstin the son of Croch afterwards held the lands; some say in parcenary from Bertram's sisters: but this the hundred doubted. Some say there was a mortgage of six shillings from the abbey on this land, but no one hath seen the Abbot's deed. Bertram was killed at the battle of Hastings. Godfrey the gate-keeper, held one hide of land for keeping the roads in repair; for this he gave a silver cup to Hugo de Porth, having privilege to claim toll for wares and merchandize passing

through the hundred. But these rates were made at his own will, and became so high that the hundred rose up against him. For he, together with his two sons, were wont to stand at the gate with cudgels, and had two large mastiffs, one chained to either post. So they set the dogs on the horses, and themselves cudgelled the travellers who refused to pay. The hundred took up weapons against them, killed the mastiffs, and compelled Godfrey to take tolls at a rate of their own making."

"A truly ready way of settling disputes," said Henry; "by the holy sepulchre! we need such men as the stout gate-keeper and his sturdy sons, now-a-days, to enforce a little of their discipline among our rebellious barons."

"This was the law of force, my liege," replied Glanvil, "an appeal in person bringing the matter at once home to the feelings, and was *semper paratus*. We have had disputes of late respecting tenure in socage; what was such service in the time of King William?"

"Such as it remaineth up to the present time

in the Hundred of Clere," replied Alaric, "and hath been time out of mind. The tenants that held their lands by socage, came on stated days every year to plough, and sow, the lord's lands, and if need was, to reap them in the Autumn; this being called socage in ground and garner; for they saw the grain safely set, and safely housed. Many a merry socage-time have I passed when the labour was done in the hall of Hugo de Porth. Every villeinage was not what it hath now come to; although the lord of the manor might at any time enter the villein's estate and turn him out. Yet while he fulfilled his tenure,—whether it was to manure the land, gather wood to burn, or any meaner service,—he was never molested; and although he could not quit the lord's estate, being villein regardant, yet he was master of the land he held in tenure, and all but in name equal to the socage."

Glanvil consulted a few minutes with the King, then spake as follows:—

"Methinks with thy experience, friend, that

the Hundred might have set these matters at rest without coming hither. And you, sir bailiff," added he, turning round to the man of portly dimensions, "will do well to act upon the judgment of the Hundred, and this venerable man. We will set one of our scribes to copy your own returns; and when they are compared with Domesday-book, make such alterations as shall bring them to their former positions; for, in spite of the negligence of King William's Commissioners, we must hold these volumes as our chief judgment; always, however, willing to make alterations in cases of oppression. As to you," added the judge, looking at the miller, "you are free from all geld; a lenity which I hope you will extend to the corn of your neighbour when it comes to be ground, for the name of rogue hath long stuck as close to all brethren of your profession, as the meal does to their garments. Your land shall also be returned to you. We have looked over divers other grounds of complaint, and leave them to the decision of

the Hundred, appointing our aged servant, Alaric, to preside over the Council ; and leaving all matters of dispute, which cannot be arranged by the judgment of the Hundred, nor a reference to the clauses which we shall cause to be copied from Doomsday-book, to be settled by his decision, for which our Sovereign Lord the King will allow him out of his own Exchequer twenty marks yearly. It is therefore the pleasure of his Highness that you again return to your different homes ; and on no account trouble this court until you have settled these disputes in the way which we have appointed, when our seals shall then be affixed to the deeds drawn up by the council.”

Ranulph de Glanvil beckoned the venerable Alaric aside, and having dismissed the court, conducted him to his own apartment, and from the old patriarch gathered many things which he digested in his celebrated work, entitled “ *Tractatus de Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliæ*,” and which is beyond all doubt the oldest book on English law extant.



While the scene which we have attempted to describe was proceeding in the hall, Becket had collected his retinue and was passing in grand state through the ancient streets of Oxford, on his way to negotiate matters with the King of Scotland, who as we have already stated, awaited the presence of the Chancellor at Lincoln. The readers of history are well aware of the state and splendour which Becket travelled in on public occasions, and which, when he once arrived in France on an embassy, caused the people to exclaim, "What manner of man must the King of England be, while his Chancellor travels in such state?" Henry also encouraged his favourite's extravagance; and perhaps even took more delight in witnessing such splendour than Becket himself did. Nor was there an office, no matter how important in the affairs of state, that the king would not as soon trust to his Chancellor as himself; for the faith that Henry placed in him was unbounded. At this time, be it remembered, Becket had no rival in the royal favour; but they seemed to

mingle together more like equals, than king and subject. It may be, that much of this was owing to the secret which Becket alone possessed of the King's marriage with Rosamond; a secret which, to his honour, he never divulged during the quarrel which afterwards sprung up between them, and to which period we are now fast hastening. Nor must it be forgotten that Becket was an able minister; and that while he studied the interests of his master, he also contrived that the benefit of the nation should be advanced. Many of the useful measures which had already taken place during the young King's reign, were done at the suggestion of the Chancellor. He embraced every opportunity that offered itself to humble the haughty barons; and though he himself afterwards set at naught the royal prerogative, yet no one guarded it more strictly than he did while Chancellor.

His insisting that the Bishops and Abbots should pay the scutage for the war of Toulouse, like the lay vassals of the crown, and that the

church was bound to the king by the same oath as his soldiers:—all prove how rigidly he enforced the royal prerogative, and doubtless tended to his becoming in the end Primate of England ;—when he daringly broke down the systems which he had before so boldly advocated. But these are matters which belong to the historian, and we only glance at them occasionally, that our readers may be prepared for the change which will, ere long, necessarily take place in our story.

Now, however, all Oxford had made holiday, to witness the splendid procession of the Chancellor, and hundreds were assembled at the end of the narrow street which led from the palace, and opened into the high road. Trees and banks were crowded, and many a one had assembled on the roofs of the ancient houses that they might witness the procession. The grave student mingled his voice with the ragged urchin, and the expounder of laws had stolen an hour from his books to gaze on the gay scene. The shouting drew near, and all eyes

were anxiously turned in the direction from whence it came.

Nearer drew the loud murmurs of the great multitude, which came upon the ear like the sounding sea, heard inland; now near, then again remote,—swelling and falling with solemn variation. Ever and anon, “the silver snarling trumpets ’gan to chide;” and the deep braying rang over valley and woodland, until it was lost along the distant river. By and by, the far-off clattering of steeds became audible, their hollow tramp sounding far around the firm-set earth, which seemed to vibrate beneath their measured tread. As the eager buzz drew nearer, the face-thronged walls seemed all astir with life; tree and tower appeared in motion; the door-way of every hut was crowded with faces, and every foot of ground that showed an elevation, was speedily taken possession of. Here was seen a young Saxon mother, holding up her infant at arm’s length, that it might view the procession, while the young slave crowed again with delight.

There stood the surly Norman, with folded arms, lowering brow, and quivering lip, only wanting the signal of his leader to spring forth, and stab "the proud upstart" (as the Chancellor was called) to the heart. Further on were seen grey locks, and aged bow-bent figures; men who had fought and struggled through the iron reign of Stephen, mingling with the dark ringlets of youth; and rejoicing in heart that they had lived to see one of their own despised and conquered race elevated to the highest trust in the kingdom.

At length the procession wound in sight, and the assembled throng raised a loud shout which was caught up and echoed back by the distant crowd that were in waiting.

Foremost rode two hundred knights in suits of complete armour, which made the eye ache again under such a weight of splendour, for the summer sun shot down his brightest beams. Each knight carried his lance erect, and with battle-axe slung at the saddle-bow, and their huge triangular shields suspended from their

necks, showed that they were ready prepared for any sudden danger. Behind these rode several barons and nobles, all richly attired, who, however much they might envy the Chancellor in their hearts, found it to their interest to show a fair face before a man already possessing almost kingly power.

Then came two hundred boys of various ages, six in a row, singing English war-songs, the chorus of which was—

“ Long, long may King Henry reign,  
And make old England free again.”

They were robed in white, and each had a garland of flowers around his head, some of them accompanied the chorus with the pipe and tabor. After them came several couples of beautiful stag-hounds, each couple attended by a youth. The hounds were of the choicest breeds, deep-chested, and strong of limb; each had the letter B. C. marked on their haunches, signifying that they belonged to Becket, Chan-

cellor: they moved along as gravely and orderly as if they were familiar with such scenes. Then followed a variety of other hounds, large slough-hounds, grey-hounds, beagles, and every kind which could hunt the buck, doe, hare, fox, badger, otter, boar, goat, or other vermin, or beasts of chase.

Some there were of the true Talbot-breed, with round big thick heads, short upturned noses, and wide nostrils; their ears large and thin, and falling much lower than their jaws, and the flews of their upper lips which also hung low showed them to be loud and deep voiced. Their backs too were strong and straight, their thighs round, denoting swiftness; and their tails rush-grown downwards, a sure sign that they were long-winded. Their legs also, were large and lean, indicating how well they could leap over tall fences. Then there were others, white, with black ears, and black spots on the top of their tails. There were also black-hounds, black-tanned, liver-



tanned, milk-white (the colour of the true Talbot), grisselled, and every variety of hue.

Many an urchin whistled, and endeavoured to press forward to pat these beautiful animals, but they were repulsed by the attendants, who with their long whips drove them back.

After these came the immense waggons, laden with every species of luxury;—wines and ale, cider and mead, venison, sheep, whole beasts ready for dressing, bacon without weight, game of every description, pastries, pies, and all kinds of confectionery known. Others conveyed rich tents, which could be put up on the shortest notice; and which, when erected, formed his chapel, his chamber, his banqueting hall, kitchen, &c., each having its corresponding furniture.

These when properly arranged, formed a scene of splendour, such as has rarely been the lot of the greatest kings to enjoy, when

encamped at a siege, or in readiness for the field of battle.

One of the wains contained no less than twenty-four changes of apparel for the Chancellor alone. Another was laden with plate, gold and silver vessels of costly workmanship, outdoing by far those which Henry himself possessed : another was laden with drink to distribute to the people of the different towns through which he passed. Each waggon was drawn by five large black horses, and every driver had on a new frock, emblazoned in front with the large initials in gold of B. C.

The wains were all roofed in like the ponderous stage waggons of the present day : beside each rode two armed knights, with lance in rest ; four archers also, with bows ready bent, marched in the rear of every waggon ; and as if such a guard was not sufficient, a grim bull-dog, of the true savage old English breed, was chained under each of the waggons.

Behind these appeared a long train of sumpter-horses, each one heavily laden with the necessaries for the servants. Then came the squires of the knights and barons, some leading horses bearing shields, lances, and armour; followed again by armourers, farriers, physicians, pages, conjurers, morris-dancers, — and women, whose tongues kept pace with the wanton glances of their eyes, as they now and then made their ambling palfreys curvette; or with an air of pretty coquetry, pulled down their long tunics, as if they either wished to conceal, or draw the spectator's attention to their showy scarlet hose.

Behind this motley retinue came the falconers, with the hooded birds perched on richly ornamented frames, and walking in stately wise, that they might show to advantage their peaked boots, or the gaudy bandages with which their hose were decorated.

A long train of solemn monks and friars, abbots, and every order of the clergy came next, as if they brought divinity enough to supply the wants of such a motley assembly, many of whom, from their looks, seemed to stand in need of spiritual comfort.

Great was the contrast between these big, burly, and holy men, and the gay knights; the latter losing no opportunity of displaying their fine persons and good horsemanship, while the former seemed to sit as immoveable in their saddles, as a huge pasty on a pewter platter. Most of these holy men had full cheeks, rosy visages, and portly paunches, which showed that however much they might preach up abstinence, they themselves were no strangers to the honey and the wine, and the fat of the land. Many of these venerable men carried a huge leathern bottle, which, lest it should cause them to lean too much on one side while in the saddle, they had balanced by a ponderous venison pasty on

the other: their missals, anthems, and holy books, were borne by the pack-horses. These were followed by Becket's cooks and cup-bearers.

Then came the great magician himself, sumptuously apparelled, seated on a beautiful cream-coloured charger, that was covered with trappings of cloth of gold, and seemed to spurn the very earth on which he trod under his mighty burthen. Beside the Great Chancellor rode Edward Gryme, and then came a few of Becket's choicest friends.

The procession was closed by a solemn array of armed knights riding four abreast, some with their shields ready slung on the arm, others with their huge cross-handled swords resting on their shoulders, or their lances partly poised, as if ready at the first whisper of danger.

Such was the gay procession that quitted Oxford; and while Becket's eye kindled as

he surveyed the rich spectacle, and heard his own praises pass from a thousand lips; he reined up his foam-covered charger beside Gryme, and said, "Thinkest thou we shall increase our glory if we exchange it for the primacy? Behold this scene!"

"Empty splendour!" muttered the monk; "the mere gilding of delegated power."

"True, most true," replied Becket. "But this is our last act of chancellorship; on our return we grasp the pastoral crook," saying which, he waved his arm as if he already held the mighty insignia of office, which in his hand was soon to become more powerful than the sword.

The sound of the singers' voices became fainter; the tramp of the steeds died away, until a turning in the road shut the long procession out of view; and only the faint and afar off braying of the trumpets was at last heard. But our story carries us not farther on

this journey, as we should be entering a wider field than we could compass within the space of these volumes. We must, in the next chapter, return to other characters and other scenes which we have too long neglected.

END OF VOL. I.





FAIR ROSAMOND.



# FAIR ROSAMOND;

OR

## THE DAYS OF KING HENRY II.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE;

BY THOMAS MILLER,

AUTHOR OF "BOYSTON GOWER," "BEAUTIES OF THE COUNTRY,"  
"A DAY IN THE WOODS," ETC.

Let us sit on the ground,  
And tell sad stories. *King Richard II.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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# FAIR ROSAMOND.

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## CHAPTER I.

Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!  
I dare damnation: to this point I stand,—  
That both the worlds I give to negligence,  
Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged.

SHAKSPEAR.

KING HENRY had but just witnessed the departure of Becket, thrown the short Norman cloak around his shoulders, and was awaiting the entrance of a menial whom he had despatched to saddle his palfrey, in order that he might return to Woodstock; when Eleanor suddenly entered the apartment. The King, however, was unconscious of her presence, thinking, probably, that it was some attendant,

but continued to amuse himself by writing on the stained casement with a diamond. Nor were his thoughts at all engrossed with the subject which he was almost unconsciously recording; but dwelling more upon the results which were expected to follow the interview between Becket and the King of Scotland, and in which the peace of the northern shires was at stake. He had, however, scrawled several of the panes with the initials H. R., which were tastefully interwoven together, before he became aware of the presence of Eleanor.

“Leave you the palace to-night, my Lord?” said the Queen, eyeing his cloak and hunting-cap; for he was already equipped for his journey.

“Such is my purpose,” replied the King briefly, “unless some unforeseen business calls for my longer delay here.”

“Is there then nothing remaining here that can longer afford your Grace pleasure?” enquired the Queen, her dark eye kindling as she spoke, as if to announce the gathering storm. “No-



thing that can induce your stay but matters of business?"

"I left several of my guests behind at the palace of Woodstock," stammered forth the King with a bad grace; "and as some of them were but recently in arms against our person, it behoveth us to look narrowly to their actions for a short time."

"Have not recourse to such petty excuses;" exclaimed the high-spirited Queen, with a look of withering scorn, "they become not a king. Say rather that the company of Rosamond Clifford is the great charm which hath drawn you so much to the palace of Woodstock of late."

"She whom you have named, abideth not at the palace, fair Queen," said Henry; "nor would we accuse our royal person wrongfully, since the charge floweth so readily from your own immaculate lips. 'Tis pity that your purity should have travelled so far to be at last tainted after so long a pilgrimage by Henry of England."

“Is this then all the satisfaction I am to receive at your hands?” exclaimed the angry Queen, her countenance darkening with rage. “Must I then have taunts and reproaches added to my injuries? But, King though you be, beware! Let but yonder smooth-faced harlot cross my path, and by my father’s bones, I swear, I will mar her beauty, and rend her limb from limb; aye, though you were to plunge your own dagger into my heart the next moment, I would do it!” While she spoke her fine features seemed to blaze with wrath, and her eyes flashed with a brightness that was terrible to look upon.

“Eleanor,” exclaimed the King, the dark spot at last gathering upon his brow, while he paced the apartment with rapid strides, “I have shared my throne with you, and raised you to the same dignity which I myself enjoy. Answer me; have I ever charged you with those deeds which have been rumoured against you, and which have many a time brought the colour to my cheek, when I have heard them whispered

about, by those who deemed not that I was within hearing? Is it honest, then, that you should charge me with matters that you have no proof of; while I remain silent to all the floating rumours that are abroad? By the holy sepulchre! not a soldier of the cross touches these shores, but he brings some new lay which was made on your feats at Palestine."

The features of the Queen became colourless; her passion could find no utterance; and while her lips faded to the same dim ashy hue as her cheeks, she said, "You then have listened to these slanders, and still kept your hand from your dagger. Would that I were again in my own realms! an hundred swords would have leaped from their scabbards, had these things but been whispered in Poictou and Aquitaine."

"Flatter not yourself that they are unknown there," said Henry, his fiery temper having now full rein; "they are borne even to the Holy Land. Bertrand de Born has shaped them into rude songs; and the troubadours sing to the gay

court of France, how Henry of England, became possessed of two fair provinces, when, after long trial, they were rejected by an infidel and a christian king. Nay, they add, that he keeps in his court the old agent; and that Oliphant Uggleshred is at any time ready to come to terms with a new bidder."

"And knew you not of these things until now?" said the Queen, stung to the heart at these remarks, which at once struck at her pride and her conscience. "Harry of England, I did once love thee above all those who sued for my hand. When the Earl of Blois, and Geoffry of Anjou sought me in marriage, I hearkened to thee alone. Oh! I could tear out my heart, and blush to death, to think how foolish I have been. But from this hour thou shalt learn what it is to arouse a woman's vengeance. I know thou lovest me no longer. But, may my pillow prove a nest of adders, if I do not revenge thy hatred;—if I do not tear down and scatter on the winds this painted blossom that has sprung up between me and thy affection!"

“It would better become thee,” said the King, “to look to thine own fame, if indeed thou hast any left that is worth the watching; and not thus be playing at bo-peep in every nook and oriel that presents either a shadow or a curtain, with Oliphant Uggleshred. Nay, thou mayest flash thine eyes. By the true Lord! an’ thou darest to put thy threats in force against aught that I set value upon, better for thee if thou hadst thrust thine hand into a nest of deadly vipers. Mark me!” added he, raising his arm and voice together, “thou mayest think I have slept of late; but remember, that many an eye looks out for a king; and if thou dost but touch her that thou hast dared to breathe thy threats against, I will have this Uggleshred, this spy, this panderer whom thou fearest, put to the torture in the midst of mine own nobles. Nay, I will convene a holiday, and every tiller of the earth,—every serf that wears the symbol of servitude—shall hear him confess all that he hath ever known against thee.” Saying which, he left the apartment

just as UGGLETHRED entered ; nor did Henry acknowledge the low genuflection which the ruffian made, as he held open the door for him to pass.

“Thou hast come at a fitting hour,” said Eleanor, her eyes still flashing with anger, and her brow lowering and dark as a thunder cloud. “The King needed but thy hateful presence to confirm his suspicions ; and like evil, it waited at the door.”

“Where it hath often waited,” replied the ruffian, without changing a feature : “and was then called gentle Oliphant. But it seems that my watching hath availed but little, since our secrets are at last bruited.”

“Villain, thou hast not been playing the eaves-dropper upon me,” said the Queen ; “but what matter ?” added she, “since Henry has at last breathed out his suspicions. Thou hast heard all then that hath passed between us ?”

“For that matter, the door stood ajar,” answered UGGLETHRED ; “and I know no law for closing a man’s ears. Beside I have

gathered nothing that is new; nor should I have waited, had you not summoned me hither."

"But mightest thou not have withdrawn?" continued Eleanor; "or at least concealed thyself when the king passed out, after hearing those foul whispers, which to me sounded like the hissing of serpents. Enough, thou seest the love that Henry bears to thee."

"Truly it is not so great as he beareth towards the lady Rosamond," said the ruffian, fixing his eyes on Eleanor as he spoke, and viewing with savage delight the terrible emotions which the hated name awakened.

"Thou hast a right touch of the devil in thee," said the excited Queen, "with which my mounting spirit can now keep pace. My revenge hath at last found an huge appetite. I will, with my own hand, strike dead the hated rival thou hast named."

"It were pity to mar so fair a piece of workmanship," said Uggleshred; "for she hath



a face that might almost allure a saint out of heaven: and had she not slipped by me so hastily, I would have shared her beauty with his kingship. But we are both flying our hawks in the dark, for the quarry hath escaped, nor have I as yet discovered her retreat."

"Were she hidden in the deepest cavern of the earth," said Eleanor, "my hatred would find out her hiding-place. Do thou but watch the king at a safe distance, and thou wilt not fail to discover where she lurks; then will I come upon them like a thunderbolt that leaps unawares from the sky, and gratify my deep revenge, by driving my dagger through both their hearts at a blow. Even here," said she, striding up to the window like a fury, while her long dark hair, which had slipped from its braid, fell in wild disorder down her face—"even here he has dared to interweave her odious name with his own, as if her hated image was not enough before me in his absence.

So let the remembrance perish! and it shall go hard if I make not as free room for the air of heaven to pass through that space without let or hindrance which their bodies now occupy." As she spoke, she drove the hilt of her dagger through the casement, which Henry had scribbled over with the diamond, and the stained glass fell rattling on the floor. "Do thou but bring me into her presence," continued Eleanor, "and I will hold it the best service thou hast done me. I have sworn by all that is good and evil, that I will be revenged upon her; and were she to die by other hands than my own, I would glut my hatred on her ashes in the grave. Death and darkness!" continued she, pacing to and fro as if she was mad, while her hair fell around her, and every now and then she threw it back in her fury; "to be thus tormented by him whom I took to make my name more honourable! Oh! I cannot utter all that my heart feels. Would to God that I had staid with the spiritless hawk of France, whom I could hood at pleasure, or let loose upon

some paltry barn-door fowl, or flight of sparrows ; but this falcon of England," added she, pressing her hands before her face, " would plunge his beak into my heart, and lay bare all that is there hidden." Then springing forward wildly, as if unconscious of what she did, she seized the hand of Uggleshred, and exclaimed, " Swear that thou wilt aid me in revenging these injuries, and I will weigh thee down with gold ; nay, thou shalt have what thou hast so long coveted. I will give up this body of mine to enrich the agreement."

The villain swore that he would peril his soul in her service, and was about to draw her face to his own, to seal the bargain on her lips, when, as if suddenly recollecting herself, she drew her head back, and said, " Not now. I will ratify my vow when my revenge is glutted, and seal it with the blood of Rosamond Clifford."

As she spoke, she let fall the hand of the ruffian, and a slight shiver ran through the frame of Uggleshred while he gazed upon her ;

for, hardened as he was, he could not look upon the savage beauty of the Queen without emotion. Eleanor stood like some beautiful goddess, whose nature has undergone a change; as if her frame could scarce hold the fierce anger and cruelty with which it had so suddenly become possessed, but was about to assume a shape in which the impress of the sterner passions would become moulded, and the whole burst forth into a form more terrible. As if she had called upon the gods to fill her with "dire cruelty," and they had sent down the evil powers to fulfil her request; and the eye could trace the progress of their work, which was fast overpowering her; for she staggered forward, and would have fallen had she not been caught by Uggleshred. The ruffian raised his voice to call for help; but the sound brought back Eleanor to her former consciousness; and she said, "Let no one be summoned hither, one witness is enough to this weakness." She put up her hair in the braid, and added, "it is over now. Thou wilt forget what thou hast

seen, good Oliphant; and be true to my cause as steel to the hand."

"I would stand by thee, were we on the brink of hell together," answered the dark-browed ruffian, "and hunt out the haunt of this pale-cheeked beauty, were she hidden in the bowels of the earth."

Eleanor took a handful of gold pieces from the pouch which hung at her girdle, and placing them in the palm of Uggleshred, said, "Fail me not;" and left the apartment.

"Thou art a daring devil," said the ruffian to himself, as he fixed his eye upon her until she quitted the room, "and would enter into a league with the evil-one himself, to slake the huge thirst of thy revenge. But not so fast, mistress of mine. I will try to see yonder fair slip of womanhood again, and if she consenteth to my terms, devil a nail of thine shall mar her beauty. But there is that cursed minstrel in the path," added he, musing; "and I fear that neither a lock of hair, nor a cup of the grape of Gascony, will be so ready a bait again.

Somewhere is this Rosamond concealed, within an arrow's flight or two of the palace, or Vidal would not so often be found walking in the neighbouring pleasance with Mistress Maud. Thou wilt need much caution, Oliphant Uglethred," continued he, still following up the train of his thoughts, "and must move about this work noiseless as a shadow. Thou must look with narrow eyes, and glide about stealthily as a serpent; and, if need be, put on a better look than those who mean true friendship,—carrying the look of Heaven in the face, and the feelings of hell in the heart,—as many a better man hath done ere this. A very fiend is this Queen; and those who cross her path must be guarded; and to save one which her eye has made a victim, is as dangerous as rending the prey from the jaws of a hungry wolf. Curse her," added he aloud, as he quitted the apartment, "I know she hates me more than she does Satan himself. But it is some comfort to know that she also fears me." So saying, he placed the gold in a slip of his gaberdine, and

sallied forth to discover the hiding-place of Rosamond, and avail himself of the advantages of the most favourable bidder. But we must leave him to follow the fate of the more important personages of our story.



## CHAPTER II.

I thought he had resembled King Henry,  
In courage, courtship, and proportion :  
But all his mind is bent to holiness,  
To number "Ave Marias," on his beads :  
His champions are, the prophets and apostles ;  
His weapons, holy saws of sacred writ ;  
His study is his tilt-yard, and his loves  
Are brazen images of canonized saints.

*King Henry VI.*

NOTHING material occurs in our story, until some time after the return of Becket from Lincoln ; when he was almost immediately made Primate of England. Firm to his promise, and secure in the good services of the Chancellor, Henry disregarded the murmurs of the Norman nobles, and preferred his faithful servant to the See of Canterbury, not doubting for a moment, but that he would prove a willing instrument to his royal pleasure. The king had

heard of the sudden change which Becket's character had undergone ; and was not a little surprised that the gay courtier should all at once become the ascetic churchman ; but he smiled to himself when he thought of the merry moments they should pass together alone, when the Archbishop would lay aside his holiness, and again become the boon companion ; for he never once doubted but that this excessive sanctity was but assumed to blind the people. Business, or pleasure had, on the one hand, confined the King to the neighbourhood of Oxford and Woodstock, while on the other it had detained the newly-made Archbishop at his diocese ; so that they had scarcely ever met since the change had taken place in Becket, of which rumour spoke so loudly. Henry had, however, at length invited the prelate to Woodstock, for his late carousals had lacked much of their former spirit since his absence, and it was on the day that the Archbishop had accepted the King's invitation, that we again resume our narrative.

Two pampered domestics were pacing indolently along the chief gallery or hall of the palace, or sometimes lolling listlessly on the massy oaken benches, which stood ready for the convenience of attendants or messengers in waiting, when after much scandal, and many hazardous guesses that would have cost them their heads, had their conversation reached the King, they at length fell into discourse on the marvellous change which the Archbishop was announced to have undergone. Nor did they fail to magnify the wonders which they had heard of,—a part so necessary to true gossiping, that it may be considered its greatest charm ; for the wonder awakened is a kind of stimulant to the narrator to “lay it on.” Neither will it be doubted for a moment, that in an age like that, which we are attempting to bring before the reader, when miracles were believed in, and superstition universally prevailed to an extent scarcely to be believed, the reformation of Becket was assigned to some mighty power. Some attributed it to a divine unction suddenly

imparted to him during his consecration ; but the lower orders had called in the agency of an angel of light ; a tough combat with Sathanas, and the routing of a whole legion of fiends, who had attempted to carry him away. But without venturing an opinion on his sudden conversion, —a point on which our ablest historians disagree, regarding its sincerity, or hypocrisy, — we will take up the conversation between the two menials, which had by this time become warm.

“Then I say his wits are gone a wool-gathering,” replied the fat attendant, to his companion, who had been dwelling upon some miraculous description of the Archbishop, — “What ! to taste of no ale, which is of itself meat and drink, then I say your great Prelate is mad, for refusing the good things which Heaven has sent him ? Think you that the miracle which was performed at the marriage of Cana, when the water was changed into wine, —which, after all was mayhap good strong ale, —would have been done, were it not intended that man

should enjoy such good things? No, marry, it would have been changed to fennel-water, green, filthy, and stagnant, such as you say this witless prelate only drinks, if the saints had required us poor mortals to swallow such poison. I say that he is mad as a March hare."

"But they say he does these things that he may have power over the evil one," said the other, with a knowing shake of the head: "and further, I can tell thee, Clement, that he eateth such black, unwholesome bread, that the very dogs turn up their noses at the remnant of it. He also wears a hair shirt to mortify his body, so rough, that it is like feeling of a ginger-grater; and that if once pulled off and thrown on the ground, there are inhabitants enough lurking within, to walk away with it as easily as a pedlar trudges off with his empty pack. Nor would he slaughter one of these beloved back-biters, for a knight's ransom; for they are of a choice breed; and their ancestors fed many a day on the blessed St. Dunstan, their true colour being a dusty black, which they have doubt-

less caught through being smoked in the saint's smithy."

"No doubt, then, he holdeth it a waste of water to wash himself," said Clement. "But what has he done with his cooks and cup-bearers, his grooms and lacqueys, his pages, knights, and squires? Assuredly he has no need of these; as one might do to boil his fennel-water, and bake his black bread."

"There thou art wrong," answered the other, "for his table is spread daily for the blind and the lame; never had the roguish beggars such a merry time. They need but to drag their lazy bodies into the green lanes about Canterbury, and out sallies a whole troop of the Archbishop's retainers to invite them to the feast. The knaves are leaving off their mummery and fortune-telling, and learning to patter their prayers. You should have seen Walter with the Wide-wallet, Billy the Bezzler, Clement the Club-footed, Izaak the Immoveable, and a few others of Walter's ragged crew, how they did skip and caper

before the scot-ale, for very joy that the Archbishop had washed all their feet with his own hands, and given each of them four silver pennies."

"Ah! ah! ah! I will wager thee my buck-handled whittle, to thy silver-rimmed drinking horn, that they are merry enough together to-day," said Giles, laughing; "and that they get to jumping over the benches and tables, ere they have drunk their third cup, and are more like two boys let loose from labour, than a king and archbishop."

"Thou wouldst lose thy bet," replied the other; "for I can tell thee that since St. Dunstan appeared to him, he is strangely altered, and goeth up and down the cloisters of St. Bennet, wringing his hands all day long, and weeping aloud for his sins. Nay, they say that in the night, strange voices are heard in his chamber, and that music has played over his head while he was asleep, and that the musicians and the speakers were invisible to all but himself."



“Truly it is strange,” answered Clement: “and methinks, were I to see him play these grave antics, I should laugh outright, as I have done many a time at his merry jests, when I have filled his wine-cup, and seen the tears roll down King Henry’s cheeks with sheer laughter, and heard him beg of the witty chancellor to keep silence unless he meant to kill him with his jokes and gibes. Marry, ’tis very strange that one who could laugh, hunt, joke, empty his wine-cup at every turn, make a lady sigh sooner than any baron in hall or bower, and splinter a lance with the boldest that ever buckled on armour, should become so suddenly changed. I can scarcely believe it, nor will I, until I have trusted my own eyes. I will watch him narrowly at the banquet to-day, and if I have not two or three right merry jests to retail to thee to-night, then shall I begin to think that he is not the real Thomas à Becket.”

“Think what pleaseth thee best,” answered the other, looking out from a shot-hole which inwardly widened to a kind of large niche.

“ Yonder cometh the Archbishop, and thou wilt now be able to judge for thyself. By the true Lord! he seemeth but the shadow of his former self;—his cheeks are almost as transparent as a horn lantern; but he is mounted on a brave steed; and, by the mass! never did priest before sit in a saddle like to him.”

“ I will in then,” said Clement, “ and like a dog give mouth that the hunter may know there is game a-foot.” So saying, he entered a side-door to apprise Henry of Becket’s approach.

Meantime the Archbishop had alighted, and as he proceeded with slow and measured steps across the court-yard which led to the inner entrance of the palace, a tall gaunt stag-hound reared itself up beside him in acknowledgment of their former acquaintanceship. Becket struck down the noble animal with indignity, as if he was ashamed of being recognized by an old favourite that had no respect for his sanctity, and only reminded him of other days, when he was the foremost in the chase, with his loud whoop and hallo. The old hound

slunk away in seeming astonishment, and made a dead pause when he had retired a few paces, and, running his eyes once more over the form of the prelate, as if to assure himself that he was not mistaken, he uttered a deep internal growl, and stretched his huge length on the pavement.

Becket swept along through the vaulted gallery, to the upper room which Clement conducted him to, and however coarse his undergarments might be, his long dalmatica, which trailed along the floor, and rustled over the green rushes with which it was strown, was made of the costliest material, and richly ornamented with embroidery, while the bottom was trimmed with the choicest ermine, of more than a hand's breadth. His features had, however, undergone a great alteration; prayer and penance had left their traces upon his brow, and he seemed much older since the day that he set out in such pomp and grandeur, on his embassy to Lincoln. That which before had given such a pleasing expression to his fine

face, was now changed to a look of deep awe, a kind of majestic seriousness, that seemed to sit well enough upon the imposing figure of the Archbishop, but had a strange appearance in what was remembered of the gay chancellor. Still the same fire lurked in his keen and penetrating eyes, and he carried his stately form as erect as ever he had done in his gayest days; and while he glanced around the arched gallery through which he passed, his eye seemed to kindle with the consciousness of what he was, and every stride to announce that there moved the proud Primate of England. Behind him crept the grave monk Gryme, gliding along like a shadow, with his head bent and his eyes rivetted on the floor, while his long grey mantle added to the appearance of his gravity: he halted by the doorway which Becket entered.

The apartment which the Archbishop had now gained, was that which had so often rung with his own laughter, when he shared the carousals of the monarch; nor had he stood above a moment or two, before king Henry sprang

from behind a pillar where he had concealed himself, and bounding forth unawares, placed his hands upon the shoulders of the Primate and leaped clean over his head. Henry laughed aloud when he had accomplished this feat, a trick which he had played off an hundred times before on Becket in former days, when they both were accustomed to amuse themselves by leaping over the settles and tables. Becket, however, moved not a muscle of his solemn countenance, but preserved his stern and iron composure, while the monarch gave vent to his own merriment in many a loud explosion of laughter. No sooner, however, did the good-hearted king's glance fall upon the solemn and unmoved features of the Archbishop, than his countenance instantly changed, and approaching him with a look of tenderness and anxiety, he said, "Ar't ill, my dear Becket?—speak what aileth thee? shall we summon our Leech hither?"

"Not ill, my liege," replied the proud churchman, who was somewhat chafed at the very familiar manner in which Henry had introduced

himself; for Becket had made himself up for this interview, and intended striking the king at once with an idea of awe for the sanctity of his character; but such an unexpected recognition in the old familiar manner of other times had upset his dignity, and he was indeed vexed to the heart.

“Not ill, my liege!” echoed Henry, whose feelings were really then straight-forward, and who was glad to see his old favourite, but felt annoyed at the coldness with which his offered kindness was received. “What the devil aileth thee, then, that thou bringest such a cold winter in thy looks? that thou comest with such a funeral face to our banquet, and lookest upon an old friend, as if thou wouldst freeze him to death?”

Becket felt ashamed at this rebuke, and had not his pride whispered him, that it would be beneath the dignity of his holy calling, to unbend his austere brow and receive the kind greeting of the king, as he had done beforetime, he would at once have embraced him; as it was, how-

ever, he took another course and thus spoke. "Banquets and merry-makings, my liege, but ill accord with the holy-office which Heaven has called upon me to fulfil. I had thought that your Grace needed some spiritual advice when you summoned me hither, and came prepared to offer you such, as a poor sinner might give, whose days and nights have of late been spent in penitence and prayer."

"Ah! ah! ah! why thou playest thy part like a very Archbishop," said Henry, laughing, but not in that hearty manner which he was accustomed to do when really merry: it was a kind of laughter which belied itself, and was at variance with the true feelings of the monarch at that moment; for the features of Becket were still as serious, as if he was looking upon the face of the dead, and Henry passed his hand over his own brow as if to assure himself that he was still awake. "Thou art but jesting with me," continued he; "come, thou hast played the saint long enough, now let a little of the sinner out; this guarded conduct is well enough for



the world ; but thou hast no need to play it off before ourselves."

" I play no part, my liege," replied Becket, in the same cold tone which he had from the first assumed ; " I am what Heaven has made me, a changed man, wholly devoted to the service of God and the holy Church."

" And hast thou left no part to be devoted to my service?" said Henry, the dark shade gathering upon his brow. " Or hast thou entirely shut me out, who made thee what thou art? I do fear me that this sudden change forebodes no good to myself. Confess it, thou wouldst overleap our head, as we did thine, but now ; oh ! I fear I have been deceived in thee ! Answer me ; what have I done that I should deserve this coldness from thy hands ?" The King averted his face when he had spoken, and attempted to hide the emotion under which he laboured.

" To me your Highness hath ever been kind," answered the Archbishop, his eyes rivetted upon the floor as if ashamed of looking Henry

in the face ; “ and, saving the things which are of Heaven, will ever find me a faithful servant, and one ready to do your bidding to the utmost of my power. But,”—

“ Enough, enough !” said Henry, pacing the apartment under great excitement, “ I understand thee now ; rumour hath for once rumoured aright. I will not hear thy buts and ifs. Oh, fool that I have been ! I made thee Archbishop, that through thy hands I might lessen this overgrown power of the church. Thou hast deceived me ; and would put in thy buts as men put up walls where land is parcelled out, until thou wouldst not even leave a footpath for a king to tread, unless it brought some benefit to the church.”

“ You do me wrong, my liege,” said Becket, speaking in a bolder tone than he had hitherto done ; “ nor can you name an instance in which I have sought to infringe upon your royal liberty, or interfere with the privileges which belong to the throne ; nor have I a wish but to further your renown ; and, saving my duty to God, the

church, His Holiness the Pope, and my own conscience, I am as willing to serve your Grace as ever I have done, or did, ere I dedicated myself to Heaven."

"Disguise it as thou wilt," said Henry, in a tone of voice which bespoke more sorrow than anger, "thou art changed to me. Thou wert not wont to call in these salvos. Pope, church, and conscience, were forgotten when I needed thy service; thou wert true to me, and I did love thee." He buried his face in his hands for a moment ere he could proceed; so much did he feel this separation of friendship; it was but for a moment, and he again assumed an apparent composure while he thus proceeded: "Becket, I did then love thee, ah, more than a very brother. I preferred thee before any of my high-born nobles. I made thee the companion of all my pleasures. I imparted to thee all my bosom secrets; leaving even my very honour in thy hands. My heart harboured no feeling that I kept from thee. My mind engendered no thought that did not become thine own. I

made thee my second self. I studied to leave thee nothing to wish for. How art thou requiting me? By snowing down thy cold sanctity until it freezes upon my very heart: by spurning the ladder, up which thou hast climbed to this height of holiness. I fear me that I see as clearly into thy thoughts, as if they were graven on brass. Heaven grant that I read not aright!" So saying, and without waiting until the Archbishop replied, Henry left the apartment, for his feelings were fast outgrowing all command.

Once did Becket move, as if he meditated throwing himself at the King's feet, and vowing his service until death; but Henry had gone ere the resolution had put itself into action, and he stood gazing upon the blank and open doorway, as if he yet hesitated whether to follow him. "I have gone too far," were the first thoughts that rushed upon his mind when left alone; but I will heal this breach; for my heart hath still a yearning towards him. Alas! he has given me a power which places me

beyond his reach. He has made me what he never can unmake again. I cannot serve him and Heaven, and be honest. I cannot serve God and man, and remain just to both. That which I have done I must undo ; my duty is no longer what it was. He guesseth rightly ; I am changed even to myself ; I am not what I have been. The dignity of Heaven is in my keeping ; —the church of Christ is entrusted to my care, and needeth a watchful shepherd.”

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he heard the voice of the King in the gallery exclaiming, “ Assuredly thou liest, sir knight ; he dare not do such a bold deed without my permission.” An answer was made, but in so low a voice, that it reached not the ears of the Archbishop ; and in another instant Henry re-entered the apartment, — his face flaming with rage. He was followed by a knight, whose bold cheek blanched the instant he encountered the fixed gaze of Becket. Henry also fixed his keen eyes upon the Prelate, and pointing to the knight, said, “ Hast thou dared

to excommunicate William de Eynesford, here present, without our permission?"

"Thy permission!" exclaimed Becket, taking fire in an instant, and turning upon the King with a look of angry pride, and astonishment,—  
"Whenever didst thou hear that the Primate of England had to stoop for permission to punish any rebellious son, who had disobeyed the holy mandates of the Church?"

"Is he not a military tenant of the Crown?" said Henry, his countenance flushed with rage, and his eyes gleaming on Becket with a fierce and steadfast glance. "Wert thou not aware long before the ill-starred hour I gave to thee the primacy, that no vassal who held *in capite* of the Crown, should be excommunicated without my sanction? Absolve him instantly."

"That will I not do," said Becket, in his turn bristling up, and looking indignantly upon the Monarch:—"It is not for you, my liege, to command whom I shall excommunicate, and whom absolve; that power belongs to the

Church alone. Nor will I relinquish its holy rights.”

It is almost impossible to describe the countenance of the King at that moment; speechless with passion, he stood with quivering lips, and eyes that seemed to flash forth fire: twice did his hand clutch the hilt of the dagger in his belt, and was again withdrawn; when, just as he was about to give vent to his rage, Gryme, who had been a witness of the whole scene from the outer passage, entered the apartment. It was not the presence of the monk that prevented the monarch from giving explosion to his wrath, but the sound of footsteps caused him suddenly to turn his head, and he at once became conscious that he was lowering his dignity, by thus exposing himself before De Eynesford and Gryme, and the thought called up all his pride; and in a moment he felt that Becket was obtaining a triumph over him, by showing that he had power to move him to such an extent. Turning, therefore, suddenly round, and frowning upon



the Archbishop as he passed, he bade the knight to follow, and left the apartment.

“Follow his Grace,” said Gryme, ere the footsteps of the King had ceased to sound in the vaulted passage; “lose no time, holy father, in absolving this knight from his sentence, lest his highness should come to some sudden resolve, for he parted with danger in his eye; and you well know——”

“Hold thy peace,” replied the Primate, speaking sharply: “thinkest thou that I am to be frightened into obedience by threats and angry looks, like a menial who bows at the board of his master. No, by my holy order, I would excommunicate the king himself, if he dared to eject a priest, like this proud knight De Eynesford, from the church in which I had placed him.”

“But this sudden breach,” continued Gryme, who knew enough of King Henry’s character to feel satisfied that where he once took a dislike, he rarely forgave the offender:—“may it not lead to difficulties, nay, even danger? Bethink

'you, holy father, it were better to absolve the knight at once, and——'

"Open a pathway for a thousand abuses," said the Archbishop, interrupting him: "I tell thee it must not be. If I but once yield to these inroads, the Church might as well be without a head. No, I will be the Primate of England, or nothing. I am no dog to keep my watch beside the gates, to bark when I am bidden, and keep silence when a finger is uplifted; I will keep honest guard over the Church, let what may befall me."

"I speak but out of love for yourself, reverend father," proceeded Gryme in a more subdued tone; "this quarrel with the King will be a triumph to your enemies,—it will be accomplishing that against yourself, which they have so long attempted in vain to achieve."

"It matters not," replied the Prelate, heaving a faint sigh; "it is the will of Heaven that I should pursue this course; my path is still onward, if even I perish, Gryme," added he after a long pause, and with deep emotion. "I

know thou meanest well; but I have foreseen this from the first; and if the King will no longer accept me as a friend, he shall find in me an honourable enemy:—the rights of the Church shall never be trampled under foot with impunity while I wield the pastoral crook over it. Let us begone; I will betake me to my sceptre; I will uplift the holy cross; and woe be to those who dare to wrench it from my grasp.”

“Assuredly you will not go without taking a farewell of his Highness,” said Gryme. “Bethink you of what may be the consequence of this abrupt departure——”

The speech of the monk was cut short by the entrance of an attendant, who with a smile of grim mockery, came to announce that the King would dispense with the presence of the Primate at his table, and that his steed stood ready accoutred without.

Becket bit his lip when he heard the message, and without deigning to reply, he stepped hurriedly along the passage; and throwing himself into the saddle with an agility that would have

done credit to any knight who was about to rush into the combat, he set off at a very different rate to that at which he came ; and which, although it would have seemed very befitting for one about to join the chase, scarcely accorded with the dignity of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Gryme followed soon after as he best could, but not without being saluted by a loud peal of laughter from the archers who guarded the postern ; and he was soon lost in the path that wound around an avenue of oaks, the broad branches of which gave such a forest-like look to the Park.

## CHAPTER III.

Now I feel  
Of what coarse metal thou art moulded—Envy.  
How eagerly you follow my disgraces,  
As if it fed ye ; and how sleek and wanton  
Ye appear in everything may bring my ruin.  
Follow your envious courses, men of malice !

SHAKSPEAR.

IN the very hall where King Henry held his feast after storming the castle, were assembled several of the Norman nobles and bishops, some of whom had been invited by the monarch to share the welcome provided for Becket, and others who had contrived by stratagem, favour, and a hundred other old courtly tricks, to get themselves admitted on the occasion. Although unknown to the archbishop, great preparations had been made by the monarch for the meeting at Woodstock, and as such things were seldom

done, but on great occasions, the secret soon flew abroad. As may be expected, the sudden changing of Becket from the gay courtier, to the ascetic churchman, was the common topic of all England ; for it had turned out the very reverse of what even the prelate's enemies had calculated, as they expected nothing less than a drunken, roystering, gay, and reckless Primate, and in place thereof, found the most rigid disciplinarian of fasts, prayer, and penances, who had ever filled the holy see. However the cry burst out as loudly then on the other hand ; for where there is once a dislike, no matter what course the object of it may take, the party who have made up their hearts to condemn, are never long at a loss to find out some new cause of complaint. So on this occasion, the change was too sudden to become sincere ; others contended that it was but taken up for a blind ; while a few who carried matters to the opposite extremity, hesitated not to attribute it all to a miracle ; and many shook their heads knowingly, and said, "Time will tell."

But it was amongst the Norman nobles and bishops, (for the latter were mostly of the same country,) where the greatest envy and hatred lurked, as no Saxon had been appointed to a station of such eminence, since the invasion of the Conqueror. Many there were who had assembled more out of curiosity than aught beside, wishing to see how the gay Chancellor would play the avowed Saint.

Amongst the chief of those thus congregated together, were the Archbishop of York, Hilary Bishop of Chichester, and Gilbert Foliot Bishop of Hereford, all of them enemies of Becket's. Yet, like true courtiers, determined to shape their course according to circumstances; a plan which some of the divines of the present day do not hesitate to adopt. Some were conversing together in a group; others walked apart, while one or two were holding earnest converse in the deep niches of the windows, all of course unconscious of what had taken place.

"I shall yet win my gage," said the Earl of Leicester, addressing a tall knight in armour:



“for we hear of no change: he still abandons his palfreys to patter his prayers, and herds with ghostly monks and friars, in place of sallying out at the head of his grooms, and giving the hollo to his hounds.”

“Right loath shall I be to part with deep-throated Rud, and broad-chested Balder,” replied the knight; “for a brace of braver hounds never hung at the throat of a fallow-deer; but if we do not see him drink healths three-deep, and crack jokes with the merriest before moon-rise, thine own portcullis shall close upon them ere another day is down.”

“E’en be it so,” replied the Earl; “and if he still stick to the saint, thou shalt hear the hoofs of my bonny black steed beating across thy drawbridge before the tolling of to-morrow’s curfew.”

Turning to the bishops who stood conversing in the shadow of the oriel, thus ran the tenure of their discourse: “From whom didst thou gather these tidings?” said Hilary of Chichester, turning to Gilbert Foliot.

“From one who is better acquainted with the character of the queen, than either you or I,” was the answer: “I tell thee that she hath long been studying how to revenge herself upon the king, for the visits he pays to the fair maid ycleped Rosamond, whom he somewhere harboureth like a hart in the thicket; it is a dainty piece of game.”

“But may she not have ventured a notch too much upon the talley in her reckoning?” said the Bishop of Chichester; “bethink thee of the power Becket has obtained by the change. What benefit can she hope to reap through thus secretly abetting De Eynesford to eject the monk, any more than in setting her snares to work, to catch Becket in the affair of the castle of Rochester.”

“Nay it is clear,” replied Gilbert Foliot, “for by the clashing of flint and steel we produce fire; so in bringing together the king and primate is there hopes of raising a blaze; for both will burn without abating: thou well knowest that the primate, if once defied, is but as an ignited brand.”

“Which blaze will extend even to the bishops,” said Hilary of Chichester, “and they must be content to stand a burning if they can but consume the building,—is it not so?”

“We strike down to rise, was a saying among the Normans, at the field of Hastings,” replied the pious divine Gilbert, “and many a goodly castle survived its possessor, and many a blow made a new baron; and as we of the church wage war against Sathanas, I see not why we should not reach the highest eminence, as well as this pampered Saxon, who is now the head over the Holy Church.”

“If to lack piety is aught to be recommended, thou and I will one day stand high in the church,” said Hilary, with a smile. “And yet we have both stood fair in the fame of our wood-craft, and could ever bestride a jennet, and blow a mot, better than deliver an homily; but *fortuna favet fatuis*, as was said long ago, and it may be our turns at last.”

“If there is truth in the Latin adage you have just quoted, I think your reverence need not despair,” said Gilbert Foliot, who could not

resist having his joke, if even he had sacrificed the good will of his friend.

“You may also hope,” answered Hilary, good humoredly; “but there is no doubt of Queen Eleanor——”

Their conversation was, however, suddenly interrupted by the presence of King Henry, who, followed by De Eynesford, burst into the apartment like an enraged tiger; and without regarding those present, at once gave vent to his fierce passion. All, saving the excommunicated knight, were ignorant of the cause of the monarch's wrath, nor were they even aware of the arrival of Becket, as they expected him to make his appearance in all the pomp with which he was wont to travel on public occasions, and which we have described in a former volume.

But when Henry entered with his countenance red with rage, his large blue eyes blazing with almost an unnatural appearance; his hands clenched, and his teeth set together; every eye turned upon him in fear and astonishment. Nor were they in the least enlightened

as to the cause of his wrath, when they heard him exclaim, "This then is the reward for all my favours,—to be defied, set at nought! and bearded in my own palace, by the very man who hath wound himself into every secret of my heart. Oh God! that I should live to see myself thus trampled upon, and that too by—" He pressed his hands before his face, and leaning his burning brow against one of the cold pillars of the hall, remained several moments in silence, while the deep heaving of his broad chest only told of the painful struggle which was passing within.

Had a thunder-bolt fallen through the vaulted roof, and dashed one of the ponderous pillars into a thousand atoms, it could not have created more awe than at that moment reigned amid the assembled nobles. Eye looked up to eye in mute astonishment for information, and glanced from one countenance to another in silent wonder,—like a herd of deer, startled by a flash of lightning, that bound away, and then suddenly halt in some far forest glade, to gaze

around again in fearful amazement. So did bishop and baron stare upon each other, until at length all eyes centered upon William de Eynesford; but he seemed to stand like a man in a dream, so appalled had he been by the bold bearing of Becket, and the furious rage of the King.

At length Henry started suddenly from his reverie, and exclaimed, in a voice which made the arched roof ring again, "Earl of Leicester, arrest the arch-traitor, Thomas à Becket instantly, and convey him to the dungeon! By the face of God! he shall not see the light of heaven again until he hath done my bidding."

"Becket,—the Archbishop,—the Primate,—a traitor,—arrest him,—the dungeon," &c. were sounds that fell from all lips in almost every imaginable tone, of wonder, triumph, disbelief, doubt, and savage exultation; while the group turned from one to another, with arm and head thrown back; and another volley of interjections passed rapidly from tongue to tongue, as, "Holy Virgin!" "Mother of Christ!" "Can this be?"

and so on: but not one either stepping up to obey the King's bidding, nor yet daring to reply, or interrogate him further on the matter. But during this sudden surprise, and before the Earl of Leicester had inquired where the Archbishop was to be found, Henry had changed his mind, and turning to an attendant, he said, "Tell the Archbishop of Canterbury, that we need not his presence at our banquet; he waits in the outer apartment." Then turning to the barons present, he added, "My Lords, you will pardon me for not sharing your festival to-day;" and without further explanation, he quitted the hall.

No sooner had the monarch withdrawn, than, like a parcel of schoolboys, who have some important tidings to impart to each other, and have been compelled to await their master's absence ere they dare venture to make them known; so did those grave bishops, and mailed barons huddle together; and instantly a score or two of tongues were let loose upon De Eynesford, who had scarcely breathing space left him, so closely was he hemmed in. Gilbert Foliot, the Bishop



of Hereford, an old enemy of Becket's, and the Archbishop of York, who had himself been intriguing for the Primacy, were among the foremost to question De Eynesford respecting Becket; and when the knight narrated the whole of the interview, those right reverend fathers could scarcely refrain from hugging each other with delight, never remembering for a moment the bold stand which the undaunted Primate had made for their order, so much were they overjoyed at the tidings of his quarrel with the King.

The Bishop of Hereford, who was a little fat red-faced personage, with a nose and chin looking under and over his mouth, as if to give the lie to abstinence, gave his reverend brother divine a twitch on the arm, which made the sleeve of his frock tremble in its stitches, and led the way to a deep oriel window, whither he was speedily followed by father Hilary, who came up rubbing his hands and chuckling to himself, and feeling as much delight as a miser, who has paid away an often-tried and bad half-

crown. But it was not until they had obtained that side of the huge oriel which screened them from the observation of those in the hall, that they ventured to give full vent to their feelings. Hilary of Chichester was as remarkable for his thinness as the other for his corpulency. And as Gilbert stood with his broad body to the light, his hands resting on his thighs, and his form half-bent, showing his teeth, and grinning in silence at his right reverend brother, who assumed the same attitude, they seemed like light and shade personified, and rehearsing the parts of clowns for some forthcoming mystery, such as those grave gentry indulged in, even at that remote period. After they had grinned at each other for some time in silence, and all but brought their bright shaven crowns in contact, they seated themselves on the massy oaken bench, which was fitted up to correspond with the form of the window.

“ It works,” said Gilbert Foliot, rubbing his course red hands together, then patting his brother bishop on the shoulder.

“ It does ! it does ! better than a miracle,” answered Hilary, his long, thin, hungry face looking like a sheep’s head with a smile upon it. “ Queen Eleanor hath pitched upon a right plan for her purpose ; she has got them both into purgatory.”

“ And it will be long ere I offer up a mass to redeem one of them,” said the red-nosed bishop ; “ neither quotidian, nor month’s mind,—anniversary or *abit*—but sooner set about to form new masses to keep them there, were it once their safe lodgment.”

“ May they not yet make matters up again ?” inquired Hilary. “ What if Becket should change his mind,—absolve this Kentish knight,—give up his claim to the castle of Rochester and other things,—where then go all the Queen’s plans ?”

“ To the strengthening of her next,” replied gross Gilbert with a knowing shake of the head. “ But all this, I tell thee, she has foreseen ; and thinkest thou, that if even the Archbishop (oh, how that word sticks in my throat ! ) were to

do this, Henry would not at once begin to reduce his power, that he might no more have such cause of complaint? Aye, marry would he; and pare away while there was aught left to cut at, as you and I have often done at a haunch of venison which we had provided during Lent.'

"But what if the King leaveth nothing but the bone?" said hungry-looking Hilary; "it will be but of little avail, I trow, the Queen rewarding thee with the Primacy when it is clean picked;—small share shall I have, too, for aiding thee in thy plans."

"A straw for thy fears!" answered the pious Gilbert; "I thought thou hadst known me too well to fear that my conscience would boggle at a stray form or two. Let Henry take mitre, stole, and crook, so that he leaves me the flock to pick; what care I if he be called the shepherd, so that he winks at my entry into the fold."

"Thou sayest sooth, good brother," replied Hilary with a grin; "it is but calling veal-cutlets crimped cod, and keeping fish in thy

mind instead of flesh ; and thou mayest satisfy both thy conscience and thy stomach at the same time, providing thou dost not let too many of the brethren put their hand into the same dish. But hark ! I hear the clattering of trenchers ; they are already preparing for the feast."

" Which I must not wait to partake of," said the bishop of Hereford ; " for it is fitting that Eleanor should have early notice of what hath to-day befallen ; so I will but get one of the attendants to bring me a few mouthfuls of food and a cup of wine, ere I set out again for Oxford."

Leaving the unholy hypocrites to eat their meal, and form their plots against the high-minded primate, we will turn for a few moments to the group seated at the huge tables in the centre of the hall ; for the banquet has no claim to our attention, as we have already described a similar scene in our former volume. Although the feelings entertained by the party were not uttered in set speeches by the leaders,

as is the case in the present day ; yet never on the eve of any great political change in modern times was party spirit more bitterly awake than on that day in the hall of Woodstock. Even the few who were well-wishers to Becket, were compelled to sit in silence ; for so bitter were the invectives poured forth by the brutish Norman barons over their wine, that for the few to take his part, whose hearts were with him, would have been tempting fifty daggers to leap at once at their throats. All that rumour had ever set afloat against the character of Becket in former times, was on that day repeated ; every one of his enemies remembered something that told against him ; while by some strange oversight all his good deeds, and knightly actions were forgotten. Men who had held his stirrup, and waited at his table, who had even with their own hands groomed his favourite charger, and fed his choicest hounds,—drank to the downfall of the son of the Saracen slave ; for they even raked up the memory of the dead, to give a deeper colouring to their

hatred. Once only was his name vindicated by the Earl of Leicester, who, in reply to some doubt about his former valour, swore by one of his deepest oaths, that a braver knight never shivered a lance; and added, that although he hated him as a saint, yet he loved him as a soldier. But why dwell longer on the scene? it was such a one as is enacted every day; and although the state of mankind was then more unpolished, it was more sincere; and those ebullitions of feeling which the present forms of society, either keep down or make known more guardedly, were then daringly displayed, and instead of rankling long in the breast, were often quenched by bloodshed on the spot. For, be it remembered, that refinement of manners does not always better the human heart; no more than the removal of a wild and poisonous plant into a trim garden, changes its evil qualities; for the feelings of the savage are to be found even in civilized society.



## CHAPTER IV.

This too much lenity  
And harmful pity must be laid aside.  
To whom do lions cast their gentle looks ?  
Not to the beast that would usurp their den.  
Whose hand is that the forest bear doth lick ?  
Not his that spoils her young before her face.

SHAKSPEARE.

LEAVING Becket to cool his choler by a ride through the park of Woodstock, we shall, for a few pages, follow the king, from the time that he so suddenly quitted the banquet hall. Henry was a man of stormy passions, firm in his friendships as most ; but when once moved to hatred, tearing on and crushing all beneath him. It was not a trifling offence that could change him ; the wound must be deep ere he would feel it, but once sent home to the heart, the assailant was never again forgiven. Never for a moment had the slanderous whispers which

were constantly circulating in the palace affected the king; but the more Becket's enemies sought to lessen him in the monarch's esteem, the closer did he rivet his friendship on every public occasion: true he had ever found the primate willing to serve him without hesitation, and the mutual interchange of kindness between them, had hitherto seemed to spring from the esteem they held for each other. Henry felt the unkindness of Becket deeply; his very soul was pained, and when his anger had in some measure subsided, there still rankled at his heart a deep melancholy, a consciousness that he had received injury from the man who had long held undisputed sway in his bosom; a man to whom every secret of his soul was known; his most inmost thoughts and sincerest opinions, which had never been divulged to any other, for few men have more than one true friend.

Writhing under these emotions, he left the hall by a side-door, and pacing the long

gallery, entered the very apartment which the primate had but a few moments before quitted; but there he found no rest. In that very room had they often caroused together: there they had laughed and sung, pledged each other in the huge goblets which still glittered in the recesses; exchanged their opinions about every one who moved in the court; laid down their plans for humbling the pride of one, and raising another; and often, when the business of the state required their presence, had they sat there laughing at each other's wit; and if the historians of the age belie them not, more than one fair lady has shared their revels, whose lord was guarding some distant fortress.

Henry gazed a moment around the apartment, and a deep sigh upheaved his broad breast, as object after object met his eye, and reminded him of bygone scenes. There hung the antlers of a deer they had chased together, when they outstripped all their followers, and were be-

nighted in the forest, and both weary and hungry, rested together under a broad oak until sunrise. Opposite were a couple of lances crossed, with which each had unhorsed three knights in the lists. Near to these hung a rich suit of chain armour, which Becket had brought over from France and presented to him. These and a hundred other similar things met the monarch's eye; and while his heart swelled for a moment, his natural pride arose, and he summoned an attendant, and commanded him to strip the walls of all their ornaments.

Leaving the menial thus employed, he caught the sound of the voices assembled in the hall at the banquet, and was at no loss to conceive the cause of their hilarity; but the image of his favourite was not yet struck out of his affections, and he hurried across the court-yard, and passing the postern, crossed the moat in the same direction as that by which Rosamond escaped from Uggleshred. His foot once upon the greensward, he drew his short Anjou cloak,

(which he had snatched up hastily, to cover the rich tunic) closely around him; and threading his way through the winding foot-paths in the coppices, unconsciously traversed the direction to the labyrinth. Onward he went through the entangling underwood, without pausing a moment to consider the course he was pursuing. The songs of the birds in the covert, the rich aroma of the trees, and the sweet fragrance that rose from a thousand wild flowers, were passed by disregarded; nor did he once pause until he had gained an open glade, at the end of which rose the shaggy eminence covered with brushwood and creeping plants, that sheltered the abode of his fair mistress.

Rambling knee-deep amid the long grass and sweet summer-flowers, was seen the figure of Gamas Gobbo, his arms waving up and down like the motion of a bird's wings, while from his thick lips issued that loud buzzing sound, which we have before described, and as he chased the honey-bees from flower to flower,

the poor idiot seemed to be one of the happiest of the human race.

The monarch stood gazing upon him in silence; and while he remembered the thousand cares which weighed upon a crown, and the painful emotions which he then felt, he almost wished that he too had been born an idiot, and left to run all summer long among the flowers. Gobbo was, however, too much engrossed in his favourite pleasure, to notice the monarch, and Henry entered the inlet of the labyrinth unobserved. As he threaded his way through the dark and intricate passages which we have already described; he felt as if he could gladly resign all the cares and splendour of a king, to dwell with the beloved being whom that solitude sheltered, and his conscience smote him when he reflected on what he had done; entailing misery upon one who was dearer to him than his kingdom, and feeding ambition on misery, to satisfy its hungry cravings. There was a weight upon his heart which he had never be-

fore felt ; a load which he would fain get rid of ; a sinking of the spirits, which told him that, although he was a king, his nature was weak and feeble as that of another man's.

He passed the faithful minstrel Pierre de Vidal, without exchanging a word, he was at a loss what to say, for now he had no one to whom he could pour forth his feelings, but Rosamond. Henry of England had but one true friend amid all his thousands of flatterers ! (since that he stood on terms of defiance with Becket,)—had but one to whom he could unbosom himself, and she lived in a solitude, such as his meanest serf would have spurned, and in a reputation which the wife of any *Theow*, who was chained to the soil would have blushed to have borne.

Light are the ears of love ; for slow and faltering as was his footstep, Rosamond recognized its sound, and was on the turret-stair, ere he had half ascended it.

“ What ails my lord ? ” said she, her lustrous



eyes instantly assuming a look of fear, and her whole countenance undergoing such a sudden change, as only a woman's features can wear when she is alarmed for the object of her love. "Speak to me, Henry," added she, chaining his neck with her fair arms, as she had done a thousand times before: "thou art not well, my love, or thou wouldst not look thus solemnly upon thy Rose."

He returned her fervent embrace in silence, and entering her chamber, sat down upon the richly carved bench which ran round the oriel. Rosamond seated herself beside him, and leaning upon his shoulder, gazed upon his countenance, which wore the strong marks of care and anguish, until her beautiful eyes filled with tears, and she again entreated him to tell her what had thus moved him.

"I am half jealous," said Rosamond, at length endeavouring to rally her spirits, and forcing herself to smile, "that your Highness grieveth for the absence of your favourite, the

Primate. Thou wert wont to be more cheerful when he shared thy company; was it not so?" added she, looking tenderly into his face, for she was unconscious of what had happened.

"Name him not," said Henry, in a voice trembling with deep emotion; "he hath to-day avowed himself mine enemy."

"I speak of Thomas à Becket, my Lord," continued Rosamond, thinking that the King mistook her meaning,— "your bosom friend, and not of your enemies."

"The same," replied the King briefly, and rising from his seat, "thinkest thou that one less than himself could have moved me thus?"

"Take it not so seriously," said Rosamond, her tongue faltering beneath its utterance and hope; "some word spoken in warmth, that could have no ill meaning; some misunderstanding which your cooler moments will explain. Believe me, my liege, the Archbishop harboureth no ill against you."

"Rosamond," said Henry, pausing suddenly

amid his hurried walk, and looking fixedly into her countenance, "he has power over me, and I fear him, not for my sake alone, so much as thine own. I have kept nothing from him; he is familiar with my most inmost thoughts. He needeth but to speak, and Aquitaine, Poictou and Anjou fly from my grasp, and Eleanor is again mistress of these possessions. Would to Heaven that they had ever remained in her power! But no," added he, pacing the apartment rapidly, "I will be the first to proclaim my own villany. Thou shalt ride beside me, and every knee bend, and every voice hail thee as England's rightful Queen. I will not be driven to render thee the justice I owe thee; it shall be an act of my own pleasure, thou shalt share my power, as thou hast long done my heart. To horse! Pierre de Vidal," he added, throwing open the casement, "spur for life and death to our capital, and by sound of trumpet——"

"Stay, my lord," said Rosamond, stepping up and closing the casement, and motioning the

minstrel with her hand to withdraw, for he was already about to ascend the turret stair ; “ this must not be,” continued she, with a firmness which Henry had never before seen her assume. “ Whatever your quarrel may have been with the Primate, my liege, I know not, but I will pledge myself for his honour, that he never abuseth our secret, nor basely betrayeth the trust your Highness hath placed in him.”

“ Ah! wilt thou too take the part of this traitor !” exclaimed the King, his countenance flushed with anger, and his large blue eyes fixed upon her, as if they would pierce into her very soul. “ No ! no !” added he, after a long pause, his stern features gradually relaxing, “ thou knowest him not; thou hast not felt his words since he became the ascetic churchman ; thou hast not encountered his chilling glance ; thou only rememberest him as the common friend to whom we imparted all our secrets, when his conscience only leant to our bidding, when I loved thee the more that thou didst

repeat his praises, and my heart was only shared by thyself and him. But now," continued he, with a bitterness of speech that made Rosamond start, "I hate him more than I did love him."

"What hath he done, my liege?" inquired Rosamond, alarmed at the King's earnestness of manner, and fearing that matters were indeed serious while they thus excited him. "Assuredly he hath not erred beyond forgiveness?"

"Defied me!" replied Henry, in a voice of thunder, and hurrying up and down the apartment like a madman, while he spoke. "Set at nought my power, and refused to do my bidding,—declared himself King of the church, and, acknowledging no power above him but the Pope, dared me to oppose him; cursed and excommunicated without my will; claimed castles and heritages for the church, and will ere long leave me but a crowned mockery, the mere shadow of a king, a puppet moved by the wires which he would manage. Oh! I could thrust my head into the earth, and bury myself for

shame when I think how foolish I have been. I have bared my heart to him, and he hath availed himself of all its weaknesses, and now despiseth me. He found me a willing steed to mount, patted and flattered me until he seated himself upon my back; and now he would shake the reins above my head, and spur on until I become mad. Oh fool! that I was, not to hearken to my nobles, and spurn the Saxon slave when he came to lick my foot, ere I had allowed him to bite me. No," added he, again pausing, while the foam hung upon his lips, and he stood erect in all his dignity, as if he suddenly remembered that it was beneath a king to be thus moved by a subject. "He shall find me no lazy steer, to be fed until I am sleek, then quietly submit myself to the yoke. I will gore to death the first that dares to harness me. Like a malignant comet, I will tread fearlessly along my fiery course; and when I have blazed out my time, leave a blank and burnt-up desolation for a future age to marvel at."

The lion was at last aroused within him, and he stood with his nostrils dilated, and his huge chest thrown out, as if he would have dared the shock of a thunderbolt; his pride had blazed forth, and extinguished all pity. Never did he look more like a king: there was a fearful majesty in his knit brow, clenched teeth, and folded arms,—a look of daring decision: a breathless and fearless resolution seemed to have possessed him, and he stood like a giant secure in his own power, as if he suddenly remembered that he need but turn round to rend those who were pursuing him, his nerves seemed to have become firm as iron. Rosamond gazed upon him in fear and astonishment; never before had she beheld him clothed in such stern dignity; so wrapt up in the iron mail of resolution, and ready to meet the shock of all comers. He stood like a firm landmark on the shore of a stormy sea, that bares its foundation before a thousand breakers, and stands the bursting of every billow unmoved. His mind was firmly



made up, the molten iron of his passion shaped and hardened itself into a form, he resolved to maintain his dignity to the death, and never to forgive Becket while he breathed; and rigidly was that resolution kept.

Rosamond was the first to break that fearful silence, and her tongue faltered lest that she should again awake the sleeping tempest; as she thus spoke:—"I will not gainsay thee, my Lord, nor deign to offer aught in apology for what the Archbishop may have done; but still I dare to affirm that he is too honourable to take advantage of your secret respecting myself; and right loath should I be to make our marriage a stumbling-block over which your Highness might fall, and bring down with you all the thousands that have hitherto remained firm. While I stand innocent in the eyes of God, in your own mind, and my own conscience, I care but little for the opinion of others; nor would I that dissension should be sown between yourself and your subjects in Aquitaine and Poictou,

merely to make me that which I would avoid being. Your Queen," added she, her heart swelling as she spoke, "covets not that domestic quietude, which is all I crave for; as for name, and fame, and the world's opinion, they are but shadows that pass over the stream, without rippling its surface; they affect not the deep under-current that flows on unseen. No, believe me Henry," continued she, laying her hand gently upon his folded arms, "I have no wish to cope with my dangerous rival. I am happy in the possession of thy love, and——" She was about to proceed, when a child bounded into the apartment, and looking into Henry's face with his smiling blue eyes, exclaimed, "Father!" and seizing his mother's hand,—with the other he grasped the skirts of the monarch's rich tunic.

For a moment, the King gazed affectionately upon the child, and he ran his fingers through the silky clusters of its hair, then cast a sad fond look upon the countenance of Rosamond,

and passing his hand over his brow, while he turned away to hide his emotion, exclaimed in a sorrowful voice: "Alas! I am doomed to bring misery upon all who are dear to me; even the innocence of childhood is not free from the curse which attends me. No," added he, "I will yet be honest to myself. I will to Rome, and procure a divorce from Eleanor. I was entrapped by the wily traitress; even the dotard Louis spurned her from his bed. I will not leave the child to be pointed at with the finger of scorn when I am dead; but make him what he is, the rightful heir to my kingdom. Men shall bow before him, and acknowledge him their liege lord, and not pass him by as a son of base birth. He shall be sought out, and courted by the Norman nobles, and not shunned as their inferior. It shall not be said," continued he, again, carried away with his feelings, "that a breath of Becket's gave him royalty: I will lead him forth of mine own accord, and he shall stand in the midst of them;

until, like young eagles which are taught to gaze upon the sun, they all become familiar with his countenance.”

But Rosamond again uplifted her gentle voice, and by her persuasive arguments prevented the irresolute monarch from accomplishing his intention, preferring even peace to her own fair fame, and the reputation of her children.

So on a breath revolve the mighty affairs of this world. The sound of a few trumpets, and the shouts of a score or two voices would have made Rosamond a queen ; and her child William, surnamed Longsword, the King of England. But they were silent, and the one in exchange was doomed to bear the title of concubine, and the other to be called the son of a harlot ; when even a word of Becket's could have made him the progenitor of a long and glorious line of kings.

## CHAPTER V.

I am too high-born to be property'd,—  
To be a secondary at controul,  
Or useful serving-man, and instrument  
To any sovereign.

But when we in our viciousness grow hard,  
(O misery on't) the wise gods seal our eyes ;  
In our own filth drop our clear judgments ; make us  
Adore our errors ; laugh at us, while we strut  
To our confusion.

SHAKSPEARE.

WE left the high-minded and angry primate riding at full speed through the park of Woodstock, chafed to the very soul at the thoughts of being dismissed from the palace ; when, if he had but made up his mind to have started a minute earlier, he might have saved himself much painful humiliation. To a proud soul like Becket's, these feelings were maddening. "To be ordered away like a beggar," thought

he, as he galloped through the chase, as if it was infected by a plague,—“and I too the Primate of England; the head of the church; high in my episcopal situation, as Henry is on his throne!—the thought is not to be borne. The very grooms at the gate cast a grim smile of triumph at me as I passed. No, I will hold no terms with him longer; but will grasp my pastoral crook as firmly as he does his sceptre, and invest the church with more power than ever belonged to the crown. Not a right that I can claim for it shall escape me. I will show this overbearing king with whom he has to deal.”

Such, and even thoughts more severe against the King, passed through the excited mind of Thomas à Becket, as he rode at full gallop along the winding road, which was here and there overhung with the arms of gigantic oaks, and the huge branches of aged and stately elms. Neither did he for a moment turn his thoughts to his faithful attendant, Gryme, so

much had anger overpowered all his calmer reflections, and carried away, at one fell swoop, all those remembrances of prayer and penance, and those severe lessons of self-denial and humiliation which he had so long practised. Be it remembered, however, that from the time he was created Archbishop, he had so schooled his mind, as to firmly believe that it was his duty to sacrifice everything for the good of the church; that his duty to Heaven, the Pope, and his own conscience, were of more consideration than aught on earth beside; and that he had carried this duty to the very verge of severity, making even no allowance for those who did not deem it so essential to play the tyrant for the love of religion. His zeal had in a great measure eaten him up; and he tortured both his body and mind to great excess, playing the part of devil to himself here, that he might prevent the horned authorities from tormenting him hereafter; and forgetting that among his bald-headed brethren of the church, there were very



few who had done so many unclerical deeds as himself. There was in fact a pride about his piety,—a painful regularity in all his forms of prayer and penance, mingled with a kind of haughty sternness, which was rooted in his soul, and from which sprang all his ambition. His hair-shirt was of the coarsest, and he never moved but it gave him torture ; but over this he wore the richest robes of office, palliums of costly velvet, ornamented with gold, and bordered with the richest minever. His food was of the plainest, such as even a beggar would have refused ; but it was brought to him in vessels of silver or gold, richly embossed ; and he would often take his meal of coarse bread and water ; whilst his favourite hound was regaling on a rich repast of cold venison at his feet. Such a man was Thomas à Becket ; born to be a leader in whatever station of life he might be thrown ; and if there have been holier men elevated to the primacy, there never was one who stuck up more firmly for its dignity.

If he wavered, it was but for a moment ; like some goodly ship, staggered by an unexpected hurricane, that reels and dips her white sails for an instant in the surges, then rises buoyant and erect, to trample upon the thunder of a thousand billows.

While the Archbishop was riding at such a furious rate through the shady and forest-like paths of the park, Gamas Gobbo chanced suddenly to emerge from a thick underwood, and darting across the road with his loud buzzing noise, in chase of a large brown bee, he startled the primate's steed, which, without abating its force, wheeled instantly on one side, and ran its head with such force against the stem of an enormous oak, that both horse and rider came instantly to the ground. The dignity of the Prelate was not at all enhanced by being thus suddenly precipitated headlong into a thicket of brambles ; nor did it add to the nobleness of his figure to see him crawl out on all fours, his hands covered with moist clay,

and his rich riding-cloak here and there besmeared with the same material. But what added to the drollery of the scene, was the figure of Gobbo jumping up and down in the middle of the road, humming and waving his skinny arms,—now turning his yellow eyes upon the Primate,—then watching some heavy bee as it flew buzzing to a neighbouring woodbine. Nor was the sudden and unexpected shock passed by without having an influence on the mind of Becket ; for it did more for the moment to abate his anger against the king, than any hour's argument Gryme could have introduced ; and for the first time he seemed to become conscious of the absence of his attendant.

Who, however, should come up at the moment, but Gilbert Foliot, the bishop of Hereford, riding at full speed on his way to carry tidings of Becket's quarrel with the King to Eleanor ; he having taken a different turning of the wood, and outridden Gryme. With many a low bow, and sentence of sympathy,

uttered in bad Latin, did this hoary old hypocrite alight, and giving the reins of his palfrey to Gamas, proceeded to offer his services to the primate. Meantime, Gobbo, idiot as he was, had observed several flies hovering around the wallets of the bishop, and knowing by a kind of instinct, that there was something more attractive than legends of the saints, or missals to draw them hither, he, without delay, commenced a search, and having drawn out the corner of an enormous pasty, he gave so high a jump, and so loud a buzz, that he frightened the horse of the poor bishop, and away it rushed at a bound into the thicket, and was instantly out of sight.

The right reverend rider at that moment had his back turned towards Gobbo, and with hands outspread and body bent forward, was making an offer of his steed to the primate, and had just delivered himself of some holy saw; at the end of which came in his "*Laus Deo,*" for the miraculous preservation of Christ's

representative, and vowing how many prayers should be offered up at the abbey of Hereford,—when his ear was arrested by the rushing of his steed through the underwood, and his eye instantly alighted upon the huge corner of the pasty which Gobbo (his mouth full) was flourishing in one hand, while his other arm kept up an incessant circular motion, and he buzzed at his highest pitch of voice with delight.

Even Becket could scarcely keep his solemn and noble looking countenance, as he beheld the ponderous prelate make a rush at Gobbo, and forgetting all his protestations of piety, he exclaimed, “May the curse of the foul fiend alight upon thy ugly carcase!” But the idiot was not to be thus caught; for, waiting until the huge bishop was just within reach of him, he sprang aside like an elastic branch, and down tumbled his reverence, face foremost, into a spot where a cow but an hour before had lain quietly chewing her cud.

When this dirty pillar of the church stood bolt upright, the primate of England could not refrain from laughing aloud ; and had King Henry by chance have come up at that moment, the calendar would have numbered a martyr less, and the Cathedral of Canterbury been shorn of the gifts of ten times ten thousand pilgrims ; for the king would have thrown himself into the primate's arms, and the walls of the palace of Woodstock would again have rung with the old familiar sounds of their laughter. Never had divine a more unclerical appearance than the reverend father of Hereford. His huge red nose looked as if it was cased in the very darkest of Roman cement ; and his broad double chin bore no inapt resemblance to the newly-upturned furrows of a plough-field, while every crease in his bagging cheeks and deep eye-pits seemed laid in, in contrast to the crimson bits that here and there peeped out ; he looked like a bishop dead-coloured, or an old portrait newly touched,

at the door of a picture-cleaner's. Becket, who was well acquainted with the character of the bishop, could not resist the temptation of venturing a few sarcasms at his expense, as he was not ignorant of the ill-will which he bore him.

“Pity, holy father, that thou shouldst meet with such a sad mishap,” said the primate, his countenance, in spite of all the sympathy he attempted to throw into it, assuming a sneer; “when thou wert in the act of conferring kindness upon one of the church, and not, like Saul, riding forth to persecute the children of Christ.”

The bishop, who at that moment was stooping down, and wiping his face upon the skirt of his mantle, paused suddenly, and cast a peculiar glance upon Becket; for his conscience smote him, when he remembered, that the very cause of his journey, was to hasten the downfall of the primate; and he began to suspect from the allusion couched in his remarks, that Becket knew the secret of his mission, and he stam-



mered forth in reply the following: "The evil-one, most holy and reverend father, it is written, shall have power over us, and when we think that we stand securely, cometh in some form or other and causeth our fall. And even as the devils were cast out, and entered into the herd of swine, so do I believe that Sathanas himself hath taken possession of that imp who now standeth, gibbering, and buzzing, and mocking us, as if he delighted in our overthrow. Had I not forgotten my flask of holy water, I would even here exorcise and cast him out."

"Methinks the holy work may yet be done," said Becket, "for but now I observed the idiot, or fiend, whichever he may be, take out a flask from your wallet, and it doubtless containeth that which your reverence bemoaneth the loss of."

"Blessed St. Dunstan! it is even so," exclaimed Gilbert, turning his eyes to where Gobbo stood with the leathern bottle to his lips, taking a hearty draught, after having

finished his pasty, for the flask had been filled with excellent Rhenish by the Cellarer at the palace;—"it is even so, and he swalloweth it, as if it were but the common flowing of the brook, when it was drawn from the well of St. Winifred, and a hundred paternosters repeated over it, every one of which was numbered with a bead."

"I fear me," replied the primate, "that they have prayed without their beads, or your reverence may have been mistaken in the flask, seeing that the idiot smacketh his lips together, and rolleth up his ears, as if he was enjoying the true flavor of wine or strong drink, rather than the holy water of the well of St. Winifred."

"Troweth your holiness, that I journey abroad, laden with forbidden drink?" said the bishop, uplifting his dirty hands, and rolling up the white of his eyes, which showed the more clearly from the dingy colour of his countenance; "or that in the very same mail in which I carry a relic of the blessed St. Gertrude, the homilies

of the holy Ambrose, and that sacred missal which was dropped into the abbey of Hereford by a holy hand, in which the face of the virgin is to be seen,—even as she looked when upon earth, and as she now showeth herself to her servants here below, with stars on her head, the moon beneath her feet, and an infant upon her knee;—wherein there is Moses with his horns of gold, Michael grasping his spear, the blessed St. Peter with his keys, St. John with his chalice, and St. James with his shells;—where the angels are girding the loins of Thomas of Aquin, and the sacred spider is spinning her web to conceal Athanasius, while the merciful Anthony of Padua, with his mallet, is breaking the heads of heretics, or preaching to a holy host of fishes, who are bowing their heads, as if to say Amen. Oh, it is a strange volume, and a blessed volume, and hath been known to close its leaves, when aught of evil hath been near it; nor will it open unless first sprinkled with holy water: then its leaves shine like the candle of

Genovefa, or the eyes of the rats around St. Gertrude; yea even bright as the glance of Anthony of Egypt, when he frightened away the evil one."

During the lying narrative of the bishop, Becket who appeared to be attentively listening, had kept his eye fixed on Gamas Gobbo, who having amused himself long enough with the leathern bags, at length threw them down, and bounded off after two bees, that went humming leisurely along above the wild flowers, as they were retreating to their hives, for the sky was heavy and lowering. No sooner did the primate observe this, than he sprang hastily forward, and seizing the half-filled flask with one hand, he grasped the bishop's wallet with the other; and applying the mouth of the leathern-bottle to his lips, was soon convinced that the holy water from the well of the blessed St. Winifred was the oldest rhenish from the cellars of Woodstock. And just as his brow had become clouded, and was about to charge the bishop as

the chief of liars and the basest of hypocrites, his reverence, probably anticipating what would follow, shot off at once into the thicket, exclaiming, "Yonder is my palfrey, I will be with your reverence anon."

The first thought of the archbishop, was to throw the flask at the head of Gilbert Foliot, as he retreated, but from this he desisted, and proceeded to examine the contents of his reverence's wallet. Far be it from us to belie those holy men of old, but true it is that there did fall from between the leaves of an old illuminated missal, a slip of parchment which was addressed to the bishop of Hereford, and subscribed by an holy abbess, living in the said shire. And could our readers have peered over the shoulder of the primate, and deciphered those ancient letters, they would have discovered, how a certain postern had been left open for several nights, by the holy abbess, and how a devout nun had been constantly on the look-out for his reverence; that the finest capons had been slain,

and the best wine kept in readiness among the sacred relics, where no one ventured to peep, saving on rare occasions, but herself.

Becket glanced his eye angrily over the document, as he muttered to himself, "No marvel that the Church of Christ hath fallen to this low estate, while such wolves in sheep's clothing have entered the fold. But I will cast them out," continued he, drawing the hood of his mantle over his shaven crown; for big drops of rain were already falling, and a huge dark cloud which had long hovered over the eastern side of the wide park slowly moved along, and now blackened that part of the sky under which the Archbishop seemed to stand. He attempted, but in vain, to raise his fallen steed; the animal groaned heavily and bled profusely from the chest, for in falling it had alighted upon the sharp stem of a jagged hawthorn. Gamas Gobbo flew to the Prelate's aid, and displayed much skill in endeavouring to raise the horse, but their united efforts were of no avail; so the

idiot only pointed to the wound, gave a louder buzz than usual, shook the rain which was now falling in torrents from his rugged and elfin locks, then rushed for shelter under a neighbouring oak; the broad branches of which covered many a yard of green grass and entangling underwood. The proud Prelate was compelled to follow the example of the idiot, and seating himself upon the mossy stem of the gigantic tree, he drew the hood closer around his head; folded his flowing and costly garments more tightly around him, and sat watching the heavy shower that seemed to smoke along the earth, until his countenance again assumed its former sternness, and his thoughts once more reverted to his interview with Henry. For a few moments the eyes of Gamas were fixed upon the thoughtful countenance of the Prelate; then he threw himself on the wet greensward, only half arising as some heavy bee now and then blundered past to seek for shelter, or clapping his hands together to scare



some wet-winged songster, that shot by in silence to the thicket. So they sat, the idiot without a care, ever and anon drawing some bee from his bosom, and extracting from it the honey bag; while the heart of Becket was steeped in the bitterness of wormwood and gall, as his pride arose while contemplating the humility he had undergone; remembering that but an hour before he stood highest in the favour of his king; but was now, like the houseless beggar, compelled to shelter under the green boughs, or journey a-foot through the wet paths of the park with the sheeted rain teeming upon him. But he was aroused from these thoughts by the sound of hoofs, as Gryme, with his face buried in the folds of his mantle and drenched to the skin, appeared.

## CHAPTER VI.

Let the great gods  
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,  
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch ;  
That hast within thee undivulged crimes  
Unwhipped of justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand !  
Thou perjured, and thou simular man of virtue,—  
Caitiff, to pieces shake.

*King Lear.*

THE delay of the faithful monk was owing to his ignorance of the paths of the park ; for, as we have before remarked, its enclosure was comparatively recent, and as it contained nearly ten times the space of ground which it stood upon a century ago, many parts still bore its ancient and forest-like appearance. When, however, Gryme had alighted and cast his eye upon the dying steed, and glanced at the wet drapery of the Prelate, his conscience smote him for the delay, and he gazed upon his master

with a look of pity and self-reproach. Becket returned his glance tenderly and without anger, and he was the first to break the painful silence by saying, "Thou seest we are already schooling ourselves for further trials, Gryme; we have sought shelter where the dun deer herd together, and are waiting with a like patience until the tempest passes away."

"Steed foundered, and garments drenched! and sheltering in the wild underwood with an idiot!" said Gryme, almost unconsciously to himself; "Arise, my dear master, and let us return to the palace. Hark! how the thunder is muttering in the distance; and see how the edges of yonder dark cloud are already fringed with lightning: arise! and let us begone ere the storm comes armed in all its fury."

"Not a step," said Becket, springing up like a war-horse at the sound of the trumpet. "Return, saidst thou?" continued he, moving rapidly under the lowest bough which his high head touched and brought down a shower, as if from

a water-spout ; “ no, not if it were midnight ; and if I were doomed to make this wet grass my couch, and every tree in the chase were to shiver around me, struck by the prostrating bolts of Heaven ! Gryme, thou didst but jest with me,” added he, fixing his eyes upon the attendant, nor shifting his glance, although the red lightning at that moment flashed across his noble countenance, and made the whole shadow of the oak, under which they stood, one broad blaze of light. Then again broke forth the deep-throated thunder, and shook every tree in the vast park as it went growling along under the gloomy and threatening vault of heaven. The affrighted idiot threw himself flat upon the earth, with his face downward, and Gryme drew the folds of his mantle closer around him ; while Becket alone stood bare-headed and erect amid the storm, as if he was unconscious of its fury.

“ It must not be,” muttered the monk, as if suddenly recollecting himself, and instantly un-

loosing the grey mantle from his shoulder to throw around the Primate; "hasten then to Oxford, in Heaven's name! for the day threateneth to close darkly; thou canst bestride mine own palfrey, and I will journey beside thee on foot; or wait here until the storm abates, if thou wilt not return to the palace."

"To the palace I will not return," said Becket, placing the mantle again upon the shoulder of his faithful follower, and with his own hands fastening the loop; "wouldst thou have the Primate of England kneel down to crave shelter like a very beggar; to go back cringing like a spiritless cur that hath been spurned by the foot of his master. No! we will journey on our way together when the fury of the tempest hath subsided. I can better brook the pelting of the storm, than the cold and contemptuous glance of the King. He shall not say, that I humbled myself at his gates; or was ushered by his grooms into the galleries to wait among his falconers and keepers

of his kennels, which the hurricane will drive homeward."

"Patience! holy father," replied Gryme, veiling his eyes from the glaring lightning; "forget not those pious lessons which you have ever taught the brethren of your order: remember that anger is but feeding the flames; that Christ forgave his enemies; and that, however high the wrath of the King might be kindled, his nature is forgiving; and that his pity and remembrance of former friendship could again be awakened in this hour of danger, when the very heavens are pouring forth their rage."

The monk meant kindly to his master, and was naturally a peace-maker; but unfortunately, like too many others who are full of good intentions, he too often widened the breach in place of closing it; and the words *pity* and *danger* fell harshly on the ears of the high-souled Prelate; and like a proud steed, which the rider thinks to check by plunging his spurs

into its side, instead of handling the reins judiciously, he instantly began to rear and plunge, and show greater symptoms of restlessness than ever.

“Pity! danger!” echoed the Pimate, bridling up as he repeated the words; and disregarding the loud thunder which now burst forth like the roaring of a thousand lions, while the heavy rain, which had by this time penetrated through every branch of the broad and deep-foliaged oak, caused Gamas Gobbo to arise from his saturated couch, and huddle closer to the stem of the tree. “Gryme, I have looked upon death; in the iron ranks of battle we have met each other face to face: danger and I have become companions; we have stood many a brunt together on the stormy sea, and amid the combat on land; we have confronted each other so often, that we have become familiar, and have long ago met without fear. No; I would sooner plant myself as a mark for the merciless lightning upon the highest oak



that towers above us, than seek to share the pity of the King. I tell thee, that ere this he hates me, since that he hath found I am marble under his hand instead of wax, and will not take his impress,—will not barter the church of God for his favour. Pity! saidst thou?" continued he, scattering the rain from the long grass as he moved to and fro in his excitement, unconscious of his situation; "as soon believe that the deep ocean roars in pity for those it has devoured,—that the wolf, gorged to excess, seeks its cave to mourn over the victim whose bones it has crunched;—that the midnight lightning came but to guide the traveller it struck dead,—as that I should awaken his pity. No!" added he with energy, and instantly checking his rapid strides; "I am beyond the reach of his pity, and will teach him to fear me. He hath set his foot upon an angry wave, that he thought to hasten shoreward; forgetting that it would roll back to the deep from whence it sprung, and bring with it a thousand

heavier breakers. The thunder of Rome is only dormant ; and will shake the wide welkin when it is aroused ; and mine," continued he, speaking in his loudest tone, " is a voice that can bid it awaken !"

As he spoke, he stood with his tall figure erect, and his arm waving aloft, while his brow was flushed with passion, and his ample drapery fell around him in graceful folds ; and scarcely had the words left his lips when, as if at the bidding of a mighty magician, the red-winged lightning gave a deeper crimson to his countenance, and filled every avenue of the park with flames, as if a million blazing banners had waved at his beck, then again became suddenly folded. Then came the deep thunder in one fearful and continuous peal that seemed as if it would split the sky asunder ; while it shook the firm foundations of the earth ; and the rain clattered down like mountain-torrents, as if the windows of heaven were again opened, and the desolating deluge once more poured down upon the world.

Gamas Gobbo gave a loud shriek, and clung to the mantle of the archbishop in fear, and in another instant, the form of Gilbert Foliot was seen brushing aside the underwood as he approached with a terror-stricken countenance, calling upon the name of every saint for protection, and vowing to offer up candles and masses, and to amend his crimes, in a breath. Even Gryme faltered beneath the mighty uproar, and took up his beads, while his lips moved rapidly as he ran over some remembered prayer. Becket alone stood unmoved: his deep and fiery eye kindled as if with some sublime emotion. While he gazed upon the dark and angry sky, not a symptom of fear settled upon his countenance; but he stood like the statue of some god that has bared his marble front before a thousand thunders, and wrapped the lightning around him like a mantle. Nor did his countenance change, until his eye alighted upon the trem-

bling form of the Bishop of Hereford; then it assumed a look of dignified rebuke, beneath which the hypocrite quailed, as his teeth chattered again between cold and fear, for he was drenched to the very skin.

“Miserable sinner!” said Becket, his anger having in some measure passed away, while his thoughts were absorbed for the few moments in contemplating the fearful grandeur of the tempest: “it becomes thee well to tremble before the dreaded wrath of the Omnipotent, thou who hast grown grey in crime, and bent thy knees so long in mockery before the Most High. Now doth thy conscience torture thee. Get thee into some cavern, and there brood over thy crimes, until repentance hath dug furrows into thy cheeks, and obliterated the marks of thy gross feeding. Think over the hours thou hast wasted with that godless abbess, until thy brow becomes wrinkled with fasting and prayer, and remorse makes hollow thy eyes. Thou hast too long grown fat upon lies, and fallen

asleep, dreaming over thy deceits for the morrow. Thou art one of those plague-spots which spreads like a rotting damp over the church, and would, in the end, eat its way through pillar and shrine, until the whole edifice was consumed."

"Have compassion upon him, holy father," said Gryme, who felt moved when he beheld the prelate bowed to the earth, and heaving forth piteous groans: "remember that we all are sinners, and that if we extend not our mercy to the fallen brethren on earth, we cannot look for it from the blessed saints in heaven, who are ever pleading for our infirmities."

"Thou knowest him not," said Becket sternly; "he is one of those who sheltereth his sins under his seeming sanctity, and is in heart more wicked than he who would rob the church of its sacred relics. The swineherd who eats of the mast which he shakes down for his hogs, and shareth at night their lair, is too good to harbour with such as he is.

Oh God!" exclaimed he, lifting up his countenance to heaven, while the descending light which fell from between two masses of clouds, gave a softness to his features and a radiance to his bald crown, not unlike the light which the old masters throw around their pictures of the apostles; "how long wilt thou slumber ere thou comest forth in all thy glory and all thy vengeance, to purify the temple with the fire of thy wrath, and drive from it all that is unclean. Thou shakest the earth with the thunder of thy terror, and uprootest the huge oaks on the highest hills with the echo of thy voice. Oh! shake the souls of those who mock thee with their lips, while their hearts are far from thee. Let them not rest until, amid darkness and solitude, long fastings and fervent prayers; flooding tears and deep groans; they have worked out their repentance, in sincerity, in fear and trembling and breathless awe. How long shall the shrines of the Saints be bowed to in mockery, and the Holy Virgin

invoked by those whose breath is burning with impure passions, and whose eyes are inflamed through keeping up their drunken vigils. Bow then the heavens in thy wrath, and come down and make the uttermost ends of the earth tremble, until every soul falls like the darkness at thy feet, and every knee bends until it grows to the ground. Send forth thy voice like the sounding of chariots upon the hills; let there be within their souls a voice of battle and of shouting, until despair, like the blackness of darkness, falls and is felt, and hope only breaks like the morning after a long night of sorrowful repentance."

While the archbishop thus proceeded, unconscious of what was going on around, Gilbert Foliot made his escape, for he could better bear the wet and cold of the underwood, than listen to these terrible enunciations. Gryme, however, harkened with bowed head, and uplifted hands, and, although the language of the prelate re-



sembled in a great measure such as was uttered by the fanatics of a later day, yet strange was the effect it sometimes produced, on the rude auditors of that age.

The storm had by this time abated, and Gamas Gobbo was the first to avail himself of the calm, for the rich aroma that followed the shower, (and which all must have inhaled who have wandered in the solitudes of nature,) was soon felt by the idiot, and he stood, like the wild ass in Job, snuffing up the air; until bee after bee broke forth; then away he bounded his arms uplifted with the undulatory motion of a bird flying, and he buzzed his gentlest notes, as he shot into the thicket.

Becket mounted the horse of the monk, and rode on at a gentle pace, while Gryme walked beside him, and they journeyed along in silence to Oxford, where they stayed that night, and afterwards by easy stages returned to Canterbury. It was late before Gilbert Foliot reached the palace with his tidings; and great was the

disappointment of his reverence, when he learnt that some other messenger had outstripped him several hours ; nor was this the greatest calamity, for he was too late for the evening meal ; and while he ate his morsel apart by the huge fire, where he sat to dry his garments, his conscience gave him sundry twinges, for he now found himself completely at the mercy of the primate, and well knew that, if dealt with according to his deserts, he should make but a sorry figure. But we must leave him, for he hath but little to do with our story.

## CHAPTER VII.

Think not I love him, though I ask for him ;  
'Tis but a peevish boy :—yet he talks well ;  
But what care I for words? yet words do well,  
When he that speaks them pleases those who hear.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was on the morning following the storm, that Pierre de Vidal left the labyrinth to wander in the secluded paths of the park ; for the remains of the old forest-like solitudes had a charm for the minstrel, which was all the sweeter when he had Maud for a companion. He threaded his way with folded arms and measured step along the winding avenues, which in some places skirted the banks of the Glyme, then wound with many a picturesque meander deeper into the neighbouring thickets. The brow of the

minstrel was overclouded with thought ; and although his dark eyes now and then became lighted up with their natural and piercing brilliancy ; yet it was only as some beautiful object in nature presented itself ; and the same moody look, and melancholy gait were again unconsciously resumed. It was not long, however, before Maud made her appearance, leading by the hand the child of her mistress, and the son of King Henry, and who was afterwards celebrated as William Longsword ; for he even rivalled the acknowledged, but scarcely more legitimate Cœur de Lion, in the weighty weapons which he in after-life wielded. There was a bewitching look about Maud as she approached in her blue tunic, her ample hood thrown back, and her clustering hair bound with its neat leathern band, and falling in graceful curls over her gorget. Nor was there many a prettier foot to be seen, than that which, encased in its plain but neat sandal, and showing between the thongs the dashing hose of deep scarlet, came

tripping through the dew and the daisies. She approached the minstrel with one of her sweetest smiles ; and when, instead of receiving the customary salute which her pouting lips seemed to covet, she was only accosted with " good morrow to thee, fair Maud," she jerked her haughty head back until every ringlet seemed to dance again, and replied, " Good morrow, Master Vidal, an' that be all your greeting."

" Pardon me, my dearest Maud !" said the minstrel, drawing her beautiful face towards him, and imprinting a fervent kiss upon her lips ; " I am ill at ease this sweet summer morning. This quarrel between my Royal Master and the Archbishop hath somewhat moved me. I know their unbending natures ; and fear me that the rent is too wide to be made up in haste. How fares it with our gentle mistress ?"

" But indifferently," replied Maud, with a deep sigh ; " she was wont to call the Primate her

father, ever since that fearful night you so well wot of, when the villain UGGLETHRED——”

“Enough! enough! Maud,” said the minstrel, grasping the hilt of the dagger in his belt; “I know it all; and have not forgotten how ill I kept my guard. But I have notched my tally; and will not fail to compare the reckoning whenever he crosses my path. Hush! didst thou not hear a rustling in the under-wood?”

“It was but the rushing of a stag which William startled with his headless shaft,” replied Maud; “you may blame yourself for teaching him to handle such weapons; he hath shot out the eyes of half the saints in the painted window, and cracked more skulls than St. Anthony of Padua ever did with his mallet. And now he is off into the thicket to rouse some hart from his harbour. Hang the scape-grace! let him run until he is weary; I see Gamas Gobbo is with him, and have no fear of his safety.”

“See what a golden green the sunlight throws upon yonder glade,” said Vidal, disregarding the latter part of the damsel’s speech; “and now the white stems of the birches look like the clearest and brightest of marble pillars, overhung with emerald, or trellised like the roofless columns that stand mocking the sunshine of azure-vaulted Italy. But thou likest not to hear me name these things, Maud; thou carest not for the poetry of the earth; and yet thou lovest flowers, the spring and summer, moonlight and starlight, the song of the nightingale and the murmuring of the waters of the Glyme. Dost thou not, dearest?”

“Marry do I,” replied Maud; “but I love my fair mistress better than all these, and marvel at thee talking of such things, when thou knowest that she will need all our vigilance, the more that the primate will be absent from her; for thou knowest that he loved her like his own daughter.”



“I love her too,” said the minstrel; “and would shed my heart’s blood in her service; the archbishop could do no more.”

“But thou hast not said so much in her praise of late,” said Maud; “thou wert wont to extol her beauty, and compare her voice to all sweet sounds. Thinkest thou I should love thee the less didst thou praise her the more?” added she, leaning fondly upon Vidal’s shoulder.

“But thou didst say that there were eyes bright as her own,” answered the minstrel, throwing his arm around her waist, and looking affectionately into her face; “and when I said that she never spoke but in so soft a strain, that like the sweetest music it made us either smile or weep; thou didst say that there were others could speak as softly when they were well pleased, and then keptest silence until we gained the avenue of the old oak-wood. When I said that there was something in her countenance which I could look upon until I grew aged, for the longer I gazed the more beauties I dis-

covered ; or ere I could name one, another arose that seemed to outvie the former ; didst thou not unloose mine arm from thy waist, and bound away, without even giving me good even ?”

“ I did,” answered Maud, bending lower her lovely head, that the minstrel might take tribute from her sweet lips for her misdeeds.

“ Thou saidst rightly, dear Maud,” continued Pierre de Vidal, suddenly recollecting himself, and unloosing his hold ; “ this is no time for dalliance, we must up and be doing, if we would serve those whom we love. I heard the king pacing the court-yard yester-even in the Palace of Woodstock, and vowing what means he would take to humble the Primate ; and he was surrounded by those who are neither lovers of our gentle mistress nor of ourselves, but men who are often in close consultation with the crafty Eleanor.”

“ I understand not their policy, as I have heard thee call it,” answered Maud ; “ but I know that there are many evil-minded men who

are ever ready to raise themselves by another's downfall; and although the haughty Archbishop doth question me oftener about my aves, and credos, and paternosters, than he was wont to do when the gay Chancellor, yet my fair mistress hearkeneth to the same advice, and she is much wiser than myself. But somehow I cannot rock our youngest child asleep so soon by singing a *placebo*, as when I troll forth an old Saxon cradle-song; and methinks, for children, holy songs and anthems are useless, and might be reserved until they become of fitting age to understand them. But I must away, and seek yonder runaway boy, or Gamas Gobbo will be stinging him again with his bees: it was but the other day that his little fingers were swelled to double their size, and all through practising Gobbo's plan of taking out the honey-bag."

"Thou needest not to hurry," replied the minstrel, "I heard his voice but now in the thicket. But say, how is it that the lady Rosamond hath so seldom been abroad of late; she

was wont to take her walks oftener, and I had hopes of making her a lover of the divine art ; she hath of late hung down her head like a violet bowed beneath the dew. What new grief hath befallen her?"

"None, but such as fall upon our royal master," answered Maud with a sigh ; "I thought that thy divine art, as thou callest thy twanging upon the harp, and soiling slips of parchment, had taught thee that those who love share the cares of each other. It cuts our mistress to the very heart to hear the King speak against the Primate ; and last night she spoke the saddest things you ever heard, and she would not eat her evening meal, but went hanging her sweet head a one side, and talked of dying,—of the world being a blank without a friend. She called it a living grave, and made many other doleful comparisons. But I should not care," added she, dashing the tear from her eye, "how much they made me sad, if I could but lessen her own sorrows."

“ Bless thee, my dear Maud, for thy kind feeling,” exclaimed the minstrel, pressing her to his bosom, “ I will never call my life my own while she doth need it ; thou shalt see that I will make amends for my past negligence, and ——”

What he intended to have said was cut short by the sudden appearance of Gamas Gobbo, who rushed up with his wing-like arms, waving with a double-quick motion ; and buzzing loud as the hum of an hundred bees, while the signs of distress were depicted upon his sallow parchment-looking countenance ; and imitating the tramping of a horse with his feet, he made signs for them to speed in the direction of Oxford.

“ The child is lost,” exclaimed Maud, and uttering a loud shriek, she rushed into the thicket. But Pierre de Vidal, who understood the signs of the idiot, instantly followed in the direction which he took, and both set off like race-horses ; Gamas, however, leading the way

before the minstrel many a long yard, and showing no more signs of fatigue than a black-bird startled from her nest.

To account for the sudden absence of the young prince, (for such we must suppose him to be by birth,) we must return to the commencement of the present chapter. The rushing sound in the underwood, which the light ear of the minstrel readily detected, and which Maud innocently attributed to the startled stag that the hardy boy had aroused, was occasioned by none other than Oliphant UGGLETHRED, who stumbled while attempting to secret himself behind a clump of hazels. He had long before been prowling in the neighbourhood of the park, and had more than once discovered Pierre de Vidal and Maud together in the same shady haunts; but no sooner did he become acquainted with the quality of the child, than he determined at once upon seizing him. To effect this more securely and prevent any sudden alarm, he glided along with the stealthy pace of an Indian

from covert to covert, still keeping behind the boy, until, having found a favourable shelter of fern and hazels, he ventured beyond him, then shot off through the underwood, by which he was concealed. The fearless child, fancying that he had again come upon the haunt of the stag, followed the rustling sound at full speed, hallooing at the top of his voice, and regardless of the thorns and brambles, which pierced his hard and naked legs. Onward did Oliphant UGGLETHRED still allure him, in the direction where his horse was hidden, for he had provided himself with a high-mettled steed in case of danger; but just as he thought he might safely venture upon his unsuspecting victim, Gamas GOBBO made his appearance, and he was as familiar with the winding of every wood and path in the vast chase, as the hart that had been thrice hunted; Gamas buzzed aloud, and attempted to withdraw his little charge from the thicket, for it was nothing unusual for the boy to wander away for hours together under the



guidance of Gobbo ; but on this occasion the high-spirited little fellow refused to obey, and aimed one of his headless shafts at the idiot, as a sign of his rebellion. To this Gamas was soon reconciled, and as several bees were humming and alighting upon the wild woodbines, which made the very air in that part of the wood redolent of their perfume ; he was so busied in his favourite amusement, and had bounded to such a distance, that he was speedily out of sight of the child. This was the favourable moment for the ruffian, who springing up in an instant, exclaimed. "The stag ! the stag ! I have shot him with my cross-bow ;" and seizing the child by the hand, who was eager enough to follow him, he half-dragged and half-led him to where his steed stood secured to the stem of an oak. While UGGLETHRED was busied in unloosing the bridle, the boy, now suspecting that all was not right, attempted to escape ; but he had not retreated many yards, before the ruffian had thrown himself into the saddle, and

pursuing him, he made a stoop like an hawk, and with one jerk of his powerful arm, he was placed before him ; and in another instant the hoofs of his steed were heard ringing through the wood, with a sound like distant thunder. The idiot, who had missed his companion, just came up in time to see him borne away, and having buzzed and shook his fist, and followed them a considerable distance, until they were out of sight ; he retreated, as our readers are aware, to apprise Maud and the minstrel of the disaster.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes,  
And with a virtuous visor hide deep vice !

Most smiling, smooth, detested parasites,  
Courteous destroyers, affable wolves, meek bears,  
You fools of fortune, trencher friends, time's flies,  
Cap and knee slaves, vapours, and minute jacks.

SHAKSPEARE.

LIKE a performer in a fair, who amuses the crowd, by showing his dexterity in throwing up and catching the various gilt balls which he produces ; so are we compelled to work our chapters by different shiftings and crossings, and jerkings, now before, then again behind, laying down and taking up, yet constantly keeping one or another in motion, until the last solitary ball falls, is caught, and the crowd disperses. Some (like our readers,) who are passing by, look on and exclaim, " It is an old

trick," without waiting to see the whole number in play, their tastes leading them further on to where another is exhibiting his dancing-bear, or monkey, which can play a thousand antics. Others regard not the particular sights, but jostle on through the crowd, only anxious to walk through the fair, without pausing at any one place, just to say that they have been there, and venturing their opinions upon what they have not seen, and consequently know but little. A few there are who like the performance to pass on quickly, and be soon over; considering every pause that depicts the passions a waste of time; such would wish to see a play of Shakspeare's represented in less time than they can read it in their closets. But authors, like actors, take their own time, and the audience must "sit out the play," or retire; they having the privilege still left them to grumble, and not come again.

Leaving, then, Oliphant Uggleshred to pursue

his course through the most intricate paths of the park of Woodstock, we must again convey our readers to the ancient palace of Oxford, where Queen Eleanor still continued to reside, surrounded by her companions of evil, and seeking to abet every plan which militated against her royal husband. The quarrel between Henry and Becket, had just fallen out as she wished it; and as the flax was already ignited, she now set about bringing it to a flame, that it might be the more readily consumed. Beside fomenting the feud between the monarch and the primate, and laying down plans for the destruction of Rosamond, whom she hated the more that Henry absented himself from her, she had also contrived to sow dissension in the distant realms of Poictou, and it was more than probable that the presence of the king himself would be required to quell them. Laymen and Churchmen, and Norman nobles in armour, were constantly passing to and from Oxford to

Woodstock ; and during their calls at the former place, it was nothing uncommon for Eleanor to waylay such as had before been sounded, and to win them over to her own interests. We have before stated that her figure was commanding in the highest degree, and that her features possessed a beauty well adapted for admiration in that barbarous age ; and well did she know how to make use of these powers, for there were very few of the haughty Norman barons, whose ungauntleted hands she had retained within the chiseled marble of her own, or into whose countenances she had darted the deep lustre of her own dark eyes, but what went away with some such expression as " Holy Virgin ! what power this Queen hath over us." " Who could look into her face and deny her aught ?" " She would make a priest forget his prayers ;" or, " No marvel that she captivated the Saracen ; by the mass ! her eyes hath shot through my armour, hauberk, and plate."

These, be it remarked, like the shepherd in Esop, had only gazed upon the sea when it was calm; they had not beheld those antics of pretty devilry which it was so much more natural for her to play off; nor had they a notion, that under so honied a surface, was concealed so much bitter wormwood and gall. The news of the mighty change which had taken place between the king and primate flew like wild-fire, and numbers who were ignorant of Eleanor's share in the matter, were, at the time when we again undraw the curtain, met in the hall of Oxford to condole with her.

Whatever Eleanor did, be it remembered, was always made to appear as if undertaken only for the glory of Henry; and many, who could see no deeper than the surface, enlisted into her plots, with a firm belief that they should be serving their monarch the better, the more that they did her bidding. There



were a few cunning foxes, however, who listened with a suspicious glance, tapped their mailed heels upon the floor of the hall, hummed and ha'ed, and screwed together their lips, pulled their chain gauntlets on and off, and writhed their arms about as if the vent-brace caused them pain. Some of these were men who had seen the court of Louis of France, or joined in the Crusade, and knew more of Eleanor's real character, than she herself supposed. These were men, to use an apt but common phrase, who "were not to be bit."

Without pausing to dwell much upon any particular character, saving the queen herself, (for such we must call her, in spite of the injustice done to Rosamond,) we shall at once describe the scene as it appeared on the day following the quarrel, presuming that our readers are aware that all similar scenes of condolence are mere form, and just mean as much as the calls made upon one another in the

fashionable world in the present day, after some splendid ball — namely nothing ; unless some patron-hunter has his eye on a particular point of interest ; then his hopes and wishes and fears multiply accordingly.

On a huge, unwieldy, and richly-carved oaken chair on the dais, was seated Queen Eleanor, endeavouring to look as dejected as a sick woman, and speaking in an affected and lower tone of voice than was her usual custom, as if she had more cause to mourn the quarrel between Henry and his favourite, than any other ; but the unusual brightness of her eyes sometimes gave the lie to her action and speech ; for there the devil reigned in his own fiery and natural form. Every now and then, when she seemed to be the least observed, her dark eye-brows were suddenly contracted, and would have met, but for the angry furrow which wrinkled her forehead : then again they as suddenly relaxed, and fell with an apparent

gentleness upon the first countenance that approached : then again they were quickly cast down, and the same deep furrow darkened that otherwise smooth and beautiful brow.

“The Lord hath wrought in his own due time,” said a Norman abbot, who had before been in converse with Eleanor. “I told your highness that this sudden conversion boded no good to our sovereign lord the king, but dared not to dream of his ingratitude. But whenever did a Saxon miss a chance to bite the hand that fed him ?”

“It is that which I fear the most,” replied this pretty piece of iniquity, throwing an apparent pity into her countenance, which her firm-set lips gave the lie to. “You know not, my Lord Abbot, how this sudden quarrel hath unhinged me ; and the more do I feel it by reflecting that I, too, was instrumental in placing the Archbishop so high in his Highness’s favour. But, assuredly this slight wound may yet be

healed. The Primate will humble himself, and confess that he hath done wrong, and the King will again regain his wonted composure, and there will be no further innovation made against his power,—a power which I would fain see upheld, if it can be done without further severing their good will to each other.”

“ Your Highness is ever willing to be a peacemaker,” said another bulky prelate, bowing low, with a most finished and court-like smile, which was faintly returned by the Queen; although no one present better knew the character of Eleanor than himself. “ But surely, to rebel against the commands of our Sovereign Lord, is to rebel against Heaven itself; seeing that it is by the grace of Heaven that the King ruleth. And it is written,—hem!—hem!—*gravy*—no—*gravis ira regum semper*,—which none knoweth better than the worthy Primate himself; therefore, as one in our own day hath it, ‘ He who thrusteth his hand into the lion’s

mouth, must expect to feel his teeth.' But this comes from *obscuris ortus parentibus*; which your Highness knows well, signifieth — but—*me fugit memoria*;—I will give you the meaning at another time."

"Hath no one been made acquainted with the measures which his Grace intendeth to pursue, to bring back our beloved Primate to his allegiance?" enquired Eleanor, with a look of apparent indifference. But she had scarcely asked the question, before Gilbert Foliot entered, his face red with rage, and raising his voice so that all around might hear him, he exclaimed, "The King hath come to a determination that the clergy shall no longer be tried before an ecclesiastical court for their crimes; but like common felons, be in future subject to the criminal tribunal. He spoke it in mine own hearing; and swore by his deepest oath, that he would not rest until it were done, and bade me to make it known forthwith."

Like masses of dark and distorted clouds, which are seen journeying over the face of heaven during a storm, and all making to that part of the sky which looks like an island of blackness; so did every monk, abbot, and bishop, and all who were connected with the church, move instantaneously to the lower end of the hall, where the greater part of the clergy were assembled.

Many a glance of sly mockery and silent triumph might be traced in the countenances of the Norman nobles whom they passed; and as Queen Eleanor received a whisper from an attendant to withdraw, she could scarcely refrain from laughing outright. Nor could she even then keep silence as she passed the abbot, who had so readily taken the part of Henry against Becket. But with one of those peculiar arch looks, such as a handsome woman only can assume, she said, "I trust your reverence will instil into the minds

of your holy brethren, those lessons of obedience which you yourself have so well digested ; that to rebel against the commands of the King, is to rebel against Heaven." The holy father wished at heart that her Highness was with Sathanus ; and showing his teeth at a mail-clad baron who burst out into a loud fit of laughter, he hunched up his cord,—gave his cowl a twist, and hurried among the dark conclave at the further end of the hall.

"The King hath declared war against Heaven," said a bishop, who looked more like a representative of Bacchus than the church ; "hath invaded the Holy Temple ! and attacked the sacred privileges of Christ !"

"Hath struck at the root of our private flagellations, and penitential severities," said another, who was so fat that he could scarcely see out of his sleepy eyes. "Who will undergo abstinence, and all that rigorous discipline which, for the love of Heaven, we inflict upon



ourselves, if we are to be punished by the hands of godless men?"

"Or who that has seen a holy back scourged by the common thong used in the Hundred?" said a third; "or heard a priest cry for mercy like a felon, will believe that we can absolve, and grant forgiveness to others? or come to confession, when our own misdeeds are bruited abroad by the rabble?"

"Let us hope," said a fourth, "that the Primate at our head will not forsake us, for the sake of the few who have fallen from him."

"Hope makes a poor loaf," said another irreligious rascal; "and prayer a worse pasty; we must show a bold front, brethren. Cannot the King ruffle one feather of the fowl, without pulling at the whole body? We must shun the stag that he is hunting, and when it would harbour amongst us, butt him away again, with our heads. Better that the wolf carry away the shepherd, than every sheep in the fold."

Leaving the conclave in the midst of their clamour and argument, which increased like the cackling of a score of hens all driven from their nests; we shall follow Eleanor into another apartment, whither she had been summoned by Oliphant Uggleshred. When the Queen opened the door, she was startled by the presence of the child, whose passion was now moderated, and was imploring the villain to take him back again to his mother.

“Who hast thou here?” said Eleanor, her eyes glancing at first affectionately over the handsome features of the boy.

“The urchin will be ready enough to answer your Highness,” said Uggleshred, with his usual effrontery; “and you have heard both the name of his father and mother before.”

“Come,” said she, putting out her hand, and burying her taper fingers among the clustering curls of the child’s hair, and speaking with a kindness which was for the moment natural,

“tell me the name of thy father, then I may know where thy mother dwelleth?”

“King Henry is my father,” said the boy, unconscious of the presence he stood in; “and my mother’s name is Rosamond; and this man stole me away from Maud; but my father will come soon.”

“Why brought ye the bastard hither?” said the Queen, springing back, as if she had unconsciously touched a serpent; while her brow became suddenly dark, and her eyes seemed to blaze again upon Uggleshred, for she was satisfied at a glance that the features of the boy resembled Henry’s.

“I could not find the lioness, so I brought the cub,” replied the villain, without moving a muscle of his iron features.

“Couldst thou not have stabbed him in the lair?” inquired the Queen, not a shade of pity passing over her fine but fearful countenance,

“without bringing him hither to tempt me to become his butcher?”

“I might have done as much,” replied Uggleshred, “had I known that such had been your pleasure, although, to say truth, I care not to wet my dagger in the blood of a child, since such is the work of tender mothers and kind nurses.”

The boy, meantime, had remained silent, and although he cast his piercing eyes from one to the other, yet was he not fully able to comprehend all that was passing; for in Uggleshred's countenance no sign of anger could be traced; and although the Queen from time to time cast an ominous glance upon him, yet he was scarcely conscious of the danger.

“Take him hence and dispatch him,” said Eleanor, her cold cruel features undergoing no change. “You ought not to have brought the bastard into my presence.”

“By your Highness’s leave,” said the ruffian, in the same careless tone as he would have addressed one of his equals; “I would first suggest that you endeavour to find out where his mother dwelleth, for as yet I have not been able to discover the hare on her seat, although I have kept careful watch.”

“Couldst thou not play the interrogator?” said Eleanor, casting a scornful glance at Uggletred: “I have heard thee boast that thou hadst means to cut short long arguments, and extract secrets; why dost thou leave thy work half finished?”

“Thou art hard to please,” replied the undaunted ruffian. “I have seen the day when thou wouldst have given me thanks for a smaller service than this; and methinks it would disgrace my calling, (villain though I own myself to be in your highness’s most respected service,) were I to enforce my hard arguments, when a

dip in the honey-pot, or a half-ripened apple, might wring from the urchin all you would obtain. I will do your bidding so far as it runneth with my humour;—but I will not kill this boy.”

“No! no! you will not hurt me,” said the child, stepping up to Uggleshred, and seizing the skirt of his tunic, for he now began to comprehend the danger, and felt alarmed at the savage looks of the Queen; for her countenance was deadly pale with anger, and her lips quivered again with savage vengeance, as she cast a withering and baleful glance at Uggleshred, as if she would annihilate him by her looks.

“Villain!” exclaimed she, springing forward like an enraged tigress, and seizing the boy by the hair, while she drew forth a dagger which was concealed in her belt, and brandished it over the head of the child, whose loud screams now rung through the apartment:—“Villain!

I will be revenged on thee ; nor shall the prey now escape my hands !”

“ Do as you list,” said Uggleshred, without interfering, “ I shed blood as I drink the juice of the grape, leaving that which is not fully ripe, to the fancy of those who like it.”

The dagger was uplifted, and the bright blade glittered for a moment, as it caught the rays of light, ere it descended upon its victim, when the sound of a trumpet was heard without, and rang through every room of the palace. Eleanor paused a moment, with her fingers twined amid the clustering ringlets of the child’s hair, whose loud cries now increased ; and as she stood with her large eyes dilated, and her bosom heaving beneath its weight of passion, like a mountain struggling before an eruption, she bore no bad resemblance to some savage and Heathen priestess, wrought up to the highest pitch of brutal enthusiasm, and about to offer



up a human sacrifice to her idol. But ere the blow was dealt, the door was thrown open with a force that made the huge posts to shake again, and King Henry rushing into the apartment, wrenched the dagger from the hand of Eleanor, and struck her a blow which left her senseless on the floor of the apartment. Uggleshred escaped,—and the child was borne safely to Rosamond: whose grief for his absence we leave to the imagination of our readers.

## CHAPTER IX.

Muse not that I thus suddenly proceed :  
For what I will, I will, and there's an end.

Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death.  
Vagabond, exile, flaying. Pent to linger  
But with a grain a day, I would not buy  
Their mercy at the price of one fair word.

SHAKSPEARE.

TIME, in the pages of a romance, is like distance to the Eastern genii : ere we have spoken it is past, and we again take up our characters and pursue our story, as if we had never once halted, or affairs had undergone no change since we parted. The quarrel between Henry and the Primate had daily grown more serious, and the former had made several attempts to overthrow the independence of the church, to break up its ecclesiastical courts, and, as was before stated, subject the clergy to the common

tribunals. This Becket steadily resisted ; sometimes appearing to yield, when the threats of the monarch grew dangerous, then again presenting himself in open defiance, and daring Henry to do his worst. We pass by the meeting at Westminster, and all the annoyances to which the primate subjected himself, rather than yield up the independence of the church. Neither shall we bring before our readers the hotly disputed contest at Clarendon, when Becket, threatened by an armed force, promised to sign the articles ; and after a long penance, withdrew his pledge. All these are matters of history, and are familiar to those who are at all acquainted with the annals of our country, and would only occupy the pages of our story with information which may be found in numerous other works. To such of our readers who wish to be fully acquainted with these events, we would recommend the perusal of Sharon Turner's impartial "History of England during

the Middle Ages," "Rapin's England," "Lyttleton's History of Henry the Second," or, "Mr. Berrington's defence of Becket;" the latter taking the most favourable view of the Archbishop's conduct, and in our humble opinion, placing it in too lenient a light. But it is not in a work of fiction like ours, (built upon the mere skeleton of historical truth,) that we can enter into a discussion of these subjects; we write to amuse, and not enlighten; to please rather than instruct; and only profess to keep within the probable boundary of truth where it best suits our purpose. Leaving then all these matters behind, we shall again commence our story, on the morning of the last day of trial at Northampton, where, as Sharon Turner says, "Henry had summoned a parliament obviously to crush the now hated Becket." When all the nobles and bishops had fallen from him, and when an inferior spirit would have humbled himself in the dust,—when stripped of all his

honours, and retaining only the primacy, without the power of acting up to its dignities, and after having stood a trial which lasted three days, and during which the king brought all the charges against him that malice could invent, or meanness devise, (many of them trivial and vexatious and unworthy of a hearing,) Becket rose himself again; the spirit of the soldier, and the high soul of the churchman once more blazed out, for he felt humbled at the concessions which he had already made, and which were all despised or rejected; Henry being determined that he should no longer remain Primate of England.

But Becket was not the man to be subdued by threats, and when all his enemies thought that he was humbled, and would resign his power at the feet of the King, then he arose like a brave knight who has but been stunned in the combat, and awakens to the renewed charge armed with double courage, ashamed that

he has lain so long idle in the lists. Urged to submit by the Pope, besieged by the trembling bishops, and threatened by the savage barons, he still resisted their combined powers, and boldly pursued his own course; and after the fatigue and terror of three days' trial, we again bring him before our readers, supposing that a long time had elapsed since the first outbreak of the quarrel at Woodstock.

The dull autumnal morning that broke in upon the apartment where Becket slumbered, seemed to harmonise with the approaching struggle. Sometimes a sunbeam beat its way through the masses of cloud, then was again suddenly dimmed,—leaving it doubtful whether gloom or brightness would prevail. The faithful attendant, Gryme, had sprung from the pallet at the foot of his master's bed, and while he hung for a moment over his pillow, ere he ventured to awaken him, the same thoughts which we have attempted to convey to the reader,

passed through his mind. There was a deep but silent agony depicted on the features of the Archbishop; and while his hands clutched the embroidered coverlet, he appeared like one who had closed his eyes, and made up his thoughts to die sternly. Low murmurs also escaped his lips for a moment or two,—muttered rapidly, as if giving vent to a torrent of passion, then again stealing forth slowly and feebly, like one who pleads humbly, or is in prayer; their purport was, however, inaudible. While his face rested in half-shadow, he gradually relaxed his grasp from the rich covering; and as he unconsciously threw out his arm, the drapery was removed from his broad chest, and revealed the rough shirt of hair, which he constantly wore under his splendid garments in voluntary penance.

Once did his stern features unbend, just as a stray sunbeam shot through the stained lattice; it was but for a moment, and the cloud



again gathered upon his brow, as the overhanging gloom fell upon the chamber. The attendant stood by, and calmly watched shade after shade pass in silence over the features of the restless sleeper; not daring, however, to awaken him, until the frown was cleared from the ample brow, well knowing that it was dangerous to arouse the lion while slumbering in such a mood.

At length the Primate awoke, and passing his hand over his eyes, as if uncertain of the situation he occupied, his glance alighted upon Gryme; and he inquired if the monks had yet assembled in the chapel.

“Thou forgettest, holy father,” replied the attendant, “that we are far from the choir of Canterbury, and that this is the final day of trial, when thou must again face thine enemies, and either triumph or fall before them.”

“True! true! answered the Archbishop in a melancholy tone. “And yet I stood before

them even now," muttered he to himself, "and felt the hands of the bishops tugging at the cross, as if they would wrench it from my grasp. But they shall this day know with whom they have to deal," added he, springing from the couch, and planting his naked foot upon the rugged bear-skin which was spread on the floor, for he had only divested himself of his upper garments when he retired to rest.

For a moment or two he seemed to stand in utter unconsciousness of what was taking place, so entirely was he occupied with his own thoughts, and held out his arms almost mechanically, while Gryme put on the plain undertunic which he commonly wore. Instantly, however, recollecting himself, he tore off the garment with such force as to rip it down the front, and casting it upon the floor, exclaimed, "Bring forth my robes of office, with the mitre and the silver cross. I will wear none of these."

The monk paused a moment, as if he expected the order to be retracted; for it was nothing uncommon for the haughty churchman to issue his mandates, and countermand them in a breath; but when the abrupt question was put of "Didst thou not hear me?" in rather an angry tone, he then fixed his gaze upon the Archbishop in astonishment, and said, "Assuredly thou meanest not to venture forth in the robes of thine holy office; consider, reverend father, that those who are against thee will not fail to interpret such a thing to thy disadvantage;—will, perchance, set down to pride, and recklessness of humility, what thou thyself doest as a duty."

"What trowest thou, that I will appear before that assembly again in aught that becometh not my dignity?" replied the prelate, a flush of anger fading over his features as he spoke. "Knowest thou not that they would be the first to exclaim, 'He hath humbled himself,

and cometh forth to be rebuked?' No! by the holy order of which it hath pleased Heaven to make me the head, they shall, by the grace of God, this day see that I am not unworthy of being their leader." He paused short; for as he waved his arm aloof in the earnestness of his speech, the rough hair-shirt grazed his shoulder by the motion, and reminded him that his feelings but ill-accorded with the garment of penitence which he wore. "Leave me for a short space," added he, waving his hand for the attendant to depart, who, without replying, quitted the chamber.

Left alone,—with slow and measured step, and arms folded on his bosom, did Becket pace the apartment; while a thousand contending emotions rushed through his bosom, like the headlong waves struggling and foaming to overleap the narrow outlet which the torrent has torn through the river-banks. In vain did he attempt to quell these contending passions.

He took up his beads,—every drop of which was formed of the purest gold;—but ere he had numbered three; the whole string was gathered up in his unconscious grasp, and he was again pacing the apartment with long and furious strides; every step of which caused the richly painted window to chatter. The names of Henry, Hereford, and York, also fell from his lips; and when he made mention of Clarendon, and reverted to the deed which he promised to sign, he stood as suddenly still in the centre of the room, as if he had been struck by a thunderbolt; while the nails of his fingers doubled up into the palms of his hands with a fierce involuntary grasp, and his brow grew dark as midnight. At length he heaved a deep sigh, and passing his hand over his face, threw himself into a massy chair, and sat motionless as a statue.

The dark spot gradually left his brow, and the stern struggle seemed in some measure to

have abated ; but how the decision had terminated, there were no traces left behind to tell. A deep and settled purpose was, however, visible ; but whether it was the fearful tranquillity that reigns at intervals between the outbursts of the tempest, or the sure and settled calm, that compressed lip and thoughtful brow told not.

He arose, and stepping up to where a rich crucifix was erected against the wall, threw himself down before it, and with bowed head and folded hands, remained for a few moments kneeling in deep and fervent prayer. This over, he bathed his face and hands in a silver ewer, and having finished his ablutions, again summoned his attendant into the apartment.

Gryme entered, bearing in his hand a loaf of the coarsest bread, and having placed it on the table, returned again with a cup of water, and a golden bowl filled with cold green herbs, which he placed beside the loaf. Coarse as

this food was, even beyond that eaten by the lowliest serf, the prelate partook of it with an apparent relish, and washed it down with a hearty draught from the silver cup, although the water was green and nauseous, through the sprigs of fennel which had purposely been immersed therein. But such was his constant meal, morning and evening, and he rarely partook of any other banquet: it was the diet that he subjected himself to on almost all ordinary occasions, and this, together with the severe penances which he occasionally underwent, did much to throw the charge of hypocrisy upon the shoulders of his accusers. Ambitious he was, to a height that perhaps became not a churchman; but even his greatest enemies must admit that he never lost sight of the holy cause which he advocated, or sought to barter his trust for his personal aggrandisement. He was one of those spirits which were born to lead, or perish, and was determined to



sway the pastoral crook over the church as uninterruptedly as King Henry did his sceptre over his English subjects.

Becket felt that he should only make himself despised by further humiliation; that he had already yielded too much to Henry; nay further, that he had sank in his own estimation, and his proud soul kindled up again, while these thoughts passed through his mind.

“Hath Mortenel or Anselm inquired after mine health this morning?” said Becket.

“No one has been here as yet,” answered Gryme. “I marvel that none of the bishops have called; they were wont to attend us earlier.”

“I marvel not at these things,” replied the Prelate. “Gryme! they are falling from me. The cowardly herd!” continued he, pushing back the coarse food; “while they deemed me secure in the king’s favour, while my table and my wealth satisfied all their wants, and

while I fed them and their retainers by hundreds daily, the base sycophants were ready to lick the dust from my feet. But now, when they think that I have fallen from my high estate, that my coffers are exhausted, and my power on the wane, they would leave me to fight the battle alone ; nay, be the very foremost to plant their feet upon my neck when I have fallen. I, who would make them what they ought to be, and break asunder the fetters by which they are bound down."

"Arm thyself with patience, holy father," said Gryme, who never neglected to check the proud archbishop when he saw him thus yielding to his fierce passions : "remember that the holy Saviour himself suffered for the good of the church."

"Patience !" echoed Becket, with a contemptuous look :—"And thinkest thou that patience would be a virtue in this cause ? I

tell thee that I have more need of anger; that the struggle is not to be decided by patience and words; but more after the manner of a brave knight, battling against odds, who has more than mortal anger in his breast, and more than human valour in his arm, and whose forbearance might well be called cowardice."

"Thou speakest but too true, holy father," answered Gryme, "if thy quarrel is in behalf of heaven and the church."

"The quarrel is Heaven's," replied Becket in a tone that but ill accorded with one who was at the head of the Church of Peace, "and in Heaven's cause have I buckled this armour on my back, and borne even the wrath of the king without blenching. Nor will I set him an evil example, by resigning the sceptre which I sway over the church, lest, when he is hard bestead, he might in an ill hour give up his crown. The Pope made me what I am, and by him only

will I be deposed. No! should every cowardly priest fall from my side, alone I will maintain this quarrel."

"Nor will I fall from thee," said the faithful monk, "an' thou remainest but true to thyself. I will take up my cross and follow thee through all evil report."

"I know thee to be faithful," said the Archbishop, extending his hand to Gryme; "and thou shalt not say that thou wert servant to one who dared not to maintain his own dignity. This day shalt thou behold me keeping all my foes at bay, and if I conquer them not, thou shalt see me retreat with honour, like a hart to the covert, in the very teeth of the hounds that are baying me."

Saying which, he began to robe himself, and by the assistance of Gryme, in readiness for the approaching and decisive struggle.

Meantime a vast crowd were assembled without, all waiting anxiously for the appearance

of the Archbishop; for as the higher orders fell from him, and his danger became more apparent, so did he, on the other hand advance in the favour of the lower classes,—who from time to time rent the air, with loud shouts of “Long live the Archbishop of Canterbury!” “Down with the Norman Bishops!” “Long life to the bold Saxon!” But when the gate of the courtyard was thrown open, and the proud Prelate himself appeared, mounted on a superb charger, and bearing the silver crucifix in his hand, the shouts became deafening, and even reached to the hall of trial where Henry was seated with his nobles, and once caused the ruddy cheek of the monarch to turn pale.

For several moments the Archbishop’s course was impeded by the dense numbers who flocked around to crave his blessing, and while he held the richly ornamented bridle in his left hand, with the right he waved the silver crucifix over their heads, and blessed them as he rode along.

And well did he wear his dignity on that eventful morning; for as his fine form rose high above the assembled crowd, and his rich dress mingled with the trappings of his steed; while his jewelled mitre blazed in the morning sun; they all seemed to draw a grace from that god-like figure, who with a calm brow and fearless heart moved along, looking as if he were born to decide the fate of empires.

Leaving Becket with the multitude, which kept increasing as they ascended the hilly street of Northampton, while numberless heads were thrust out of every little arched and ancient window to salute him as he passed; we will conduct our readers to the hall of the palace, where King Henry, surrounded by all his court, awaited the Archbishop's approach. Occupying the highest seat at the farthest end of the hall, sat the monarch himself, overlooking the whole scene; while the tables, which were arranged in the form of a T, and were covered with

various documents, all relating to the trial of Becket, were stretched out before him. On the right hand of King Henry sat the grave Glanvil,—whom we have before introduced to our readers as the greatest judge and law-maker of that age,—his shaggy brows were bent upon a large sheet of parchment,—the contents of which absorbed his whole thoughts. To the left of the monarch was seated the Earl of Leicester, in deep conversation with two bishops, whose outstretched necks and bald heads,—which ever and anon they nodded, as they assumed looks of great wisdom, bore no inapt resemblance to Chinese mandarins. Henry seemed ill at ease in his seat ; then he fixed his large blue eyes upon one or another around him, as if he would fain read their thoughts ; and as the shouts of the multitude drew nearer, he passed his hand before his brow, and at last remained absorbed in deep meditation. Towards the door stood a group of bishops, among



whom the figures of York and Hereford were conspicuous ; they were in deep conversation, and kept glancing from time to time at the King.

Along the sides of the hall stood numbers of the Norman barons, some sheathed in mail, and grasping their various weapons,—some with their visors up—with the butt-end of their long lances resting on the floor, gazed carelessly on the scene around them ; others were leaning on their heavy cross-handled swords, and either conversing with each other in low tones, or buried in their own contemplations. A few rested against the pillars of the hall, and seemed motionless as statues ; while their armour flashed back the flood of light which shot down from the high windows, or wore a deep, solemn, and bronzy hue, as they stood in the shadow of the columns. Even the grim and carved figures which held shields in their hands, and looked down from the richly ornamented roof, seemed

somehow to belong to the scene, as if their hideous wooden faces took an interest in the proceedings that were going on below. One of the images in especial had arrested the eye of an old baron, who kept constantly shifting his glance from the figure to Glanvil, as if he sought to trace a resemblance between it and the judge.

At length the shouts of the mob announced the near approach of the Archbishop, and echoed along the vaulted roof of the hall, so loud as even to draw the glance of Glanvil from the parchment, and cause his deep and sunken grey eyes to look towards the door. King Henry also awoke from his reverie, and looked fixedly in the same direction; while the quick quivering of his lips told that, in spite of his affected calmness, he was deeply excited.

Without the hall door, stood the Archbishop of York, together with Gilbert Foliot, the

Bishop of Hereford, and Hilary of Chichester ; and great was the astonishment of these divines when they beheld the undaunted prelate approaching in all the panoply of spiritual defiance. They gazed upon each other in mute astonishment ; for they expected that Becket would that day appear in the most humble guise, not doubting even that he would approach bare-footed, and throw himself at the King's feet, to sue for forgiveness. Nay, their wishes even carried them further ; for they anticipated seeing him spurned by Henry ; stripped of all his power, and placed in one of the lowest stations in the church. But when, in place of this, they beheld him approach in all his power, armed as it were with the thunder of the church, and springing up with all that courage which was so natural to his character, and which at once declared that he now stood in full and open defiance before the King, they were as much startled as if a volcano had opened at

their feet. They stood with uplifted hands and mouths agape, while their eyes remained as fixed in astonishment, as if an apparition had sprung up before them.

The Bishop of Hereford was the first to speak, and approaching him with an affected humility, he seized on the silver crucifix with both hands and said, "Permit me, holy father, to bear the sacred emblem of our salvation before thee. It ill becometh thee to carry that which it is the office of a suffragan to bear."

"Back, hypocrite!" said Becket, "art thou not ashamed to stand before me? Back, I say, or here upon this very threshold, and in the face of this multitude, I will publish thy shame."

The Bishop shrank back like a dog before his angry master, and Hilary of Chichester, with a low bow, offered himself as cross-bearer, and even dared to take hold of the holy symbol.

The Archbishop looked upon him with a

glance of withering hatred, and by a powerful effort wrenched the cross from his grasp, while he exclaimed, with a look of triumph, that caused his fine eyes to kindle,—“ I know thy kindness, but it is most meet that this day I should bear the cross myself. Under the defence of this holy emblem I am safe, it is the ensign of heaven, and denotes under what prince I serve.”

The Bishop gnashed his teeth with rage, to see himself thus foiled, both by the superior strength, and deeper laid policy of Becket. The Archbishop of York was also pale with fear, and anger; and while his bloodless lips quivered, and his whole frame trembled from head to foot, he said, “ Proud Prelate, thou art defying our lord the King, to enter his court in this guise. But remember, he hath a sword, the point of which is sharper than thy pastoral staff.”

“ Ah! darest thou to threaten me, base syco-

phant?" replied Becket, turning upon the trembling Archbishop like an enraged tiger, and brandishing the heavy cross over his head. "An' thou keepest not thy tongue in greater reverence, I will pour forth the curses of the holy church upon thee, and excommunicate thee beyond the pale of salvation. As for thee," added he, glancing upon the Bishop of Chichester, "I marvel that thou darest to show thy face in this assembly, when but a month ago one of thy nearest relations was hung for a thief and a robber." Saying which he strode into the hall, with the stately step of a conqueror; and more like one who was about to sit in judgment amid the assembly, than stand before them on trial.

The three prelates followed in the rear, with malicious and downcast looks, like cowed dogs whose inclinations would lead them to bite; but having met with so bold a rebuff, are com-

pelled to confine their wrath within the compass of a few subdued growls.

With his silver cross elevated,—his stately form erect, and his countenance still bearing traces of the late explosion of his wrath, while his rich mantle swept its ample folds along the floor, and a few of his most faithful attendants following in due order,—the high-souled prelate trod with a firm foot up the centre of the hall; while baron and bishop gave way before him, like waves that yield to the prow of some stately vessel which steps with crowded canvass over the bosom of the deep.

As yet King Henry was not aware of his presence; for he still sat with his elbow resting upon the arm of the huge oaken chair which he occupied, while his brow was half-buried in the palm of his hand; and so deeply was he absorbed in his own thoughts, that he was un-



conscious of what was taking place before him. But when a low deep murmur ran through the hall, like the groaning sound which sweeps through the forest, as if to announce the coming storm; he passed his hand over his brow, and sitting upright on his seat, his eyes met the collected and angry glance of Thomas à Becket.

The monarch leant forward in his seat, as if to assure himself that it was not a vision which had sprung up before him. But when he became satisfied that the daring figure was the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose steadfast eye fell upon him unmoved, while he held up the silver cross, which, like an ægis, appalled all who looked upon it, the dark lines instantly gathered upon his brow,—his teeth became clenched,—his hands doubled up with a kind of convulsive grasp,—and while his bright eyes seemed to shoot forth fire, his whole face be-

came a deep crimson, like a fiery sunset sinking amid the gathering storm. All eyes were fixed upon the King and Becket; but not a lip moved,—not a sound was heard throughout the vast hall;—men seemed to hold their breath while they watched the upheaving of the tempest; as if they expected that its first burst would bring the whole roof about their heads. The followers of Becket trembled; but the Prelate neither moved eye nor lip, nor was there a shadow of fear upon his countenance; and while he stood in dignified silence, he seemed to fill the body of the hall; for the eye sought in vain to rest upon aught saving his godlike figure and the silver cross which he held on high: even the vacant space which they had left around him, pointed him out as the only mark worthy of the tempest's wrath; for he stood like a gigantic oak in the midst of a vast plain overlooking the dwarf trees around

him, and stretching his topmost boughs towards the black and angry heavens.

The first sign of the king's exploding wrath was to clutch the hilt of the dagger in his belt, as if he was about to spring forward, and at one blow strike the haughty Churchman dead at his feet; but then his eye fell upon the cross, and springing from his seat like a tiger from the covert, he overturned the grave Glanvill in his rage, as he arose and exclaimed \* "By God's eyes! I will have vengeance! he hath armed himself against me," saying which he rushed into an inner apartment, for, in the midst of his rage, he saw the impossibility of gratifying his vengeance on the spot, without calling down all the thunders of Christendom upon his head.

Like masses of clouds scattered over the face of heaven, and following in the rear of the

\* This was Henry's usual oath when deeply enraged; and, according to the old chroniclers, the very words he uttered on this occasion. The whole of the following dialogue in this chapter is but a mere transcript from history.

tempest, so did the bishops and barons close upon the wake of the king, and enter the inner apartment, leaving Becket in the hall, accompanied only by a few of his own followers, and the lower clergy of the Church, who, unlike the rest of the high-fed and place-seeking dignitaries, boldly stood by the side of the Archbishop. Many of them were, however, pale with fear, and dreaded that the wrath of Henry would vent itself against the Primate, ere he departed. Not so with Becket: he stepped up calmly to the side of the vast hall, and seated himself on a bench, and still holding the silver cross in his hands, he seemed to await his fate like a brave captain, who, when the decks are deserted, sits alone listening to the shrill wind, with rudder in hand, prepared to meet the first fierce outbreak of the storm, from which he is aware there is no retreating.

The faithful Gryme stood boldly beside his

master ; neither of them, however, exchanging a word, so much was each engaged with his own thoughts. Once, however, they exchanged glances with each other, and that was at a moment when the uplifted voice of King Henry was heard from the inner apartment, sounding like distant thunder. Suddenly it ceased : then a sound as of many voices were heard in confusion together ; then the angry voice of Henry again broke forth, and overwhelmed them all.

At length the Bishop of Exeter rushed out of the inner apartment with a terrified countenance ; and, throwing himself at the feet of Becket, with an imploring look, said, “ Have pity, holy father, upon thy brethren of the Church ; the King hath already struck down one of the Bishops who spoke in thy defence ; and hath sworn his most awful vow, that he will sheathe his dagger in the heart of the first who shall dare to excuse thy conduct. In pity,

lay aside the crucifix, and approach our sovereign lord with humility ; conjure him by the remembrance of your former friendship to overlook the past ; if not for thyself, do it in compassion for the Church.”

“Thou a servant of God—a pillar of His Holy Church !” said Becket, with a concealed sneer, “and fearest the anger of a king more than the wrath of Heaven ! Nay, flee, then ; for my part, I move not a step, until I have maintained the dignity of mine high estate, and stopped the mouths of these curs ! even in the midst of their imagined triumph !”

Presently the whole of the bishops appeared in a body, headed by Hilary of Chichester, who thus spoke the sentiments of the deputation. “Thou, Thomas à Becket, wast our Primate ; but now we thus publicly disavow thee, and no longer acknowledge thee as the head of our church. Thou hast broken thy oath, sworn

to our sovereign lord, and we proclaim thee as a traitor, and a perjured Archbishop ; nor will we any longer obey thy commands ; but place ourselves and our cause in the hands of his Holiness the Pope, before whom we summon thee to answer."

" I hear what you say," replied Becket, without either arising from his seat or changing countenance ; for he felt that the moment of triumph had not yet arrived. Stung with rage and covered with shame, the whole body again retreated into the inner apartment, like a mass of waters spurned back by the foot of the mighty rock, which their puny efforts could not wash a pebble from.

But the storm had not yet reached its height, and Becket calmly awaited further proofs of its fury. Nor had he to wait long before the whole of the barons and bishops came forth in a column, headed by Robert, Earl of Leicester, who held



in his hand a parchment containing the sentence, which he proceeded to read in the usual form of the Norman court, and halting before Becket, began, "Oyez-ci ! Oyez-ci !"

"Stop!" exclaimed the Archbishop, waving his hand as he arose, and drawing his form to its full height, while he planted his foot within an hand-breadth of the Earl's, and held the crucifix erect before him, as his eye glanced without blenching along the lines of his enemies. "Stop, son Earl ! and hear me first. You are my children !—rebels although you be—nor have ye power to sit in judgment on your spiritual father. I forbid you, therefore, on pain of excommunication, to judge me. I deny the power of your tribunal ; and leave my quarrel to the decision of the Pope, who alone on earth hath power over me. To him I now appeal ; and having placed myself under the

protection of the holy church and the apostolic see, I depart in peace."

A dead blank expression fell upon the faces of the whole assembly ; they were caught in the very snare which they themselves had prepared. This counter-appeal came wholly unexpected ;—their whole policy was overturned in a moment ;—they stood baffled, confused, and beaten. Becket paused a moment ere he departed ; turning upon them like a noble stag who shakes his antlers upon the yelping pack ere he betakes himself to the thicket,—then he trod with measured and stately step towards the door of the hall. When near the door, some of the courtiers' attendants hissed ; and picking up straws and rushes, with which some parts of the hall were strewn, threw them at him, exclaiming, " Such a traitor and perjurer is not worthy to live !"

The spirit of the soldier was not yet, however, extinguished, for turning upon them with an angry countenance, and shaking the crucifix in their faces ; in a deep voice which caused the vaulted hall to ring again, he exclaimed, " Be-gone, base slaves, lest ye tempt me to smite you to the earth with this holy symbol. And you," added he, turning to the barons, who had called him traitor, " did not my holy calling forbid me, I would give back mine answer on the sword point to every coward of you who has dared to insult me."

The whole herd fell back, and a few there were who gave vent to their feelings in murmurs of applause, when they beheld the undaunted bearing of the high-souled Prelate. And many a bold eye that but an hour before had bent upon him in anger, now beamed with admiration at his valour, and vowed within them-

selves that they would follow so courageous a leader to the utmost ends of the earth.

At the hall door he again mounted his palfrey, and rode homeward in triumph, followed by the acclamations of the crowd, who rent the air with shouts, many exclaiming, "Blessed be God who hath delivered his faithful servant from the hands of his enemies." Deserted by nearly all the noble and powerful, the lower orders looked upon him as their champion, for he was almost the only Saxon who dared to stand up against the power of the King and barons, since the Norman conquest.

As he rode along, he bowed low, and blessed the crowd who saluted him, and returned his courtesy with thunders of acclaim. But a calm observer, who had looked narrowly into the fine countenance of the Prelate, would have seen that the smile with which he acknowledged the

plaudits of the crowd, was accompanied by a troubled eye, and that on the least cessation of tumult, the lips became compressed and the brow furrowed. He was like some great actor on a stage, who, while he returns the greetings of his audience, has his mind wrapt up in the contemplation of the part he has yet to enact. He well knew the dangerous position in which he stood, for he had that day defied the King, and the whole power by which he was surrounded; nor was he ignorant that among the barons there were many desperate men, who neither regarded God nor the church, and would not, if occasion presented itself, hesitate a moment to take away his life. The Primate of England reached his residence amid the thunder of hundreds of voices, and bowing low as he alighted from his palfrey, entered the open gates with a smiling countenance, and a heavy heart.

## CHAPTER X.

Are not these woods  
More free from peril than the envious court ?  
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,  
The season's difference ; as the icy fang,  
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind ;  
Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,  
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile, and say,—  
This is no flattery : these are counsellors  
That feelingly persuade me what I am.

*As You Like It.*

THE night which set in upon this memorable day was rainy and dark, and the cold October wind blew bleakly from the North, and swept fiercely through the narrow and hilly streets of Northampton. Stormy, however, as it was, Becket well knew that no time must be lost, for he had already received warning from a faithful follower, that danger awaited him, and was aware that there were those amongst his

enemies who would not hesitate to shed his blood. When the messenger also returned which he had despatched to King Henry, craving permission to leave England, with the answer that "he would think of it on the morrow," he was fully assured that measures would be put in force by the monarch to deprive him of his liberty, if he lingered in the town until that morrow came.

Such were the thoughts that passed through the Archbishop's mind, as he sat in the rude oaken chair, watching the faggots, as they crackled and blazed on the ample hearth, and filled the apartment with smoke, for it contained neither grate nor chimney.

Occasionally, however, the light of the ruddy flames fell upon his fine thoughtful countenance, or were flashed back again by the golden embroidery which decorated his rich canonical dress, for he had not yet doffed the garments



which he wore in the hall of trial. The silver cross which he had also borne in his hand, stood in the corner opposite to where he sat, as if it had been cast aside like a bauble with which a child was weary of playing. The rich foot-cloth and the gaudy harness with which his steed had that day been caparisoned, were thrown together beside the mitre and cross, and all were hidden or revealed, just as the uncertain flames flashed, or darkened. Care there was deeply imprinted on the brow of the Archbishop, but such a collectedness was mingled therewithal, that he seemed like some bold pilot, who, conscious that the wind and waves are bearing him onward amid rocks and quicksands, is determined never to quit the helm, until the goodly vessel hath become a wreck. He felt that he had upheld his course in the very teeth of danger ; and, if he could no longer bear the brunt of the elements, he

could yet run into some inland creek, where the tempest might rave around him in vain.

He had not sat long alone before his faithful attendant Gryme entered the apartment, his garments drenched through with the rain.

“How lieth the land?” said Becket, raising his eyes to his follower as he spoke, and kicking the brands together to bring them to a flame; “are we already beleaguered, or is there yet time to begone?”

“Every postern is doubly guarded, holy father,” replied Gryme with a mournful shake of the head; “and the portcullis has been lowered an hour ago. Spies are also without, their faces buried in the hoods of their cloaks; some are lingering among the cloisters, others stationed under the gateway. There is no way to escape, but in some mean disguise, and by scaling the walls, which may be done from the back windows of this building.”

“And is it come to this!” said the Archbishop, with a sigh: “I, who have been attended by hundreds of knights, gonfanons fluttering, and trumpets sounding; who but to-day rode in the face of the sun, must now seek shelter under the clouds of night, and such a night!—but no matter.”

“It must be done,” said Gryme; “I saw the countenances of Tracy and Fitzurse without, and they forebode thee no good, nor would resistance become thee as the head of the church, and ruler of that kingdom which is to bring peace, and good-will to all men;—although there are thousands ready to strike in thy defence.”

“Thou speakest truly, good Gryme,” replied the prelate; “but assuredly thou wouldst not have me escape in a disguise that becometh not my dignity, thou wouldst not have the Primate of England wear the garb of a serf, and slink away like a very felon. Beside, in such a night

as this, we must be provided with steeds and attendants in case of danger.”

“Not so, holy father,” replied the monk, “we must depart alone, and at present on foot, and that speedily, for there is danger at hand. Our disguise must be complete, and the Primate of England wear the gaberdine of a beggar, if such will ensure his safety. And to attempt to escape in aught but the disguise of the meanest monk will, I wot well, be of none avail. I need not tell thee, holy father, that those who are now Saints in heaven, have while here below been driven into the wilderness, clothed in sackcloth, with only tears to slake their thirst, and herbs to quell their hunger. A cord and cowl must thou put on this night, if we are to escape; for on the morrow thou art doomed to fetters and the dungeon, for there are those who have forsworn their allegiance to thee as Archbishop of

Canterbury, and are ready to treat thee as Thomas à Becket the Saxon."

"Thou speakest soothly," replied the Prelate after a long pause, and glancing at his rich dalmatica as he spoke. "The hand of Heaven moveth in these matters: even the tunic on which I trampled this morning, as being unmeet for my wearing, is now a garment too costly for the persecuted servant of Christ to put on. *Non sum qualis eram*; bring forth the robes," said he, arising:—and rending the rich dress from his shoulders, he cast it on the floor. A faint sigh escaped his lips, as he again fell back in his seat, and as he planted his elbow on the massy arm of the chair, he rested his clouded brow on the palm of his hand; and with closed eyes and compressed lips, sat silent and motionless for several moments, and as the uncertain flames blazed, or were extinguished,

he traced in their flickering light a resemblance to earthly honour.

For the first time he seemed to become conscious how much he had lost by this struggle, and how great a sacrifice he had made between pride and conscience; but still his great soul sunk not; and he began to contemplate the dangers and privations which he must now prepare himself to undergo. How much his feeling preponderated in the balance in behalf of the victory he had won for the church, in whose service he had so deeply suffered, we will not venture to scrutinize too closely. As its head, he had waged war nobly against all innovations; but conscience is a skittish jade;—approach her too closely, and she will bound aside;—hit her too hard, and she will throw you in the mire, and prostrate you lower than you ever were before. The Archbishop shrunk from questioning himself too closely on these

matters. He felt like a man who has thrown a beggar a penny, when the eyes of a group of passengers were upon him, almost at a loss to know whether he had done it to be thought generous, or out of a feeling of charity. "Had he fought the battles of the church as a servant of Christ, free from every selfish feeling,—indulging no private pique,—gratifying no pride, but giving all the glory to Heaven?" The question arose in his own mind almost unawares, and he felt that he was not yet purified from all pride and selfish gratification; and there was mingled with his thoughts the remembrance that he had withstood the power of the King too much in the proud spirit of opposition.

We will not, however, entirely take away the veil, and bare every motive by which he was actuated; few hearts will stand this trial. There is more of vanity in all our natures than we wish to reveal; many motives of which we



are ourselves ignorant, and which we can only come at by digging into the heart, and satisfying our curiosity at the expense of great pain. But let us do justice to the memory of the dead. If he was weak,—he prayed to Heaven to render him strong; and where he had erred, resolved in future, by the help of God, to err so no more. And few, we are bound to confess, went under so many privations for the good of the church as Thomas à Becket.

Look at the springs of all human actions,—the inner wheels and hidden movements of all we do. The eye of the patriot brightens at the applause of his hearers; and he forgets the miseries of his country while listening to the shouts of the crowd. The truths of the gospel are expounded in flowery terms, and the minister looks around in triumph upon his smiling congregation, when he has given utterance to some new idea which he has long laboured to master.

Discretion, judgment, and caution, are but gentle terms for deceit;—candour ought ever to be armed in mail; for there are weaknesses in all our natures ready to tilt at the truth. We censure a man for his follies; when, if we examined ourselves closely, we should find that we were guilty of others equally great. But what need would there be of another and a better state of life, if we were perfect in this? or why should we not rather seek to amend, than quarrel with each other's faults? The wisest of men have dealt kindly with the frailties of our nature: it requires but little power to expose them; but to lay down plans, for their amendment, without giving pain, must be the work of a wise and kind-hearted teacher. That man who undergoes years of suffering and privation for conscience sake, deserves credit for sincerity; but he who assumes a sudden sympathy for the moment, may be

doubted;—nay, even earnest passion is not always sincere; for calm and after-investigation often shows that we acted from a wrong impulse. But we cannot say so of Thomas à Becket; for he died in maintaining his opinions: and if he never was firm to his purpose in his life before, he was at the dreadful hour of death. But we are stepping beyond our story.

Gryme robed the Archbishop in the simple dress then worn by the monks of that period, which consisted of a long frock or mantle, girded at the waist by a cord, and having at the neck a hood which formed a covering for the head, and being of a piece with the garment, it could be drawn up, or thrown back in a moment, at the wearer's pleasure. The monk was also arrayed in the same costume, and, saving the difference of figure (for even in that disguise, the tall and erect form of the Archbishop showed to advantage) there was no

mark by which to distinguish the Primate from his attendant. Gryme had, however, concealed the pallium under his inner garments, for it was not of much bulk : this Becket had received from the Pope, on his nomination to the see of Canterbury ; all other outward marks of his high dignity were left behind : for the mitre, the cross, and the rich dalmatica remained on the floor in the same confused state as we before described them. Becket cast his eye upon them as he passed, and if a sigh escaped him, it was but for a moment as he left the apartment. At a remote corner of the mansion, stood a room which abutted from the building, the upper window of which was on a level with one of the walls, and not more than six feet asunder ; from this Gryme had thrust an oaken plank, and venturing out first, he was followed by the Archbishop, and they dropped from the high wall in safety, for the rattling of the rain

and the roaring of the wind prevented the sound of their footsteps from being heard by the sentry, whose post was at some distance. In spite of the darkness of the night (for the moon was overcast with dark clouds), the loud clattering of the rain, which came down in torrents, and was blown full in the face of our travellers, Becket drew the hood closely round his head, and they pursued their journey without a murmur, in the direction of Leicester. If the heart of the Primate was pained at the outset of the enterprise, and his step faltered a moment ere he commenced his journey, both were now firm to their purpose, for he had regained all his former courage ; and as he wrenched a huge stake from a neighbouring hedge, and brandished it a moment in the air, a spark of his former military spirit was kindled, and he rose with the danger, as his manly stride increased ; and the free motion of his arm

told that long abstinence had not altogether deprived that muscular form of its strength. Gryme had much ado to keep pace with his master, and was compelled every now and then to fetch up his lost ground, by a quick trot, like a boy who is ambitious of keeping up with a good walker. Sometimes, however, the Primate drew in his long and rapid stride, to suit the pace of his companion, and the latter, already tired of the silence, thus spoke, —

“ I fear me, holy father ” —

“ Better call me brother Dearman,” said Becket, “ when you have need to use my name ; and, on common occasions, brother John, it will be well to sink all honours and titles ; for the present, we must school ourselves in humility, and I am bent upon setting thee a good example ; wherever we shelter, let there be no distinction between us. I am aware how thou hast, and wouldst still, serve

me, but thou must leave off thy old habits for awhile. So, brother Ambrose, come on at the bidding of brother John, both poor monks of the monastery of St. Mary's—there has been a good number of that name."

"I will endeavour to obey thee, holy father," replied Gryme, "but I fear me this journey will weary thee. But if thou canst hold out until we reach the cross at Lamport, which from Northampton is about eight miles distant, we shall find Oswald the groom, with horses ready saddled for our journey; and if we halt a few moments at the Scotale, at Harborough, and from thence push on at good speed, we may hope to reach Leicester by daybreak."

"Nay, fear not for me," answered the Archbishop, "thou shalt find brother John as good at a journey as brother Ambrose; and when once we set foot in stirrup, we will ride with the fleetest that ever run down a fallow-deer.



For thou must not forget," added he, his spirits becoming more buoyant through exercise, "that I was a soldier, and wielded the sword before I grasped the pastoral crook: and sheltered in the camp long before I had the church for a covering. But those days are gone," added he, with a sigh.

In the course of two hours' brisk walking, they reached the hamlet of Lamport; they found Oswald in waiting beside the rude stone cross; and after the faithful groom had knelt down with tears in his eyes, and received the Primate's blessing, they set off at a good round gallop, and having halted at the rude Scotale, or hostel, at Market Harborough, again pursued their journey.

Towards morning, the sky became clear, and the moon looked down from her starry throne in full brilliancy, as if she only shed her silver light upon a land of peace. But the eye of

Becket caught glimpses of castles which the fire had consumed, and of convents which the hands of the Norman invaders had despoiled ; for England still bore marks of the ravages committed by William the Conqueror, and where the village of Great Glen now stands, the moonlight then streamed down upon a mass of blackened ruins, for here the Saxons had made one of their boldest stands. Sometimes the horned owl hooted from the mouldering turrets of a castle, which the ivy was then fast covering, or the barking of the fox came with a strange hollow sound from amid ruins. Here and there, long lines of gloomy forests stretched on either hand, and seemed to slumber after the storm, for scarcely a sound broke the profound silence, saving when some herd of dappled deer brushed across the path, and for a moment made a rustling amid the under-wood; then again all was still, for only the

tramping of their steeds rang over the vast solitude.

They journeyed along in silence, and sometimes the mind of Becket reverted to past scenes,—to the happy days of his boyhood,—to the deeds he had achieved when he rode armed in mail; to the remembrance of his friendship with Henry, his splendid embassies, his trial in the hall but a few hours before; the looks of the king that day, and the same look in former times when he welcomed him to Woodstock. Then he thought of Rosamond, and his heart sank within him, for he well knew that during Henry's absence, the Queen would seek by every means to gratify her vengeance, and he sighed deeply when he remembered that he himself could no longer assist her, and half-wished that he had yielded to the King for her sake, for the Primate loved her with a fatherly affection.

“ I will yet see her,” muttered he to himself, “ ere I leave England ; she shall not be left to perish by the machinations of that dark-minded woman, and the villain Uggleshred.” And he reached Leicester in the cold grey light of an autumnal morning, revolving in his mind the best plans for obtaining an interview with Rosamond at Woodstock.

They abode all that day with a pious monk at Leicester, who had been a friend of Gryme’s in former years, and towards twilight, again resumed their journey in the direction to Nottingham. They were, however, compelled to travel in bye-ways, and through roads unknown ; for they heard tidings of four knights in armour, who had but a few hours before journeyed on the same road. They made a circuit along the borders of the wide forest of Charnwood,—which then extended to the very ridge of the hills, under which Mount-Sorrel

is now sheltered,—and long before daylight they found themselves under the brow of Clifton, the grove of which has long been celebrated in ballad poetry. Here they halted; for the broad river Trent was now before them, and in consequence of the late rains, was impassable. As no sign of either shelter or human habitation here presented itself, they rode along by the banks of the river for upwards of a mile, until they came to where the village of Wilford now stands, and which even at that early period was known as a ferry. They reined in their steeds beside the bank; near to which, a huge flat-bottomed boat was moored, and was the only communication between the opposite shores. Beyond the river, and the broad meadows, rose the turrets of Nottingham castle,—the huge rock resting in half-shadow, and the straggling town stretching along the gentle acclivity,—here and there concealed by masses of trees,

as if it had sprung up in the midst of a forest. Looking behind them they discovered a rude shed, which was overhung by two immense oaks, and not doubting but that this was the abode of the ferryman, Becket alighted and began to knock at the door.

The deep baying of a mastiff, and the sound of a voice almost as surly, demanding the business of the intruders, were the ready answers to the Primate's summons.

"We would have thee unmoor thy boat, honest ferryman," said the Archbishop, "and give us a safe conveyance to the opposite shore."

"A safe conveyance to the devil," muttered the surly Charon; "how think you I could get across without floating down a mile or two while the stream is running at this furious rate? Go from whence you came, and disturb me not; for I have already wafted three cursed Normans

over this very night; and the fourth, I trow, is by this time in the safe keeping of Sathanas; for both horse and rider went head-foremost into the stream."

"We are no Normans, friend," replied Gryme, "but two poor Saxon monks flying from danger, and have need of assistance."

"The less need have ye to cross the river," answered the ferryman, fumbling at the wooden bar which secured the door, and which he opened as the broad morning broke. "Horses, too!" added he, eyeing them narrowly; "the one tall, and the other of middling stature;—the very men these Norman cut-throats were enquiring after. Hark you, friends!" added he in a louder tone, "I, and my fathers before me, have kept this ferry for more than a hundred years, and never yet defiled our hands with the gold of the Norman. I need but to bear you across to place you within the power of those



who are in quest of you. But if ye be Saxons, take my counsel and journey further on, for here you are halting too near the hold of the enemy ; and from yonder castle all can be seen that passeth here ; for the warden has the eye of an hawk."

" We thank thee for thy advice," said the Archbishop ; " but having been in the saddle all night, we are but ill fitted to pursue our journey without rest and refreshment ; and if it is not in thy power to grant us either, thou wilt, we trust, point out some place where we may obtain a mouthful of food, and a few hours' repose."

" Nay, an' it be thus," said the rough ferryman, " ye shall be welcome to the best my shed affords ; for it shall never be said that the son of Balder was a churl, when those of his oppressed race needed a shelter : " saying which, he led the way into his hut, having placed their

horses in a rude out-house, where the steeds of his passengers were generally stabled.

“ I have not been so well provisioned during the late rains,” said the ferryman, producing a wooden trencher which contained a huge lump of cold fat pork, and a cake of coarse barley bread ; “ for but few of the good-wives venture across the river at this time of the year ; but here is a stoup of Burton ale,—better never washed the lip of a saint,—and if a Saxon welcome will give this homely fare a better relish, why, in the name of St. Dunstan, fall to.”

Both the guests assured their host that they needed no better fare, and Becket partook of it with a keener relish than he had before done when sharing daintier viands ; for his severe abstinence had taught him to conquer trifles. Nor did the ferryman himself, when pressed to share their repast, show any reluctance ; but

ate with the appetite of a true Saxon, and washed it down with a cup of good ale, which the sharp smacking of his lips pronounced excellent.

Scarcely was their meal finished before they were startled by the sound of voices which came from the opposite bank of the river. "Yonder are the Norman thieves whom I ferried across yester-even," said the ferryman, reconnoitering from a loop-hole in his shed; "I know them by their armour. The devil looketh after his own, or they would have shared the fate of their companion. It is as I feared,—the cursed warden has had a glimpse of you from the watch-tower of the castle; but fear not, the broad river will keep the blood-thirsty thieves at bay, while I plan your escape;—devil of aught shall they find but your horses."

The Primate looked through the narrow

loop-hole, and saw three men armed, and in their saddles on the opposite bank, who were riding to and fro, and hallooing at the highest pitch of their voices. The loud dashing of the river, and the sound of the wind among the trees prevented their words from being heard.

“This way,” said the ferryman, hastily setting aside the remains of the meal, and opening a door at the back of his hut. He then led them round by a circuitous path, until he brought them on a line behind the banks of the river; and bidding them stoop that their heads might not be seen above the bank, led them to a considerable distance before he bade them halt.

“You are safe now,” said he, pausing before a little island covered with tall osiers, which shut out all view of the opposite shore. “Steady and fear nothing, but grasp that pole firmly, and you will pass the narrow channel. Devil

a bit can either man or horse reach you there, when I have unmoored the old tree, and sent it sailing down the stream." Along the hedge of the bank, and even down to the margin of the river, grew several enormous elms, some of their roots were bared by the dashing of the waters, which had from time to time carried away portions of the earth; a few were also scattered on the farthest edge of the island, and as the osiers, though leafless, were planted close together, they formed an impenetrable barrier to the eye, on the opposite shore.

Tall sedge also grew along the margin; reeds and rushes, which were white and withered, afforded safe shelter to the wild-fowl, several of which were startled from their haunts by the presence of our adventurers. The river rolled along darkly and deeply in this confined channel, and much swifter than in the broader bed of the river, and many a boiling eddy told its

strength in this narrow course ; nor did the trunk of the extensive tree with its round side and rough bark, that stretched across to the island, promise too secure a footing, for in more than one place the waves washed over it. There was, however, no time for hesitation, for between every pause of the wind, the voices of the knights were heard on the opposite shore growing more angry at the delay, and roaring like lions eager to seize their prey.

With eye firmly fixed on the end of the tree, and the pole grasped securely in his hand, which it required nerves of iron to hold steady amid the furious current, the Archbishop stepped boldly and fearlessly across in safety, and then threw back the pole for Gryme. The monk hesitated, and for a moment the dashing of the stream rendered his eye unsteady, but a word of caution from Becket made him more calm, and although he fell all his length

amongst the tall sedge, he speedily recovered his footing, and both made their way into the very centre of the ozier-holt.

The ferryman took up the pole, and getting a purchase with it like a lever, shifted the end of the tree into the stream: it swung slowly round, until it caught the full current, and was then borne furiously down the river, and the son of Balder returned with all former caution to his hut.



## CHAPTER XI.

Across the water angry voices came,  
And cursed the lagging of the lazy boat ;  
Till dip by dip, it slow and nearer drew,  
Rustled its prow along the reedy shore,  
And when its keel ground on the pebbly land,  
The angry Charon growled, " What want you here ?"  
*The Dark River.*

THE sturdy ferryman was too well used to the threats and anger of his passengers to take much heed of them ; and when he came forth again from the front of his hut, as if he had but just arisen, he only replied to the impatient shouts of the knights by a wave of his hand, and proceeded to haul up the heavy boat against the stream ; " and yet," muttered he to himself, " I may as well let her drift half a mile below the ferry, it will but be warming the blood of

yonder Norman cut-throats to haul her up again." So saying, he pushed her from the shore,—leaped in, and went drifting at a swift pace down the rapid river, without caring much to keep her head against the stream.

"The curse of every saint alight upon thee for a lazy knave!" said a knight, whose name was Reginald Fitzurse, as the ferryman drew nearer the shore; a considerable space of which they were compelled to traverse: "but I will break every bone in thy carcase the instant thou art landed."

"An' I thought thou wouldst keep thy word proud Norman, or cared the worth of a dead leaf for thy threats," replied the broad-shouldered ferryman, "thou shouldst hear the curfew toll before my keel grated on a pebble of that shore."

"Speak him fair," said another; "thou mightest have seen enough of the fellow yester-

night to convince thee that he is one of those dogged Saxons who would scarce care a straw to swamp his boat, and even drown himself, so that he might rid the world of three Normans a few years before their time. Didst thou not see how the knave grinned when poor Berwin went head-foremost to the devil; cooling himself beforehand, that he might the better stand the penal flame? Speak the knave fair, or we shall have our journey for nothing."

"Gramercy for thy advice, Tracy," replied Fitzurse; "I have ever found such knaves more easily cudgelled than cajoled into submission; but here he comes.—Art thou not afraid to venture within reach of us?" continued Fitzurse, making a circle with his huge cross-handled sword as he spoke, "after having kept us here bawling ourselves hoarse, and making noise enough to awaken the dead?"

"Devil a man hath set foot in my boat that

I yet feared," replied the undaunted ferryman ;  
" and I have given some scores a ducking in  
my day, who have not kept a civil tongue in  
their heads. As to hearing you, I make it a  
rule to hear no one when I am asleep ; and I  
have already been once aroused this morning,  
ere I was half awake."

" Hast thou left the two monks who awoke  
thee safe housed ?" said Tracy.

" Monks, were they ?" said the ferryman,  
half parrying the question ; " in truth my  
eyes were scarcely unclosed ; they but en-  
quired the way to Burton—a curse on them  
for wakening me—and I went to sleep  
again."

" Out upon thee, for a liar !" said the fiery  
Fitzurse ; " the warder saw them from the eastern  
keep enter thy shed."

" The warder drank a cup too deep," replied  
the ferryman, " and hath seen double this

morning; and thou art a cup too low, which makes thee speak so uncivilly."

"Darest thou bandy words with me, slave?" exclaimed Fitzurse, uplifting his sword, as he was about to leap into the boat. "By the thunder of Heaven! I will cleave thee to the teeth, an' thou puttest not a bridle on thy tongue."

"An' thou pointest thy sword at me again," said the ferryman, stepping back on the shore, and uplifting the huge oar with both hands, "I will smite thee to the earth. I am no more a slave than thyself; but hold my ferry by a true grant."

"Art thou mad, Fitzurse?" said Ranulph de Broc, stepping in between them, "to stand parleying here, while our prey is already two good leagues in advance? let us overtake them; then quarrel with this fellow an' thou wilt."

Give me hold of the chain, and let us draw up the boat against this strong current, that we may land where there is a sure footing for our horses." Tracy assisted him; but both being heavily armed, they sunk up to the greaves at every step; while Fitzurse walked along moodily on the high embankment. Having arrived to a sufficient height to allow for the force of the stream in crossing, the knights seated themselves in the stern of the boat, each retaining the reins of his steed to swim them across the river.

The sun had by this time broke forth, and cast his beams over the sparkling waves; while the high rock on which the distant castle stood, seemed bathed in a flood of light. The bright waters went dashing around the osiered isle, and the heart of the Primate beat quicker as he heard the voices of his enemies nearing the adjacent shore. The wind stole with gentle

sighs through the tall trees ; then swept along the silver ripples, which chased each other in the sunshine, like children at play. The dark grove of Clifton rose high in the distance ; and at the feet of its overhanging trees might be seen some solitary stag stooping to drink : it was altogether a lovely scene. The prow of the boat cut its way through the dashing waters, as the armour of the knights flashed back the rays of the sun, and the horses snorted as they breasted the waves ; while the rude hut of the ferryman, with its thatched roof, green with moss, or grey with lichen,—all combined to form such a picture as a Calcott could have transferred to canvass, and rivetted down the eye of the beholder for hours.

At length the boat drew up to where the long grass swayed idly to and fro along the shore, and the men-at-arms alighted. “ I will not take this knave’s word,” said Fitzurse, looking



into the ferryman's hut to satisfy himself that there was no one there, and adding, "methinks it would not be amiss to scour yonder thicket on the eminence."

"Hast thou spoken truly on this matter?" said Ranulph de Broc, presenting the boatman with a gold piece. "If thou knowest aught of the place of concealment of these monks," added he, looking narrowly into the broad hard face of the ferryman, "and wilt guide us to it, ten of these gold pieces shall be thine? Hark thee, friend! under one of these monkish guises is hidden the Archbishop of Canterbury,—the traitor Thomas à Becket."

"Had you told me this yesternight," answered the ferryman, his countenance undergoing no alteration, "I might have landed them in the opposite meadows; then you need only to have made a sally from the lower postern, and captured them at leisure."

“ ’Twere well an’ I had made thee master of this secret,” said De Broc ; “ but we dreamed not of their following so near in our steps. They kept not the course below the wood ?” enquired he.

“ The path beyond the grove is the only safe bridle-way,” replied the son of Balder. “ When ye have ridden beyond Barton, you will reach another ferry, and find the opposite banks the better pathway.”

“ To horse !” exclaimed Ranulph de Broc ; and the knights leaped nimbly into their saddles, in spite of their cumbrous armour ; and the clattering of their chargers’ hoofs soon sounded in the distance.

“ Spur on, ye bloody-minded villains,” said the ferryman, jerking the gold piece into the river, which leaped from ripple to ripple, as if loth to sink. “ I will not defile my pouch with your cursed coin. And yet,” added he, his eye fixed

upon the spot where it sank, "it is folly to fling away one's hire, when it might have made light the heart of some poor serf. Alice of the Grove could have purchased new gaberdines for her four naked urchins, and found them food for three moons besides. But, no matter, it is gone; and I vow to her as good a piece in its stead.—Archbishop of Canterbury! well, he is a Saxon, and has spoken truth, and may remember me in his prayers for this deed, and, mayhap, offer up a mass or two for the soul of my father. But, what doeth he in this guise?" continued he, as he again secured his boat to the post, and so conjecturing a thousand things, he again entered his hut.

Meantime, the persecuted Primate and his faithful attendant were safely sheltered in the cold osier bed, which, but a few days before, was under water, and was now ankle-deep in wet weeds, or spongy and sinking soil. Becket

had seated himself on a large dead root, which had been thrown aside to burn, and Gryme rested upon a pile of withered peelings, which smoked in the morning sunshine.

“These are trials that we must learn to endure,” said the Primate, as he watched the monk securing the strings of his shoes, from which he had been emptying the water: “it is useless to sit with folded arms and head bent, sighing over our sorrows; we must learn to bear troubles without murmuring, and to travail on under the burthen of our griefs patiently.”

“Thou shalt not find me the first to complain,” said Gryme, coughing, as if he had already caught a severe cold: “I would fain wear out this old body of mine in thy service, for it can never undergo a worthier trial.”

“Fortune plays strange freaks with us,” continued the Archbishop, following the tenor

of his thoughts, without hearing the monk's reply, "I but little deemed, when my ears were stunned with the shouts of the assembled populace in the streets of Northampton, that I should so soon have to seek shelter in solitudes like these—have to sit and listen to the whispering of the wind, and the plashing of the river, and wander like an outcast upon the face of the earth." He rested his brow in the palm of his hand as he spoke, and remained several moments in silence. "But it hath ever been so," continued he; "the brave Vortigern was a king one day, and the next a slave in chains; even the high-minded Alfred had to seek shelter in the hut of a neat-herd, and superintend the baking of bread. A few years since and England flourished beneath the sway of the Saxons; then came the Danes, and wrenched it from their grasp; then the Norman Conqueror swept like a fierce hurricane through

the land, leaving traces of his desolating march in every town and hamlet ; and no one but Death was mighty enough to wrench the sceptre from his grasp. One stroke of fate makes the monarch a menial ; the bishop a beggar. A few blows of the sword, and the Saxon lords became serfs, and the meanest Norman who ever held the stirrup of the squire, in one day became a baron."

"It is too true," replied Gryme, "but, hark ! I heard some one call." It was the voice of the ferryman.

"How now ?" said Becket, "we heard the tramping of their steeds ; may we resume our journey without danger ?"

"There is no fear for the present, holy father," said the boatman, speaking in a more deferential tone than he had before assumed, "an' ye can but catch this rope, and draw this huge plank across, which I have long had con-

cealed under the bank in case of danger, you may again resume your journey, for I have sent the hounds in a wrong slot."

This was speedily done, and offered a safer footing than the slippery tree; and as the water was now much smoother, they passed over without difficulty.

"I have sent a boy with your horses, by a secret path to Shelford," continued the ferryman; "and by taking the course up yonder lane for a mile or two, you will then find an open pathway, which will lead you to the hamlet where your steeds are in waiting; and from thence by winding ways, sometimes by the river, and along the brow of the hills you will reach Newark, to which place, if I understand aright, your journey bends."

Pecket tendered his thanks for the good services which he had received, and offered the honest ferryman two gold pieces, which the



latter refused, saying, "No, holy father, I have to crave pardon for the rude reception you met with at my hands this morning, and if I am not unworthy, would fain share your blessing ere you depart; and if, when you again are engaged in your holy calling, (which may the Holy Virgin speedily bring about!) I would beg that your reverence remember the soul of Balder the boatman of the Trent, and let these few gold pieces be expended in masses at the high altar of Canterbury."

"Thy wishes shall be obeyed, my son," replied the prelate, "for the services thou hast this day done me. But put up thy gold; it shall not be needed."

The ferryman knelt down, and received the Primate's blessing, then departed with a lighter heart than he had felt for many a day.

They reached Shelford, and found their horses in readiness, and again resumed their journey

along the beautiful borders of the Trent. Where now many a village slopes down to the sweet water-edge, then only grew wild masses of underwood,—and stretched immense tracts of forest-land, which plough had never disturbed, nor had their echoes been broken by the sound of the woodman's axe. Glen and glade slumbered in the same wild grandeur as when the wolf made its lair there, and the wild boar ground its tusks upon the bolls of the knotted oaks. Along the opposite shore stretched the gloomy forest of Sherwood, which in those days extended to the very verge of the river; herds of deer were standing under the giant oaks, and the otter darted to and fro in quest of its finny prey; while at some arm of the river might be seen the shallop of a fisherman gliding along in the sunshine, for it was one of those days that brings back summer into

the lap of autumn. They halted at a scot-ale in Stoke, then an extensive village, and reached the old town of Newark before night-fall; where they rested at the monastery of St. Winifred, the Abbot of which was friendly to the cause of Becket. Next day they pursued their course over the sandy and marshy plains of Lincolnshire, for where Long Collingham, and all those lengthy villages now stretch, not a hamlet was seen until they came to Torksey, the mouth of the old Roman Fossdyke; nor any human habitation saving the lonely hut of some war-rener. At Torksey they left their horses, and pursued their way on foot by the ancient water-course, to the already far-famed city of Lincoln, along a path which the foot-beaten traveller contemplates with horror in the present day; for even now it is only one weary waste of heavy sand-banks, overgrown with stunted brambles

and armies of thistles, varied by low plantations of dwarf firs, and the gibbet post of a murderer, whose bones have long since mouldered away.

## CHAPTER XII.

The swarthy Smith spits in his buck-horn fist,  
And bids the man bring out the five-fold twist,  
His shackles, shacklocks, hampers, gyves, and chains ;  
And if a carrier's jade be brought unto him,  
His man can hold his foot whilst he can shoe him.

*BROWNE'S Pastorals.*

THE brief Autumn day was fast drawing to a close, when our travellers came in sight of the ancient city of Lincoln; and long and dreary seemed the distance, when after journeying a mile or two on the loose sands that banked in the Roman Fossdyke, they seemed to be no nearer to the huge cathedral, which had so long been visible from its proud eminence. Becket paused a moment to gaze upon the mighty building, which like a huge Titan seemed to bestride the hill, and overlook the old city

which sloped away from its feet: its huge towers and rich windows were bathed in the deep crimson of sunset, which also shed a dusky and ominous lustre over the lower streets of the city. Ever and anon the deep-toned bell of the cathedral sent forth its slow and measured knell over the wide waste of marshes, and was answered by the booming of some solitary bittern from the sedge, or the shrill shrieking of the curlew. The Primate sat down upon the bank of the Fossdyke, while Gryme unloosed the thongs which secured his shoes, for they had become painful through the quantity of loose sand which they now contained; and as his eye fell upon the calm surface of the stream, he forgot his pain for a moment, while his imagination called up the gilded galleys of the Romans, which more than a thousand years ago had ploughed up those tranquil waters.

“Here,” said he, addressing Gryme in a me-

lancholy tone of voice, "still stands the work of the conquerors of the world, the remains of fallen power, the watery way which the Romans made to connect the broad Trent with the waves of the Witham, that their galleys might ride safely from river to river. Yes, even here," continued he, "has the tramp of the Roman cohorts been heard; and the proud eye of Julius Cæsar, as he stood on the prow of his vessel, glanced at their armed ranks, as they bore the eagle aloft, and marched in triumph to yonder city. Alas! Gryme," added he, his thoughts instantly changing, "how brief a space of time is it since I myself was heralded into those walls, amid the sounding of trumpets, and the loud acclaim of voices; when my long train of followers filled the whole line of its hilly streets, and the King of Scotland helped me to alight from my saddle. And now I go to seek a night's shelter, and crave a mouthful of food,



where before I ——.” He buried his face in his hands, and sat several moments without speaking a word.

“Take comfort, holy father,” replied the faithful monk: “God, in his own good time, will avenge thy wrongs. Remember that the blessed Saviour himself was a wanderer in the wilderness, and that many of the Saints who are now in heaven, underwent persecution: travelled bare-footed from place to place, bore cold and hunger, and cruel scourgings; and all for the Church’s sake. Come, let us pursue our course; we shall find some one, who, for the love of God, will give us food and shelter;—there is yet many a kind heart beating amid the green hills and wide valleys of England.”

“And Rosamond!” continued Becket, arising and continuing his course along the deep sandy path: “Thou knowest not, Gryme, how my heart yearneth towards her, and how my

conscience smiteth me, when I remember that I was instrumental in bringing about her ill-fated marriage."

"Let not that grieve you, reverend father," replied the monk; "the King treateth her with kindness and great love; and sad regrets cannot alter the past, no more than human foresight can prevent future ills from befalling us."

"True, true," said the Primate in the same melancholy voice: "Henry loveth her, and that is some consolation; I too, have a fatherly affection for her. Yes," added he, musing, "I will still remain true to my pledge; but one word from my lips, Gryme, would make her England's Queen, and drive the dark-minded Eleanor again to her own dominions."

"But these matters could not be achieved without much bloodshed, reverend father," answered the monk; "and from your own

lips I am taught to believe that the change would make the Lady Rosamond no happier."

"Thou speakest sooth," replied the Prelate ; "but I can tell thee that the revengeful queen will never rest until she hath imbued her hands in the blood of her fair rival. And it will need a vigilant watch to keep her vengeance aloof."

The shades of evening were by this time falling, for they had now reached that wide part of the Fossdyke, known in the present day by the name of Braford, which comes up to within a short distance of the principal street of the city. They halted beside the shop of a blacksmith, and Gryme entered the dusky smithy to enquire the nearest way to the convent of St. Mary.

The smith himself, a fine muscular fellow, with his huge brawny arms bared to the shoulders ; and his soiled leather doublet and apron

of the same material, bearing the marks of much toil and long service,—was busied in beating out a horse-shoe when the monk entered, and drawing his bulky body erect, and wiping the perspiration from his brow on his sinewy arm, he gazed on the countenance of Gryme without replying, while the Cyclop who aided this ancient Vulcan, took the advantage of the pause, and leant upon the huge hammer which he had been wielding, to rest himself. Becket stood without, and as the twilight was now fast approaching, the deep ruddy glare from the forge streamed full upon his fine but melancholy countenance, making such a picture as the eye of an artist loves to dwell upon.

“ St. Mary’s, St. Mary’s,” said the smith ; “ the city gates will be closed ere this, and ” turning to his Cyclop, he added, “ Swaine, give the Abbot’s horse a little hay, and shake up its bed for the night ; and remember that the

charge of his provender is added to the shoeing when he is fetched on the morrow." The attendant retired to obey his master's commands. He then continued : " the drawbridge is never lowered after sunset, and all the sally-ports in the Roman wall are closed at the ringing of curfew, and"—he had hitherto kept his eye stedfastly upon Gryme, and having observed that Swaine was now out of sight, he threw his hammer upon the floor, and seizing the hands of the monk between his own " buck-horn fists," exclaimed, " Have you forgotten Turstin, the son of Stur, who threw aside his breviary to take up the hammer and tong, like St. Dunstan ?"

" Mine old acquaintance," echoed the monk, kissing the grimy cheek of the smith, the ancient mode of English salutation ; " and how fares it with thee, since thou hast shown the convent a clean pair of heels ?"

“ I can scarcely tell thee,” replied the smith, overjoyed at thus meeting with an old acquaintance ; “ but thou rememberest when I broke my vow and my head at the same time. I then betook me to this honest trade (not but that a priest’s is a worthy profession), but I ever, as thou knowest, loved the ale-cup better than the chalice, and a bear-baiting beyond my books ; so I took to myself a wife, having confessed her beforehand, got a quittance from the worthy Prior ; and here I am as thou now seest me.”

Gryme cast his eye upon Becket, who had by this time entered the shed, and the monk would rather that Turstin had confined his narrative to his own ears ; but the mischief was done ; so, without further preface, he began to inquire where they might find a lodging for the night ?

“ And where should it be ?” replied the smith,

who had so candidly avowed his backsliding from the Church, "but under the roof of an honest Saxon like yourself, who will endeavour to make up his lack of piety by his best fare, and think himself well rewarded if you mention his name in your prayers, for you was always what you seem," added the smith, with a sigh, "and it was in vain my trying to become what I was not born to. I learnt to deal heavy blows at a morrice, or a May-day meeting, before I dealt them upon hot iron."

"And my companion," continued Gryme, "he also hath need of shelter and privacy for a short time; for, to deal plainly with thee, we are flying from danger, and know not how soon it may overtake us."

"Shelter and food he shall gladly have with me for thy sake," answered the man of iron, subduing his free tone of conversation; for he was now struck for the first time by the noble



appearance of the Primate, who had not lost a jot of that innate dignity which was so habitual to his character, "shelter and food, and such safety as the humble roof and strong arm of a poor Saxon can afford him."

"I thank thee, friend," replied the Archbishop, "I am also a Saxon, and will do as much for thee and thine, shouldst thou ever have the ill fortune to be as hard-bested as myself, which may Heaven forbid."

The honest blacksmith made a low genuflection, muttered his answer in tones which were inaudible; and, entering a low doorway which communicated with his shop and dwelling-house, departed to make arrangements for his guests. The Primate of England folded his arms, and seated himself on the iron anvil, while the monk stood warming his benumbed hands over the fire; and here we must leave them to their conversation, while we take a

survey of the household of Turstin, the son of Stur, the trusty blacksmith of Lincoln.

The door by which the smith entered, opened into a long low apartment, the roof of which was blackened with smoke ; at one corner blazed a huge fire of wood ; and as the room contained no chimney, and the wind blew in at a kind of loop-hole or window, which opened above the flames, the smoke rolled back in deep drifts, and filled the apartment. Around the walls, which were chiefly formed of wood, hung numerous horse-shoes of almost all sizes, and various pieces of timber, which seemed placed there to season, and be in readiness for future hammer-shafts and other tools ; but an experienced eye might detect the rude outlines of future cross-bows and straight shafts, for the smith was not a man to tie himself to any particular craft. Two or three huge logs of wood stood ready for seats, and two stools, the

tops of which were just as rough as when sawn from the cross-grain of the tree ; each, however, stood upon three rough ash-pole legs, on which the bark remained ; the top was bound round with hoops of iron to keep them from splitting ; but it behoved any one, before sitting upon them, to see that each leg was in its proper place. A table, which had once been a door, and was now elevated after the manner of the stools, stood in the centre of the room ; over this was suspended an iron lamp, of the smith's own making, the blaze of which was nearly obscured by the smoke.

Before the fire sat the mistress of this murky mansion, watching the progress of the evening meal, which, suspended by a chain, was simmering in an iron pot ;—two dirty children were quarrelling in the midst of the floor, and one having struck the other, on the head with an iron shoe, had just received

punishment from the hard hand of the mother, and was bawling in chorus with his brother. At the end of the room was reared a ladder which gave access to the floor above through a hole in the roof. The smoke,—the squalling of the children,—together with the dull red and flickering light of the lamp, and a kind of oily or smoky stench,—bore little promise of making the sojourn of our travellers very desirable.

“Thou needed not to have left off thy work yet,” said the wife, catching a side glimpse at her husband; “the souse is not ready; and what with the bairns bawling, and the fuel being damp, and the pot having slipped aside and almost put the fire out, I’m half-distracted.”

“Patience, wife! patience!” said the burly smith, I trust thou wilt not be in thy tantarums to-night; for there are two guests in the smithy

that we must give a meal's meat, and a night's shelter to, and—”

“Some lazy monks or other, I'll warrant,” answered this rib of iron. “Marry! thou mayest work;—all these bone-idle fellows find thee out. But I should not matter it so much, an' they needed it; but when I think of their tithes, and their orchards, and their cattle, and their fish-ponds, and the money they have paid for masses, and—”

“No matter dame,” said the husband, breaking in upon his wife's conversation; for as he was wont to say, when her tongue once got loose, it went like a lamb's tail. “They have spoken many a good word for us; and I never knew a kind turn lost. Beside, one of them looks like an abbot or a prior, so we know not what he may do for us; the other is an old acquaintance of mine; and beshrew me, if I would not share my last crust with him.”

“ A bonny place for an abbot to come to,” answered the wife. “ There is the Minster above the hill, where the bishop eats from off silver and gold ; and we have but three wooden platters, and four vessels of clay, which Peter the potter ought to have been ashamed to turn out of his hands so rough and unfinished. Well, well ! an’ ye have left this great man in your shop, and never a cask nor a log for him to sit down upon. Begone Turstin ! and send in Swaine to aid me in looking after the souse ; and when I ding against the partition with a shoe, ye may then bring them in.”

Turstin, the son of Stur, obeyed ; and again entered the smithy, and Gryme thus resumed the conversation which he had been carrying on with the archbishop. “ Couldst thou not favour us with a safe shelter for a day or two ? ” said Gryme ; “ I know thou art to be trusted ; and if thou couldst but conceal my reverend com-

panion, I could take a hand at the forge if any one chanced to call ; thou mightest find something for me to hammer at ; or I might keep up the blast of the furnace ; we should escape suspicion here, better than if we abode at any of the monasteries."

"That hand of thine would tell tales, worthy Gryme," said the smith, bringing the fire to a blaze as he spoke, and spreading out his broad black hand ; "No ; we may, an' ye like, keep you both safe enough in our own loft : but were you to take up a hammer, there are so many who come in to point a nail, or borrow a rasp, that they would laugh at your smithcraft, and say that Turstin had got a help to shoe hogs in place of horses,—a smith whose blows would scarce bring down a butterfly ; and we should have all the gossips of Lincoln hanging about the doorway, from Tim the lazy troubadour, to Bernard the bear-ward."



“ It would need some caution to pass for one of thy craft,” said the archbishop, taking hold of the buck-horn fist of the smith, and examining it as a geologist would the paw of an antediluvian lizard ; while his own long white fingers looked like a row of bright pins, laid side by side, with an equal number of rough hob-nails ; “ these hands have been acquainted with something heavier than bead and book, and I doubt not but that thou art as happy,” added he, heaving a sigh, “ while earning thy bread by the sweat of thy brow, as if thou faredst sumptuously, and spent thy days in a palace.”

“ I have no cause to murmur, holy father,” answered the honest smith, proud at the notice bestowed upon him by a man of Becket’s appearance ; “ I have got a name that is now famous through all this shire ; for I have found out a secret to temper my nails ; and Walter of Washinbro’ lames ten horses to my one ;—

it is through making them soft, your reverence," added he, taking up a huge horse-nail between his finger and thumb and bending it over his nose; "this is the test of a good nail; for it will drive aside sooner than lame a steed. But I hear the summons for supper, and will now gladly make you welcome to the best my humble shed affords."

Becket smiled at the simple egotism of the blacksmith, and followed him into the inner apartment. Gryme exchanged a look with his master, when their eyes had glanced over the humble board; for Becket was placed at the end of the table or door, and took his seat upon the empty cask; the monk sat beside the smith, —Swaine, the help or journeyman, sat opposite, —the two children standing on either side of him, their heads just level with the board,—while the hostess faced the Primate. Before her stood a huge pewter vessel filled with souse,

—an old Saxon dish consisting of the offal of swine, ears and hocks, etc., with which kale was boiled, and to an hungry man, offering no bad supper; barley-cakes were placed beside the trencher of each guest;—Swaine and the smith had, however, two earthen vessels which resembled the stands of flower-pots; two rusty knives and a wooden spoon, were all that the table presented; while the salt was placed in a hole of the board, cut, beyond doubt for the purpose. Although etiquette in those days was unknown amongst the lower classes, and such a hard word had never been heard, yet the wife of Turstin first pushed the pewter vessel up to Swaine, that he might send it towards the Primate; but Swaine, only bent upon satisfying his own hunger — which was somewhat of the keenest, as the evening meal had been prolonged beyond the usual hour—seized a pig's ear with

his hand,—took a pinch of salt between his thumb and finger, and then fishing out a large hock, with which he burnt his fingers,—he thrust the dish away with one hand, and crammed the scalded finger into his mouth. While the Archbishop was helping himself, both the children made a snatch at Swaine's plate, and one seized the ear, and the other the hock, then down they squatted upon the floor.

“Thou art served aright,” said the hostess to Swaine; “and wilt have to wait for thy greediness.”

“Peace, wife!” growled Vulcan, and the Cyclop muttered something to himself; but the dish had speedily traversed the table, and all was again quiet; for each ate with a relish that only true hunger knows. A horn of good ale was handed round; and although all had

to drink from the same cup, it was swallowed with as much pleasure as if it had thrown its white foam around a rim of gold.

After supper the Archbishop had to listen to an account of his own embassy to Lincoln,—for the wife of Turstin had witnessed that gorgeous procession, and soon grew warm in describing it; and although her narrative might amuse our readers—for it even caused a smile to gather on the care-worn countenance of the Primate, as he listened to a description of himself,—yet we must withhold it from them; having already too long delayed the progress of our story in following the course of the archbishop. The smith resigned his own pallet to the Primate, and clean straw was scattered in a corner of the loft for Gryme; while Turstin and his family passed the night on the floor of the lower room, and Swaine took up his station in an outer shed or stable. The eyes of the

prelate were soon closed in slumber; and although visions of former splendour, mingled with the ferryman's hut, and the smith's shed, and the forge seemed to stand beside the altar at Canterbury, and the voices of the priests were broken by the hammering of the anvil; yet, when he was awakened next morning by the clattering of the smith, he found himself wonderfully refreshed.

## CHAPTER XIII.

And even there, his eye being big with tears,  
Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,  
And with affection wondrous sensible,  
He wrung Bassanio's hand, and so they parted.

SHAKSPEARE.

WITHOUT dwelling longer upon the narrow escapes, adventures, and privations, of the Archbishop and his faithful attendant, we need but simply state that they quitted the honest blacksmith in safety, were afterwards compelled to shelter with a hermit, on a lonely island amid the wide waters of Lincolnshire; and, after remaining there three days, often



suffering through both cold and hunger, they again reached the Cathedral of Canterbury. Amid the vaults and winding passages of this venerable pile Becket found a secure shelter ; and it is on record that he caused an aperture to be made between his hiding-place and the church, that he might hear mass ; and although his secret was known to most of the monks, not one was base enough to betray him, so highly was his character estimated amongst the brethren of his order. More than one opportunity had offered him a clear escape from England ; but still he lingered in the hopes of obtaining an interview with Rosamond, for he was well aware of the machinations of Eleanor ; and, as he himself had been in a great measure the chief mover of her marriage with Henry, he felt anxious for her safety. A chance at last presented itself ; for Henry was busied in

searching the rich manor of Berkhamstead, one of the Prelate's splendid residences—for the King had seized upon all Becket's possessions—and, while he was thus employed, the Primate reached Oxford secretly ; and, having apprised Rosamond of his near presence, he only waited the coming of night, to obtain the long-desired interview.

Night came, as the darkness of Autumn threw its shadow upon the gloomy brow of Winter, for the year was now fast waning ; and, followed by Gryme, the Prelate entered the wild chase of Woodstock. The moon had not yet arisen ; and they pursued their course along the darksome paths of the park in silence, every avenue of which was as familiar to Becket in the noon of night as in the broad blaze of day.

“ Here,” thought the Primate, as his steed

paced leisurely along, " I have wandered with Henry ;—at this spot we have often parted ;— I to carry his greetings to Rosamond before meeting him at the banquet. In this very avenue did his word put me in the power of immense possessions, which he is now depriving me of. Here we have walked alone and talked over the affairs of state,—laid down plans for the peace of England,—plotted the overthrow of some tyrannical Norman,—opened our hearts to each other as if we had been brothers. Have these thoughts then never passed through his own mind when he has wandered by these scenes ? But what would it avail me to know ; he refused me the kiss of peace, and we shall never be what we were to each other again."

" Our power hath greatly faded," said he, addressing the monk, " since we last journeyed through these scenes. We dreamed not then

that, like the hart in the thicket, we should have to hide ourselves from the hunters,—be exposed to cold and hunger, and all those privations which we have since undergone. But they will one day have an ending,” added he, heaving a deep sigh ; “ the weary will at last find rest, and friend and foe lie down, and take their long sleep together. Death decides all quarrels : —the grave is a final peacemaker ; and there all grievances are hushed.”

“ All suffer not like ourselves,” replied Gryme ; “ remember, holy father ! that it is some consolation to think that all thou hast undergone, and art still undergoing, is for the glory of the church of Christ.”

“ Glory is but a shadow, Gryme !” answered the Primate in a solemn voice. “ Fame and ambition are sounds that deceive us ! there is nothing great but pure piety, and real humility !

Glory is but a sound! and men deceive the world and dishonour themselves to appear great! The coward would be thought brave,—the thief would fain have the world believe him honest,—the man who accumulates riches by grinding down the poorest serfs, makes a display of generosity before his equals,—the hypocrite assumes a holiness which he possesses not,—and justice makes a display of impartiality, which is sold the next moment to the highest bidder. Gryme, we deceive ourselves; there is something selfish and dishonest in the best of us; we do not suffer and endure for the sake of righteousness alone. If we make a sacrifice for that which is good, we listen for the applause of the world, and point out the deed that we may receive the praise of men. Shall I tell thee that I have felt the glowing pride pervade me when I have thought, that future ages will

look upon me as a martyr for what I have suffered."

"Thou lookest into the human heart too deeply," reverend father, replied Gryme. "If our natures were freed from all these weaknesses, what need would there be of vigils, prayer, and penance, when we should at once be fit for the assembly of the saints?"

"But thinkest thou, that with these feelings we are fit to loose and bind?" continued Becket, "to take upon our shoulders the sins of others, when we ourselves have enough to bow us down to the earth,—that our ears which are open to the evils of others, do not turn to our own,—and have the most need of that mercy which we hold out to those who fly to us for succour? Gryme, I tell thee that these thoughts have haunted me much of late. We who stand between the mercy of Heaven and

the crimes which are opened before us, have need to be as pure in heart as the angels. We assume a sanctity which we possess not; and lay claim to a power which is in the hands of God alone. We deceive others; while we ourselves go astray with open eyes."

"These are matters which I understand not aright, holy father," answered the monk; "and which but few in the church, saving yourself, have inquired into."

"Thou sayest sooth," replied Becket; "our creed is bowed down beneath bolts and shackles, and none must unloose her; she is made a prisoner to customs and forms, and no one bringeth her to trial. The fold of Christ is guarded by sleepy shepherds; if the wolf stealeth in without making an alarm they care not, so that he disturbeth not the next on watch. The Church is filled with lazy drones who



labour not, they sleep and eat; then wake to sleep again, as if they were but born to consume so much food, pass so many days upon the earth, then creep into their graves to be forgotten. They are of no more use than the figures in an arras, which move to and fro when the wind bloweth, then fall again into their usual folds, and remain still. They amble the marked mile to the well, and will not bestir themselves to make a new path, when the waters of Truth might be obtained within half the distance. But the day will come when Truth will be stripped of all her barbarous trappings,—when the clear walls of her temple will be bared, and all the beautiful tracery revealed, without the cumbrous curtaining which is now thrown over it. That day we shall never live to see.”

So they pursued their journey through the gloomy avenues of the park, the soul of Becket

teeming with aspirations worthy of a more enlightened age; for his clear mind saw through the feeble mist which surrounded the vatican, and he revolted at the suggestions of the Pope, who had long ago wished him to keep on fair terms with the King at any sacrifice. At length he reached the entrance of the labyrinth, and leaving the faithful monk to take care of the steeds in a neighbouring thicket, the Primate threaded the intricate but well-known mazes alone in the darkness.

Pierre de Vidal kept watch in a kind of cavern at the innermost verge of the winding passages, and as he stepped out to receive Becket, of whose coming he was apprised by his fair mistress, the eye of the Archbishop caught a glance at Gamas Gobbo, who, coiled up like a dog, lay fast asleep on a bear-skin before the fire. Becket entered the apartment,

into which we have before conducted our readers, and Rosamond threw herself at his feet to implore his blessing.

“ Arise, my daughter,” said the Prelate ; “ and invoke not sinful dust, that hath more need of the aid of Heaven than thyself. I have ever breathed forth a blessing for thee in my prayers, which I trust the Holy Virgin hath accepted.”

“ I thank thee, holy father,” said Rosamond, arising and seizing the Prelate’s hands, “ thou hast ever been as a father to me ; and I but pray to live to see thee once more reconciled to the King, then I could die happy.”

“ Alas! there is a great gulph between us,” replied Becket, “ which neither of us can again pass ; the heart once estranged, my dearest daughter, never returneth again with its former freshness. It was the will of Heaven that we should become divided.”

“ And Rosamond ever after remain unhappy,” added she with a sigh, which shook her very heart.

“ I am about to leave England,” continued Becket, “ perhaps for ever ;—can I be of any service to thee ere I depart ? Thou art one of the very few my heart leaves behind with regret ; and for thy sake, more than my own, I have often wished that there was no division between myself and his Highness.”

“ I shall not need earthly aid much longer, holy father,” answered Rosamond, in a low, sweet, yet melancholy voice. “ My life has been but one continued scene of trouble, and it will, ere long, draw to a close. Would that my dying eyes might behold yourself and Henry the friends that you once were, ere they set in eternal darkness !”

“ That can never be again,” replied Becket

in a mournful tone. "It is useless casting our eyes upon the past, let us look forward to amend the future. Were I to throw myself at Henry's feet, he would never take me to his heart again, but would scorn me the more for my humility."

"Nay, you think too harshly of his nature, reverend father," said Rosamond; "he even now applauds your high spirit, and regrets your privations; it is those around him who feed the flames which have blazed out between you; if left alone, they would soon become extinguished."

"It is but the spark of the warrior that is kindled in my favour," answered Becket: "the bravest knight who meets his mortal foe in the lists respects his valour, while he hates him. But let him once sue like a coward for mercy, and he would tread upon him like a reptile, and

crush him beneath his armed heel. No! I will not call down his scorn; he shall find in me a foe worthy of combating."

As he thus spoke, his eyes kindled with their ancient military ardour; and he looked more like a warrior about to enter the lists, than one who had spent his late days in penitence and prayer.

"Rosamond," continued he, in his most endearing tone, "let me see thee in some place of safety ere I depart; I have a strange foreboding that if I leave thee here, exposed to the machinations of the crafty Eleanor, we shall never meet again. Consider thine own safety ere it is too late."

"It must not be," replied Rosamond; "here will I abide my fate,—come when it will, it shall be welcome." A tear stole unawares down her cheek as she spoke.

“But thou art surrounded with danger,” continued the Archbishop;—“what can tempt thee to remain in a place where thy very life is menaced? How art thou now protected?”

“Thy holy office, reverend father,” said Rosamond, heaving a deep sigh, “preventeth thee from feeling as a woman feels; thou hast not the weakness to love.”

“It may be that I have not now,” replied Becket; “but there was a time when my heart was as much a slave to this passion as thine own. But that time has gone. Thinkest thou that I, who have the hot eastern blood dashing through my veins, have never worshipped at the altar of thy sex. Ah! and shivered a lance in behalf of the beauty of her I had chosen; but I have long ago torn these feelings from my heart.”

“I have heard thy mother named as a woman



possessing great charms," said Rosamond ;  
"a beauty that belongeth not to the cold  
North. Something too have I heard of the  
strange adventure of her love, but with too  
great a minglement of romance in the nar-  
rative ; but I have never heard the story from  
thy lips."

"I will tell it thee," answered Becket,—  
"briefly and truly. I have nought to boast of  
in my father's birth, saving that he went out  
with the crusaders and fought for the holy  
sepulchre ; but little dreaming that on a future  
day his son would be called upon to fight the  
battles of the Holy Church with spiritual  
weapons. He became the captive of an Emir,  
and after having languished in captivity for  
above twelve moons, at length found favour in  
the sight of the Infidel, and was admitted to his  
table. The Emir's daughter loved my father ;

nor, although a heathen, could he behold her beauty without emotion. They conversed together, she planned his escape, and by her aid he reached England in safety. But she loved too well to stay long behind him ; and disguising herself, and taking with her her most costly jewels, she set out for the sea-coast, and finding a vessel that was about to sail for England, she embarked. I have heard her dwell upon the perils of her voyage ; and afterwards she learned that it was owing to the bravery of a knight who was returning from the holy wars that she escaped, or the crew would have murdered her for her wealth. She reached England, remembering only the names of " London " and " Gilbert," the only English words that she could utter ; and when she arrived in London, she wandered day after day from street to street, wringing her hands, and exclaiming,

“Gilbert, Gilbert.” She at length by chance reached the street in which my father lived; who seeing a crowd assembled, ventured forth to inquire into the matter, and there he beheld the lovely heathen, seated on a stone in the street, ready to sink through very weariness. Her eyes no sooner fell upon him than she sprang into his arms, and was borne senseless into the house. She became a Christian, and my father’s wife; and I, their son, sprang from a crusader and a Saracen. Thus, lady, you have the whole history in a few words.”

“This was indeed love,” said Rosamond, heaving a sigh; “nor have I, in giving up my fair fame for ever, made so great a sacrifice as the Saracen maiden; she gave up her home, her country, and the faith of her fathers for love. I have but given up my good name and

my heart; but," added she with a sigh, "I resigned them where I loved."

Becket gazed on her anxiously as she spoke, and there was a tenderness in his deep-set eye, such as seldom lingered there; and when her eye met his, he turned suddenly away, and paced the vaulted chamber with rapid strides. "Rosamond," said he, at length halting before her, and speaking under great excitement, "I know not what hath led me to this visit. My heart hath long yearned towards thee, even as if thou hadst been mine own daughter. I never look upon thee without conjuring up the image of my mother, (may Heaven assoil her!)—like what she was when I climbed her knee, a child. Fairer thou art, and hast not her dark hair; but oh! thy features are very like her own,—and the sound of thy voice is the same as that which soothed me when I was a child. I had

also a sister, but she died when young; thy lips and features also resemble hers. I know not why, but thou art very dear to me; thy own father could not love thee with a deeper, or purer love than that which I bear for thee." He paused a few moments, for his voice faltered through the deep emotion under which he laboured, while Rosamond passed her hands over her lovely face and wept bitterly. "I leave England," continued he, "with the dawn of day; and what grieveth me even more than my quarrel with the King, is, that I leave thee in danger. Wilt thou escape with me?—I will be to thee a father, and thou shalt be unto me as a child."

A silence still as death, and almost as awful, reigned in the chamber for several moments, broken only at intervals by the deep sobs that escaped from the aching heart of Rosamond;

until at length she faintly replied,—“ I may not go forth with thee, holy father, I must bear the bitterness of Eleanor’s hatred, as a penance for loving Henry. Thou at least,” added she, sinking down and seizing his hand, which she pressed to her beautiful lips: “Thou wilt know that when the grave has closed over the remains of the ill-starred Rosamond, she was not what the world will in after-ages believe her to be; that she sank quietly into the grave, bearing all the odium of her enemies, for the weal of the man she loved; that she preferred the peace of mind of her true lord, and the tranquillity of her country, to her own fair fame; that she was the wife of Henry of England, and not——” Her voice faltered, and her deep sobs sounded through the very heart of Becket, while her tears gushed forth like a summer shower.

“Weep not, fair daughter,” said the Arch-

bishop, assisting her to rise, while a silent tear stole down his own noble face. "This must not be, one word from my lips can make thee England's Queen; the Pope shall absolve me of the rash vow I have sworn to King Henry to keep his marriage with thee a secret. His Holiness will readily knock off this false fetter from my conscience. Fly with me to Rome, and thy claims shall be established before the eyes of a whole world; thou shalt no longer abide in this worse than dungeon. I have power, child, to drive the dark-hearted Eleanor from these realms, to send her back to the dotard Louis, who divorced her, or among the Infidels, with whom she carried on her unholy intrigues, even while dwelling in the camp of the soldiers of Christ. Let us haste, my daughter, and thou shalt speedily see that the Primate of England, the humble head of God's



Church in these realms, will seat thee in thine own high place, even although he may lose his own life in doing so just a deed."

For a moment pride and honour struggled in the bosom of Rosamond; and had they gained the mastery, Eleanor would have tottered upon her throne; and the territories of Poictou and Aquitaine vanished from Henry's grasp like a dream of the night, and peradventure war would have swept through the land like a dreadful hurricane; for Becket was not the man to resign the helm which he had once taken in hand, although he had awoke a tempest over his head. But love came to her aid,—love subdued by suffering, but flowing not the less deeply in her bosom,—a love that preferred Henry's peace to her own honour and ambition.—Even when her heart bled at every fibre, still she was the resigned,—the loving

Rosamond ; and the anguish which at that moment wrung her heart,—could it but have been revealed—would have made the angels weep.

“ No ! no ! ” said she, conquering those deep emotions which shook her very frame ; “ this must not be ; urge me no further on this matter. I believe thou meanest well to me and mine : but oh ! consider what would be the consequence of this rash act.—I am unhappy now : I should be more so were this thing to come to pass. But even amid all my misery, I have still Henry’s love. The bustle of a kingdom would but ill accord with me. I am not ambitious : I covet but peace, and with that, Henry ; and while I have these, I can live happily in the meanest hut that shelters the serf. I am happy ; and should covet nothing, could I but——” Just then the voice of her youngest child, which was sleeping on a couch

and covered with her mantle, arrested her ear, and she flew as if to still its cries ; but while she bent over it, gave vent to a torrent of tears, which her greatest effort could no longer withhold.

Becket turned away to conceal his own feelings ; and he who had withstood the King in his anger, and confronted the whole array of his nobles, without once allowing his feelings to overcome him, stepped aside and wept like a child, forgetting for the time his high station, and all those dangers which dogged his every footstep. Such is human nature in sensitive bosoms ; and the man who will not let a murmur escape his lips at his own sufferings, will weep and sympathize at the sorrows of others—albeit they are not so keen as his own—will share the grief of another, when he would sooner die than reveal the contending passions

which, like vultures, are tearing to atoms his own heart.

“And this,” said he to himself, “is the love of woman. Here then do I find an example of fortitude that might become a god. And am I undergoing privation and suffering with such disinterested motives? Does the love of God’s church alone impel me forward in this struggle, free from pride and all ambition? Alas! my heart echoes not to these interrogations; pride, revenge,—a thousand contending emotions fly up and repel its utterance. But I will tear them from my breast, although I drag flesh and blood asunder with them.” He turned to where the lovely mother was bending over her child, and dashing the tears from his eyes, thus ran his meditations :—

“What have I won for all the sacrifices I have offered up on the altar of ambition?”

Would not a being like this have been a greater reward than all I have hitherto gained? But, alas! I must never utter the name of wife; never look into eyes that would resemble hers, and call me father. O God!" he internally prayed, "remove all these weaknesses from the heart of thy unworthy servant; make me fit to fight thy battles; give me strength to bear the armour which I have buckled on in thy cause; steel me against these human sympathies, which become not one who is wedded to heaven. 'Tis in vain," continued he, still pursuing the thoughts which emanated from his better nature, and sprang up in spite of himself. "Woman! thou art alone worthy to serve Heaven. She who would give up her own fair fame,—who would even sacrifice the honourable name of her children for peace and love, and the holy vow which she has made—

has taught a lesson to the high head of England's Church. Conscious that she will be held innocent in the eyes of Heaven, she despises the opinions of this world. Surely this is pure,—this is devoted love! Henry of England, I will not serve thee worse than a woman. I will keep faith with thee on this matter; even if in the assembly of mine enemies, thine own dagger was at my throat, I would die honest to myself."

So ran the thoughts of the Archbishop of Canterbury, while he stood gazing on the lovely sufferer before him; and whether or not they accorded with justice, it comes not within our compass to say; they were, however, honourable to the man. And to such a pitch were these scruples carried in that romantic and even dignified age, that a man professing the true principles of chivalry, was safe from the

most deadly enemy, who had once sworn to be secret and faithful in any matter. Becket, be it remembered, was a soldier before he became a Prelate; and although in the case of the articles of Clarendon, he did not in every sense adhere to his word; yet that was a matter that concerned the welfare of the church in a greater measure than his own private feelings; but in the present case, this was a vow sworn in friendship; and such a one as none but a craven or a villain could ever break. Nor was he one of those to be easily blinded by the power of Rome: for although he well knew that the Pope would readily absolve him from such a promise; yet he was aware that the motives which would lead him to seek the release, could only spring from a feeling of revenge, and add one more thorn to the eternal torturer, conscience.



It will, however, avail nothing to keep the curtain drawn over his inmost feelings. To say that he had never meditated seeking absolution from his vow, would be at once to write him down more than human, and to commit an outrage upon nature. Many a man is noble enough to forgive ; but he who can bear persecution heaped continually upon his head, and having the power, meditates no retaliation, is in very deed a god. Men also in that age were influenced by the same passions which agitate us now. And although much of that ill feeling which at present rankles and frets in private, found vent in blood and sturdy blows ; yet as in the present day, there were boundaries which could only be overleaped by a sacrifice of honour, and all that rendered the character of man valuable. And when Becket was persecuted almost to madness by Henry, when he

remembered all he had undergone, and knew that even his life was aimed at, and if not sanctioned by the King, at least followed up by those whom he countenanced; no marvel if the thought flashed through his mind, and he was more than once determined to push revenge to the very verge of power.

After a long pause, Rosamond again approached the Primate, and on her knees implored his blessing before he departed. Becket placed his hands upon her beautiful head; and while his eyes were upturned towards Heaven, tear after tear stole silently down his cheeks; and although he spoke not, yet his lips moved as if in deep and fervent prayer. He then advanced to the door, and waved his hand in adieu; but twice did he return, as if he had yet something to impart to her, until at last he imprinted a kiss on her pale and cold forehead,

and hurried out of the apartment, leaving Rosamond with closed eyes and folded hands, still kneeling on the floor.

The Archbishop hastened through the labyrinth, and followed by Gryme, rode on in the darkness until they reached the banks of the Thames, where a small boat was in readiness, when, having resigned their steeds to an attendant, they instantly embarked.

They pursued their course along the majestic river, sometimes mooring their little bark among the thick sedge when they were apprehensive of danger ; then again dashing boldly along in the broad daylight, when their path seemed secure.

As they passed Westminster,—then bearing its ancient name, “The Isle of Thorns”—Becket gazed upon the hall of Rufus and the splendid Abbey, which had received many additions since the days of the Confessor, and thought

that where then the jagged underwood and hoary hawthorns skirted the water-edge, while the minster and hall rose above, as if they had sprung up from the forest—that the day would come when goodly edifices should crown those banks, so dark with sedge and entangling thickets.

The boat shot safely through the narrow and pointed arches of the bridge,—which had then but recently been erected by Peter of Colechurch—and as the eye of the Prelate rested upon the Tower, which reared its old Roman remains, as if in triumph, above the Norman innovations, and pigmy turrets of the Bastard, he could not avoid recalling the mighty changes which the hand of time had wrought, and then reverting to those which he himself had undergone. They passed the steep acclivity of

Greenwich—then a wild forest which stretched for miles beyond what is now called Shooter's Hill, covering the broken ridges of Blackheath, and sloping down to the green vales of Eltham, and where now the old pensioners sit gazing over the lovely river, talking over their "hair-breadth 'scapes," herds of wild deer were congregated,—some browsing on the low and dense underwood; or bowing their antlered-heads as they drank of the clear waters.—But what boots it following their course.—They gained the open channel, and their little bark rode safely over the ocean; although the darkness of November closed over their watery pathway, and the dying Autumn tore past with all its agony of storms.

They landed safely at Gravelines; and without halting, Becket, followed by the faithful

monk, journeyed on foot to the monastery of St. Bertin's, near Namur ; where we must for the present leave them, to attend to other matters connected with our story.

END OF VOL. II.

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FAIR ROSAMOND.





# FAIR ROSAMOND;

OR

## THE DAYS OF KING HENRY II.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE;

BY THOMAS MILLER,

AUTHOR OF "ROYSTON GOWER," "BEAUTIES OF THE COUNTRY,"

"A DAY IN THE WOODS," ETC.

Let us sit on the ground,  
And tell sad stories.

*King Richard II.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# FAIR ROSAMOND.

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## CHAPTER I.

But yet before our comely King  
The English land forsook ;  
Of Rosamond, his lady fair  
His farewell thus he took :  
“ Oh ! I must leave my fairest flower,  
My sweetest Rose a space ;  
And cross the seas to famous France,  
Proud rebels to abase.”

*Ancient Ballad.*

TIME rolled along unimpeded by all the mighty changes which followed its course ; like a ship that steadily pursues her voyage over the sea, and leaves wave after wave behind. Becket still remained in a foreign land ; his proud spirit unbroken, although he had assumed the coarse habit of the Cistercian order, and adhered to

the strict discipline of a monastic life in the Abbey of Pontigny, even after the Pope had re-invested him in his former archiepiscopal dignity. There, for the present, we must leave him. Meantime an insurrection had broken out in Brittany, which the King of France secretly abetted, and which it needed the presence of Henry to quell; nor was he long before he summoned his forces together, and entered the frontier of Normandy.

His troops were already in advance, and he himself armed from head to heel, and ready to depart, when he resolved to take his farewell of Rosamond before quitting the shores of England.

The sweet summer-day was fast drawing to a close, when Henry, followed by four faithful attendants in armour, entered the chase of Woodstock. As he rode with his ventail unclosed, the red rays of the sinking sun fell upon

his countenance, and displayed features careworn and melancholy ; as if his face during a few brief months had been wasted by the sufferings of long years. There was a calm dignity amid his sorrow, which told, that however much he was doomed to undergo, his soul was still steeled with that proud philosophy which is ever determined to endure. While his steed paced leisurely along between the tall avenues of trees, or wound past some old familiar path which revealed glades and rich patches of pastureland in the distance, all sleeping in their green tranquillity beneath the golden sunlight which fell upon them ; he unconsciously heaved a deep sigh. His mind reverted to the scenes of other days, when the cares of state fell upon the able shoulders of his high-minded mother Matilda, and he himself stole away into those green solitudes where Rosamond, his young bride, awaited him. " Would to God," mut-

tered he to himself, " that Stephen had never resigned his crown in my favour ; but that I had still lived with her I love, and remained only Henry of Anjou, without bartering my peace of mind to ambition !" Then his thoughts turned to the Archbishop of Canterbury ; and although his brow became for a moment cloudy, it soon assumed that melancholy calm which pervades every countenance when contemplating the past, and dwelling upon bygone pleasures and remembered scenes, which can never again be recalled.

At some distance from the labyrinth was seen the gaunt form of Gamas Gobbo, looking more unearthly than common, as his parchment-coloured face caught the full hue of the setting sun ; while he went buzzing to and fro with his thin skeleton-like arms in motion, and waylaying the honey-laden bees as they returned to their hives. No sooner however



did the idiot perceive the armed horsemen, than he bounded at full speed across the glade, shot up the steep eminence under which the windings of the labyrinth extended, and dropping through an aperture, which looked as if it would scarcely admit a dog, by his loud humming, apprized Pierre de Vidal, that strangers were approaching.

The King halted near a neighbouring thicket, and dismounting, left his favourite war-horse to the care of his attendants, and proceeded on foot, his heart beating quicker as he drew nearer to the abode of his beloved mistress ; for the thoughts flashed strangely and almost unaware upon his mind, that he was doomed never to meet with her again. He threaded the well-known way, every turning of which was as familiar to him as the broadest bridle-path in the park. He passed the faithful minstrel without speaking, only laying his hand for a moment

kindly upon his shoulder, and silently patting the rough head of Gamas Gobbo, as if he had been a favourite hound: then with slow steps and aching heart, he ascended the heavy stairs, every step of which was formed of a solid beam of oak.

With a countenance mournfully pale, and eyes which but a few moments before had been overflowing with tears, Rosamond arose to meet him, but the effort she made overcame her, for she staggered and would have fallen, had not the King caught her in his arms. With eyes closed as if in death, her beautiful head hanging down like a flower which has been trampled upon, and her rich ringlets drooping over the chain armour of the monarch, there she lay, every sign of life extinguished. A shudder ran through the frame of the King as he looked upon her, which caused the scales of his armour to fill out, as if his heart was about to burst, for

he remembered that her countenance wore just the same expression, when he rescued her from the jaws of death, and laid her down senseless beside the waters of the Glyme.

“What mean these thoughts,” said he, after having in vain endeavoured by every soothing term to bring her round. “Last night I saw thy face in my sleep, just so pale and woe-begone, and now I again gaze upon thee with thoughts allied to death, and thou appearest before me just as when I bore thee with hair streaming loose, and—. She breathes again! Rosamond! dearest Rose, look once more upon me ere I depart. Oh! let me not leave thee thus care-worn, lest thy fainting image flit before me, in the tumult of battle, and the remembrance of thy pallid features unnerve my arm when I have need of its strength.”

“Henry! dearest Henry!” said Rosamond, after a long pause, and in a voice which was

scarcely audible, while she threw one of her white arms over the mailed vent-brace of the monarch, and half-elevated her lovely head to gaze upon his features in silence, as he looked down upon her through the square opening of the helmet, as if she was gazing upon him for the last time,—for she well knew that he was about to leave her.

“Speak, love,” said Henry, stooping his mailed form, and pressing her cold pale lips; “ask what thou wilt ere I depart, and it shall be thine; for within the wide domains of England, there is nothing that my love can withhold from thee.”

“Let me, then, share thy dangers,” said Rosamond. “Oh! leave me not behind thee.”

“Thy frame would but ill brook the fatigues of war,” replied Henry: “The clamour of a camp, hasty marches, and perilous sieges, cannot be endured by delicate limbs like thine.

No, Rose, I love thee too well to lead thee into dangers like these, here thou wilt be safe."

"Henry, an' thou leavest me behind," said Rosamond, in a firm but melancholy tone, while she fixed her eyes steadfastly upon him, "I have a strange foreboding that we shall never meet again."

"These are but weak and fond fancies," replied the King in a faltering voice, for the same thoughts had before disturbed himself,— "and must be dispelled. Give not way to them, my sweet Rose, they but spring from the sorrow of separation, brief as it will be. Trust me, it is but the thought of parting that has called up these melancholy forebodings. I shall soon return, and all will again be well."

"I fear it, my lord," replied Rosamond, with a mournful shake of the head: "sad thoughts have long haunted me while I have been awake; and when asleep my dreams have been of death.

I have tried to veil these sorrowful scenes from myself, but when alone they ever break in upon me, and reveal themselves."

"Embitter not our parting with thoughts like these, my dearest Rose," said Henry with deep emotion, and enclosing her fair hand in the folds of his gauntlet. "Thou knowest I love thee far beyond what words can express, and could I but dream that danger lurked near thee, I would not for a thousand kingdoms leave thee behind. Here thou art safe; thy haunt unknown to the revengeful Eleanor; the palace of Woodstock scarce a bow shot from hence, and filled with armed men, all ready to rise at a moment's warning in thy defence, and at the beck of Pierre de Vidal. Trust me, thou art much safer here than thou wouldst be with me amid the din and tumult of war. Come," said he, placing his arm around her graceful figure, and drawing her to a strong carved oaken seat,

“I must not leave thee in this melancholy mood, although life and death hangs upon every moment that I linger with thee.”

“Thou wert ever kind to me,” replied Rosamond in the same sad voice; “nor have I ever feared danger when thou hast been at hand. But the deep sea will soon divide us, and many a broad billow will roar between myself and thee, whose sounding will bury all cries for help, were a thousand voices to stand shrieking on the shores.”

“It will not be needed, my own heart’s love,” answered Henry, deeply moved; then lifting up his eyes to the window, he added, “the sun is already burying himself in the west, a few more moments and his splendour will be hidden: so is he now dipping his golden head behind the sea that washes the base of the ancient castle on the mount of St. Michael, and shedding his dying glory over the wide wastes of Brittany.



Rosamond," added he, drawing her face to his own, and imprinting a kiss upon her lips;—"until I meet thee again, I will every night hold these moments sacred to thy memory; even in the midst of battle, I will snatch a brief space to watch the sun descend,—and waft a sigh, or a prayer, for thee to the shores of England. Thou wilt turn thy face towards it, and think of me at the self same moment of time."

"I will," replied Rosamond, a tear stealing silently down her fair cheek as she spoke, and falling upon the gauntleted hand of the monarch, which he felt not. "But I shall not need such a sign to remind me that my light has departed, when I sit in silence, with only my sorrows for companionship, until we become inseparable. I shall need nothing to tell me of thy absence. And when the sky is clouded, and no sunset trails its glory along the western steep, then

shall I think that my hope is quenched for ever; and amid the struggling clouds trace strange shapes of thy form in battle, even as I was wont to do, ere I knew that thou wert England's King; and when the dark masses closed over one bright spot in the sky, I sat shedding tears to think that thou wert so covered with the bodies of the slain, until the rack assumed strange forms, and man and horse went thundering over thee;—and then I wept to think that thou wert no more; so shall——” She pressed her hands before her face, and sobbed as if her heart was breaking; for she could no longer restrain her grief, nor get rid of the melancholy images which her fancy had conjured up.

Henry replied not, but drew her face closer to his mailed breast, while tear after tear stole down the linked armour, the coldness of which her feverish cheek scarcely felt.

“Hast thou then no request to make ere I depart,” said the monarch after a long pause, and with difficulty suppressing his own feelings, for his eyes had more than once overflowed with tears; but by a powerful effort of mind he drove the rising current back to its deep channel, and felt ashamed of his own weakness.

“I have but one, my lord,” replied Rosamond, suddenly controlling her grief, although her suppressed sobs told that the war still raged within. “It may be,” added she, heaving a deep sigh, “the last that I shall crave, and yet I fear to name it.”

“Whatever it may be,” said Henry, “if it lies within my power to fulfil it, it shall be done, and thou wilt not crave that which I cannot grant thee.”

“It is,” said Rosomand, hesitating as if afraid to trust the sound of her own voice, “that thou wilt recall the Archbishop of Canterbury, or at

least seek a reconciliation with him. I know," continued she, taking advantage of the silence, "that I ask a hard matter at thy hands, but thou wilt forgive me, if thou canst not grant my request."

Henry remained silent, whilst his countenance underwent as many changes as the face of a lake in which the clouds of heaven are mirrored as they pass on before the tempest. Then he arose and paced the apartment, slowly at first, and soon with quicker strides, which increased the more he became excited; when pausing as suddenly as a horse, which a sharp jerk of the bridle throws upon its haunches, he said, "Rosamond, recall thy wish, and this very night shalt thou depart with me, and on the morrow, embark in my own galley for Normandy."

"I cannot recall it," answered Rosamond, in a low firm voice; "the words I might change,

but the request will still be the same ; it is what I have long wished, and prayed for." Silence again reigned in the apartment for the space of several minutes.

" I will not—I must not—recall him," replied Henry, with difficulty suppressing his anger ; " the eyes of all Europe are now drawn to the contest between us ; and my honour is dearer to me than my life ! But, for thy sake," added he, as if he forced the very words from his throat against his will, " I will yield much to him ; and it shall only be some unreasonable request, such as thou thyself couldst not grant, that shall prevent our reconciliation. If he be disposed for peace with me, I will throw no obstacle in the path, but make a double return to his advances. More I cannot promise—more thou wouldst not wish me to perform."

Henry fulfilled his promise on a future day ; and had not Becket, as soon as he landed in

England, proceeded to excommunicate those who, during his absence, had opposed him, peace would no doubt have been maintained between them.

“I thank thee,” said Rosamond, arising, and leaning upon his manly bosom, “and now,” continued she, attempting to speak in a more cheerful tone, but which the trembling of her voice belied, “I can part from thee, with the hopes that when we meet again, the friend of our early love will be thy companion.” She threw her arms around Henry’s neck as she spoke, imprinted a fervent kiss upon his lips, and fell senseless upon his bosom. The last effort was too much for her feelings; for her eyes closed, with a firm conviction that she should never see him again; and the thought caused a cold shivering to run through her frame—a dizzy sensation which she could not conquer—a cold foretaste of death.

Henry lifted her upon the long carved seat on which they had just before been seated ; and, ringing a silver bell, summoned Maud into the apartment. He pointed to her ; but spoke not ; then he bent for a moment over her pale features, which, in the approaching twilight, assumed the ashy hue of death—he retreated towards the door, and returned again to press her pallid lips. He paused once more, uplifted his hands, and breathed a brief prayer for her safety. Just then, his eye caught one of her long ringlets, which fell over the oaken arm of the seat ; he drew a two-edged dagger from his breast, severed the long lock at a blow, leaving a deep incision in the wood, pressed it to his lips, and departed, his eyes still turned to where she lay, until he passed the door.

Pierre de Vidal waited without, but the excited King could do no more than seize his hand, and the firm pressure with which the



minstrel returned his grasp, while a tear gathered in his dark eye, spoke more than a thousand words. Henry again threaded the winding paths of the gloomy labyrinth ; but, ere he ventured into the park, he leant his burning brow against the cold walls, and wept like a child. He, who would have scorned to call for quarter if the dagger of his enemy had been pointed at his throat—who had waded through the gory ranks of battle, and heard the groans of the dying, had looked on death face to face without blenching, and felt the keen arrows eat through every accessible point of his armour without changing countenance ;—wept as if his manly heart would break when he parted from Rosamond. The vaulted labyrinth, which was so soon to echo with other sounds, gave back sob for sob, and the darkness which gathered around, seemed only a meet witness for the weakness of him, whose eye, on other

occasions, would cause the proudest warrior to quail, and, like the forked lightning of heaven, strike terror wherever it alighted.

“Strange mortals that we are,” thought the monarch, as he gradually recovered himself, and wiped the tears from his cheeks with the inner part of his gauntlet, “that I, who shed no tear when the tidings of my mother’s death arrived, and yet felt the arrows of grief pierce into my very soul, should be thus moved at parting only for a brief space, with the object I love. No, I will not leave her,” thought he, retracing his steps for a few paces, then again pausing suddenly; “yet, why should I expose her to a thousand dangers? No; it will be some comfort, amid the wear and tear of war, to know that I have still her bosom to fly to, when all dangers are past; even the timid bird braves the thunder-cloud, and wings its way across stormy seas to gain a land of sunshine, to

build its nest, and repose in safety by its mate. Alas!" added he, "its home is torn by no convulsions—no jealousies await its return—no doubts—no fears: the lowliest serf that tills the soil, and groans under his hard task-master, sleeps a sounder sleep than Henry of England."

As Henry quitted the labyrinth, he stumbled over something at the entrance—it was Gamas Gobbo, who had taken up his station for the night; for the poor idiot seldom slept with a roof over his head during the months of summer.

"Even thou art faithful to her," said the king, again patting the head of the idiot, while the latter rubbed his rough hair against the chain-mail of the monarch, like a dog when fondled by his master,—“thou, who art scarcely possessed with more knowledge than a brute, dost fawn at her feet, and hum in her path,

whenever she walks abroad, and bringest the biggest bees to her to show thy gratitude for her protection. Alas !” added he, “ I can make thee no happier ; thou wouldst throw aside all the gold in my realm, to chase a bee, and exchange my crown and sceptre for a day’s sweet sunshine. Poor wretch ! I know thou art as faithful as a dog,” continued he, gently stroking the head of Gobbo, “ and wouldst die in the defence of those who treat thee kindly ; there, lie thee down ; thou art happier under the shade of that bramble, than I am under the canopy of my throne, when surrounded by all the chivalry of England.”

He snatched a rich velvet cloak, trimmed with costly fur, from an attendant who waited near, who was about to throw it over his shoulders, and with his own hand did Henry place it around the idiot as carefully as a fond mother who puts her child to bed ; then he departed.

Many a look did Henry give in the direction of the labyrinth, ere he quitted the park, but the darkening trees and the deepening twilight soon shut out all objects in the distance; and, when he had once quitted the princely enclosure of Woodstock, he set off at a speed which put to the test the mettle of both man and horse, and soon overtook the last troop of his chivalry, who were on their way to embark. The next evening, a favourable breeze sprang up, and the heavy galleys were speedily in motion; and, although Henry had never closed his eyes on the preceding night, he watched the sun sink behind the tall cliffs, as he drew the ample folds of his dalmatica around him, and laid his head upon his triangular shield to sleep, unconscious of the roarings of the billows which rolled around him. He slept sound as an infant, and dreamed that he was again walking by the banks of the Glyme, with her he loved.

History records how he gained the frontiers of Normandy, quelled the turbulent spirit of the nobles of Bretagne, and took up his abode in the strong castle of Mount St. Michael, from whence, like an eagle on a rock, his keen eye could sweep over the broad lands of Brittany. But not a page tells of his lonely walks on the highest turret of that rocky eminence at sunset, when he listened to the melancholy dash of the breakers below; and, as he watched the God of Day gild the farthest ripple with his beams ere he sank behind the deep, wafted a prayer across the wide waste of waters for the welfare of Rosamond Clifford.

## CHAPTER II.

Now I will unclasp a secret book,  
And to your quick-conceiving discontents  
I'll read you matter deep and dangerous ;  
As full of peril, and adventurous spirit,  
As to o'erwalk a current, roaring loud,  
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear.

SHAKSPEARE.

GLANCING backward at our history, we must suppose Queen Eleanor to have just parted with the King, previous to his embarkation ; that the tramp of his steed was fast dying upon her ear, and she stood in the same position as when she took her cold farewell of him. Like a serpent uncoiling itself, or when, as fold after fold unwinds, its head becomes every moment nearer its victim before making the



fatal spring, so did she, as the tramp of the chargers' hoofs sounded more and more remote, gradually raise herself from her musing position, until her whole figure became erect, and she stood with head elevated, and flashing eyes that glared with almost a savage fury. "He is gone," said she aloud, and after a long pause—"and will no longer interpose, like a shield between me and my vengeance: the hour of my revenge is at hand; nor will I delay the deed for which it hungers." She took up a small silver bell, and having rung it, Oliphant Uggleshred entered the apartment.

"Are all in readiness?" said Eleanor, in a bold and brief tone, and with a look that would well have become a commander on the eve of battle.

"All as your highness ordered," replied Uggleshred, "but"—

“ But what ? ” inquired the Queen, “ bid every soldier hasten to his saddle, I have no time to parley.”

“ Your highness forgets,” said Uggleshred, unmoved by the stern demeanour of the Queen, “ that Henry may yet return to imprint a farewell kiss on the lips of Rosamond, and ”—

“ Silence, villain ! ” cried Eleanor, fixing her dark eye on Uggleshred ; then suddenly altering her tone, as if she remembered that all might yet be lost if she quarrelled with the ruffian ; “ thou wouldst anger me further against yonder cursed harlot, but hast no need ; my vengeance has long been rife. Do thou but lead the way, and I will instantly about the work.”

“ Even as it pleaseth you,” answered Oliphant ; “ but if matters fall out as I conjecture, all will then be over, and this queen of the cave

borne away beyond your reach. Better wait until the morning, when the King will be far on his way to the coast, and no fear of our plot miscarrying."

"Thou art not tampering with me?" said the Queen, looking upon the villain's face as if she there sought to read his very soul.

"Devil a bit am I," answered Uggleshred; "an' you choose we will to Woodstock instantly, but it were wisdom to abide our time."

"It may be as thou sayest," said Eleanor musing; "but hast thou explored this cavern, into which thou hast so often seen the King enter of late?—ar't sure that it is her hiding place?"

"As sure as that I am upon the nest of the plover, when I see the young ones seeking to hide themselves in the grass," answered Uggleshred. "As to exploring it, I but looked in and

saw that it was dark as a black bull's hide; but the minstrel and Maud pass to and fro; and trust me to finding a path."

"And the Leech?" inquired Eleanor, her countenance changing as she spoke, "hast seen him, and"—she paused as if afraid to finish the sentence.

"Obtained a phial of poison strong enough to kill Satan himself," said the ruffian,—“better never entered the lip of Crusader or Saracen.”

"Speak not so loud, lest we should be overheard," said Eleanor, casting her dark eyes cautiously around the apartment; "I tell thee, Oliphant, that I would shed her blood with my own dagger; but that her father was a noble Norman, and hath in his day stood me in good stead, and"—she paused, for another thought passed through her mind, and she added, while her features kindled up

as she spoke,—“ How will the King look when he discovers the bower dark, and the nest cold, where he left his dainty dove at roost. Uggledred, I would give my life to hear the first outbreak of his grief, and glut mine eyes in his agony.”

“ I would sooner be with Beelzebub himself than see such an outburst,” said he, shrugging up his shoulders and gazing in astonishment at the savage expression of the Queen’s features.

“ Thou knowest not how sweet is revenge to an injured woman,” continued Eleanor, her passion rising as she spoke, “ when the current of her unrequited love is driven back and left to freeze in her very heart. I would have given my soul to the Evil-one,” continued she, drawing a richly inlaid dagger from her belt, “ if I could but have sheathed this in both their hearts, and left them weltering

together in the embrace of death. But how," added she, suddenly changing her mood after having walked to and fro in the apartment—"how shall we gain admittance to the palace of Woodstock?"

"They have no orders to keep out your highness," replied Oliphant, "as I learned from one who hath but little love for the minstrel. But, on the contrary, are to treat you as if nothing was amiss. It is only in case of an alarm from Pierre de Vidal that they are to betake themselves to arms. So that, when once there, we may strike down the hind at our leisure, without startling any of the herd."

"Then, to-morrow, will we take up our abode at Woodstock," said the Queen, "and until then we leave all to thy management." So saying, she quitted the apartment.

"It hath ever been held fair to enter into a

bond with the Devil and then cheat him if we can," said Uggleshred when left alone; "and although I have set my seal to this dark work, I would fain reserve yonder beauty of the cave for another doom than that of death. But I have played the game too deeply to retreat without danger," added he, again musing. "And what were I to make an effort to save her? I have once bidden high for my bargain. No;" continued he, shaking his head as he quitted the apartment, "I will see the game out; and if chance leaves any odds in my favour at the end, why, then, I will count my gains; but I would sooner face a chafed tiger, than venture to cross the path of this blood-thirsty queen in her present mood."

The next day Eleanor arrived at the palace of Woodstock, and drawing up with her retinue, demanded entrance; while Oliphant



Ugglethred with half a score of soldiers were stationed in an adjacent thicket. As the draw-bridge was down, only the huge bars of the portcullis prevented the party from making good their entry ; but a man-at-arms who was pacing to and fro within the gloomy postern, refused to raise the grated door-way without the governor's orders.

“ The Queen of England demands admission, sirrah,” said Eleanor, waving back the attendant who had in vain sued for entrance, and riding up to the strong fastness—“and unless the portcullis is instantly upraised, may doom you to waver over the battlements of the postern.”

“ Were it King Henry himself,” replied the warrior, still pacing to and fro with the partisan in his hand, “he knows a sentinel's duty, and must bide the coming of the Governor.”

Meantime De Whycherly arrived, to whom

the keeping of the palace was entrusted, and without further parley, ordered the Queen's instant admission, adding, "My orders extend not to the entry of your Highness' attendants."

"We take the command upon ourselves," replied Eleanor haughtily, and while she spoke, the horsemen, with Uggleshred at their head, drew up: "at least," added she, seeing that the knight was about to make some resistance, "so far as it regardeth our own attendants, I trust that your orders extend not to my followers."

"So far as it regardeth the time of watch—raising the drawbridge at sunset, and admitting none after that hour," said the knight, "my commands must be enforced during the King's absence."

"We shall not need to break your rules,"

replied Eleanor, glancing at Uggleshred; "if we chance to prolong our sports beyond that period, we can return by the postern that faces the pleasance." So saying, she rode into the court-yard, and resigning her palfrey to an attendant, entered the hall of the palace.

Meantime Uggleshred had beckoned aside one of the men-at-arms whom Henry had left in charge of the palace, and they retired to converse together in an angle by one of the towers. "The King rode down yesternight," said Oliphant, speaking as if he was certain of the fact, though at the same time asking the question.

"True as a bird to its nest," answered the soldier, "and rode out of the park with his face behind him. Marry! 'twas a marvel that his steed did not break its neck against one or other of the trees. They say love is blind; but he

often manages to find his way, much better than those who see."

"Who guards the postern that opens upon the pleasance?" enquired Uggleshred, more bent upon business than listening to the loquacious soldier.

"Even myself," answered the soldier, "and none other, neither do I care to enquire who cometh or goeth, while Oliphant Uggleshred furnisheth me with gold pieces to spend at the Scotale. I gave trusty Timothy a solida to exchange posts with me, and no one will enquire how I came there, for one steel doublet looketh as well as another gliding along by the shadow of the wall."

"Has Pierre de Vidal crossed the drawbridge since yestereven's sunset?" continued Oliphant.

"He hath not shown himself before the postern these three days," answered the other.

“Gobbo, or whatever you call him, went humming over the pleasance in the morning sunshine, with a gay garment looped over his shoulders, which I dare be sworn King Henry hath worn many a time. But he tore along through brake or briar whenever a bee buzzed, as if it had been the coarsest serge.”

“All then is secure,” said Oliphant, “and Eleanor hath stationed four as sturdy fellows in a neighbouring copse to waylay any messenger that may pass between the palace and the minstrel, as ever emptied the bags of a monk, or cut a throat on the highway. What time art thou stationed at thy post?”

“When curfew tolls from the turrets of Godstow?” replied the soldier, “then I take up my station for the night; and if thou canst leave me a flask of wine for a companion, why I shall hum all the merrier a stave until sun-

rise, when Balder the Bald will come to my relief."

"I will not forget thee," said Oliphant. "Meantime be cautious, and keep thy tongue still, but have thine eyes and ears wide open, and should aught occur that thou thinkest may be of service to our plot, do not fail to acquaint me with it." So saying, he departed, having first thrust two gold pieces into the hand of the soldier.

On the arrival of Eleanor, De Whycherly did not fail to send a messenger to apprise Pierre de Vidal of her coming; the soldier had also orders to remain in the labyrinth, and be in readiness in case it was necessary to hold communication with the Governor. But as Oliphant had stated, the Queen was prepared for this, and the messenger was seized, and conveyed by a circuitous path to Oxford, so that Roso-

mond received no warning of the near approach of her rival.

As the time drew nearer for the accomplishment of the long meditated deed, Uggleshred became more restless ; and as he crossed the narrow outlet over the moat to walk in the pleasance, he more than once thought of saving Rosamond from the vengeance of Eleanor. Her imposing beauty had long haunted the mind of the ruffian, and although he was entirely devoid of the finer feelings of love, still he would have sacrificed half the world, had it been in his possession, to have had her within his own keeping. He had several times meditated an attack upon the labyrinth, but then he was ignorant of the force kept up for her safety, and moreover dreaded meeting with the minstrel whose fame in arms was equal to his celebrity as a troubadour. One scheme how-



ever he had reserved, if all others failed ; but he had forgotten to calculate all risks, like one who sums up the advantages which will be gained by a victory, before the battle is fought. But our story now carries us back to fair Rosamond, and the labyrinth of Woodstock.

## CHAPTER III.

In sooth I know not why I am so sad ;  
It wearies me ; you say it wearies you :  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn.


I am the most unhappy woman living.

SHAKSPEARE.

TWICE had Queen Eleanor attempted to reach the abode of Rosamond, but was unable to discover the right course through the labyrinth ; and even Uggleshred gave up the search in despair. Two days had elapsed, and neither Pierre de Vidal, nor his fair mistress, were aware of the danger that lurked so near. A great change had, however, taken place in

Rosamond ; she passed long hours in silence ; and, when Maud spoke to her, she but seldom replied, but stood moping and sighing in the deep oriel, or gazing upon the dark trees or dense underwood, which hung around the high mound that roofed the labyrinth ; and only here and there showed glimpses of the distant scenery through some loop-hole between the foliage.

All that had before gladdened her soul seemed now to have changed ; her ideal world had vanished ; pleasure after pleasure had appeared but to pass away, like Time, which, once gone, is beyond all recall. Even when she ventured beyond the labyrinth, the very landscape on which her eyes had so long been accustomed to gaze with delight, had changed ; every sound, that was before cheerful, had suddenly become harsh and discordant to her ears ;



every sight wearisome, and but converting past joys into pain. The river Glyme no more rolled with the same music with which it was fraught in times gone by ; she but heard a mournful voice in the dashing of its waters—a babbling like the dreamy voices of other days, which fancy calls up in sleep.

Hour after hour would she sit in the secret pleasance which opened beyond her retreat, watching the shadows chase each other over the green grass ; or, fixing her eyes upon a gnarled and naked tree, which she remembered to have seen flourishing in all its pride, and, by some unknown contortion of the mind, she had in its ruin found a resemblance to her own fate. Often, too, would her eye wander to the distant towers of Godstow, just seen through a vista between the broad oaks ; and the remembrance of the happy hours she had spent within those

walls, fell with a coldness upon her heart—a pang of deep and almost bitter regret. A change had passed over Rosamond's spirit—she saw how much she had sacrificed only to render herself more miserable,—to be shut up like a felon, and not even to have the presence of him for whom she endured all this, to console her; nor was the consciousness that she still retained full possession of King Henry's love, an equivalent for all that her feelings suffered. The thought of what the world would think of her when she was dead, and that her children must share her innocent shame, like a voice from within, was constantly whispering to her; and there were moments of deep reflection, when these thoughts burst upon her, and, like a black cloud, darkened all that was before light in her bosom.

It was on the third evening after the de-

parture of Henry, that Maud persuaded her fair mistress to venture out into the park of Woodstock, for she had heard from the minstrel that there was help at hand in the palace, and neither thought of, nor feared, danger. Rosamond had partaken of no food all the live-long day, and seemed more than usually melancholy ; yet, in spite of all this, she acceded to the proposition of her faithful attendant without a murmur.

“ Put aside thy embroidery, my dear lady,” said Maud, seeing that her mistress had deposited the clue of silk in the pouch which hung from her girdle, “ thou hast worked so long upon that rose, that thy very tears have caused the colours to fade.”

“ I will sit by the waters of the Glyme,” answered Rosamond, “ and there run in another thread or twain. It was a favourite haunt

of mine, years ago, when the light-hearted Margaret Mountpenon was my companion, and we were wont to rival each other in copying the flowers which adorned the banks. Then," added she, sighing deeply, "there was a silence about the memory which was pleasing; or, when it spoke to itself, it only dwelt upon forthcoming pleasures, for the remembrance of the past brought no pain."

"Speak not so sadly, dear lady," said Maud, as she threw a rich tippet over the fair shoulders of her mistress, to which was appended a silken hood, that could be drawn over the head at pleasure,—“all will yet be well.”

They were conducted through the dark labyrinth by Pierre de Vidal, who would fain have accompanied them into the chase; but Rosamond expressed a wish that they might go alone. When they gained the open park, they



were met by Gamas Gobbo, who went buzzing round them for several moments, then bounded off in quest of his favourite amusement.

“ Let us sit in the shade of this sweet woodbine,” said Rosamond, seating herself on a green bank, at a short distance from the entrance of her secret bower. Maud obeyed, and placed herself by the side of her mistress. “ Dear Maud,” continued she, placing her hand familiarly upon her shoulder, “ I have thought much of death of late ; and, sometimes, it seems not so fearful as I was wont to deem it. ’Tis but a long sleep, unbroken by sorrow and care ;—a dark night that will be chased away by some future morn breaking upon a new world, where there are no aching bosoms ; it is the only medicine that can heal a broken heart.”

“ Dispel this cloud from thy mind, dear lady,” said Maud ; “ look how cheerful all

Nature appears ; the birds fill every grove with melody, and the green leaves glitter in the broad sunshine. Why wilt thou give way to this sadness ?”

“ I have been very low of late,” replied Rosamond, sighing deeply ; “ I feel, Maud, that I can never be happy again—never, never more,” and she buried her face in her hands.

“ Thou sighest so deeply,” said Maud, “ that I feel also sad ; ’tis long since thou didst reward me with a smile ; thou art indeed sorrowful.”

“ ’Tis too true,” replied Rosamond, “ I feel my spirits sink, even to very sadness, and weeping affords me no relief.”

“ But what hath made thee so ?” inquired Maud, “ no new trouble that I wot of hath of late befallen us. Cheer thee, sweet lady, and chase away this fancied grief. What art

thou afeared of, that makes thee so unhappy?"

"Of what I know not of," replied Rosamond with a sigh; "it is some hidden danger that I fear, the uncertain dread that hath not yet come to light. I tremble at the falling of a leaf; even my own shadow hath thrice startled me to-day. Some misery is near at hand,—some danger that will ere long close upon me: sure as the gathering clouds foretell a storm, so does this dull foreboding warn me that sorrow is near the door. Oh! I had awful dreams all yesternight."

"Tell me thy dreams then," said Maud, "and I will be thy interpreter, and it shall go hard, if I extract not some hopes out of this seeming misery."

"Thou canst not," replied Rosamond in a mournful voice. "I have essayed to think on

happy and bygone scenes, have turned my thoughts to departed days, to pleasures that had no alloy, when I flew to and fro as devoid of care as a happy bird, sang to myself, and was pleased with my own voice ; when my heart made its own sunshine. I have thought of these things many times to-day," added she, uplifting her delicate hand to her face, while the tears oozed out from between her small taper fingers. "I have thought of them until even their remembrance has become sad. I can never feel happy again ; pleasure hath forsaken me for ever;" and she endeavoured in vain to stifle her rising sobs as she spoke.

"Nay, weep not, my dear lady," said the attendant, her own tears falling in large drops ; "we shall again be happy when King Henry returns, and you wot well that this sorrow is a tell-tale, and no eye sooner detecteth where it

hath had lodging than his own. Alas!" added she, heaving a deep sigh, "mine is but sorry condolence, and if you must be sad, mine eyes will weep for companionship; yet know I no cause for these tears."

Just then a favourite fawn, which had followed them from the labyrinth, came tripping over the greensward with a faded garland of flowers around its neck. It lifted up its bright eyes to Rosamond's face, and receiving no sign of recognition, rested its sleek and beautiful head upon her knee.

"And thou also lovest me," said Rosamond, placing her white hand gently upon its head, and lowering her stately neck, until her lovely ringlets fell over, and rested upon the fawn. "Maud," added she, in a voice melancholy sweet, "thou wilt be kind to this pet when I am dead, and see that it is cared for when

the nights are a-cold, and I am in my grave."

"Break not my heart, dear mistress," exclaimed Maud, sobbing deeply, "when thou art in thy grave, there will be nothing on earth that poor Maud will care to live for."

But Rosamond heard, or regarded her not; for she had broken off a long branch of trailing woodbine which overhung the seat, and was wreathing it around the neck of the fawn, while the beautiful favourite kept licking her hands as they were busily employed in the task. "It is the last garland that Rosamond will weave for thee," said she, arranging the flowers as she spoke. "We shall never more trip over the sunny glades together, my innocent companion; our summer rambles are at an end; we have just outlived the flowers, and meet it is that we should die. Thou mayest look up

at me with that soft black eye of thine," added she: "would that I were thy sister, that we might ramble together all day long, browsing on the tender grass, and drinking of the waters of the sweet Glyme! But no, I would not have thee aught akin to me, the fever and the fret, and the slumberless nights that I have passed, until despair hath left no room for even hope, would dim thy sinless eye. I would not that thou wert Rosamond."

"Come, my sweet lady," said Maud, rallying, "let us wander along the banks of the Glyme, and watch this lovely sunset reflected back by the deep waters, and look at our favourite, sporting with his own shadow as we have done heretofore."

"I cannot walk for very weariness," answered Rosamond. "I would fain not wander by the Glyme now. Oh God! that its waters had



closed over me for ever when I stumbled on its shore,—what misery had I been spared !”

“ Wilt thou not then walk down by the hazel copse ?” continued Maud, “ or mark the twilight closing in above the old oaks ?—such sights have driven our cares away ere now.”

“ I would not stir a foot in that path,” answered Rosamond ; “ it was our favourite haunt when I sojourned at Godstow. Oh! that I could recall the past, and become again what I then was ! No, I will never more set foot in those shades ; such tranquil spots are too beautiful for the unhappy to dwell in.”

“ Shall I then sing to thee ?” continued Maud, still endeavouring to divert her thoughts from the melancholy channel. “ Come ! thou wert not wont to thwart my wishes when I endeavoured to please thee.”

“ Thou canst not comfort me, dear Maud,”

replied Rosamond in the same mournful voice.

“Wouldst thou sing a sorrowful song? Marry!

I am too sad now even to hold sympathy with thy lay. Shouldst thou sing of love, it would

but be striking the chord from which my sorrow first sprung. Didst thou breathe of hope; my

thoughts are far away with despair. Did thy

lay touch on pleasure; it would but remind me that mine have for ever fled. No! thou canst

not comfort me, dear Maud. But here is a book,” added she, drawing it from her pouch,

“written in a fair hand by some Saxon bard; it was given me by the Archbishop of Canter-

bury long before he left England:—would to God that he had never gone! If thou wouldst

do aught, read me a page or two, and I will listen to thee; mayhap I shall feel more calm

when thou hast done.”

“What shall I read to thee?” enquired

Maud, unclasping the richly bound book; the pages of which glittered with gold and flowers, and all those gaudy devices with which the manuscripts of that period were decorated.

“ Even what first befalleth,” replied Rosamond; “ it may be that we shall alight upon some passage that will clear away these clouds of fear and doubt; or the better arm us for what is to come.”

Maud obeyed, and in the Saxon read as follows :\*—

“ For thee is a house built  
Ere thou wert born.  
For thee was a mould shapen  
Ere thou of thy mother camest.  
Its height is not determined,  
Nor its depth measured.

\* The following poem is from a volume of Homilies in the Bodleian Library, (MSS. 343) and is supposed to have been written in the time of Henry II.; it has been quoted before in several works.

Nor is it closed up  
However long it may be  
Until I bring thee  
Where thou shalt remain,  
Until I shall measure thee  
And the sod of earth."

"I will read no further," said Maud, "'tis like looking in the grave to comfort one's dolefulness."

"Where only comfort and peace can at last be found," answered Rosamond; "read on, or give me the book; my fate is sealed."

Maud obeyed, and she thus proceeded:—

"Thy house is not  
Built high and timbered.  
It is unhigh and low:  
When thou art in it  
The heel-ways are low,  
The side-ways unhigh.  
The roof is built  
Thy breast full nigh;  
So thou shalt in earth

## FAIR ROSAMOND.

Dwell full cold,  
Dim and dark,  
Doorless is that house,  
And dark it is within,  
Where thou art fast detained :  
And Death holds the key.  
Loathly is that earth-house,  
And grim to dwell in ;  
There thou shalt dwell  
And worms shall share thee.  
Thus thou art laid  
And leavest thy friends—  
Thou hast no friend  
That will come to thee,  
Who will ever enquire  
How thou likest that house ?  
Who shall ever open  
For thee the door,  
And seek thee ?  
For soon thou becomest loathly,  
And hateful to look upon."

"Close the book ; I will hear no more,"  
said Rosamond, with a firmness that seemed  
the more startling when compared with her  
former despondency. "*Rosa mundi !* there is

no flattery in Death ; thou wilt become loathly and hateful to look upon. *Rosa mundi !*" added she, again sinking into her sorrowful tones ; " how would the worms exult, if they could but know that she they fed upon had had her beauties chaunted by minstrels, and praised by the lips of a king. Rose of the world ! alas ! even my ashes may be despised in a future age, and scattered upon the winds by some stern churchman, as being unworthy of the grave."

" Be not cast down, my dear lady !" exclaimed Maud, throwing her arms around Rosamond's neck ; " we must all die ; and even death is not so gloomy as this miserable minstrel hath made it. Nay, he telleth not the truth ; for our friends will come to see us when we are dead ; even as thou and I have wept over thy mother's grave together, until we believed that

she was but asleep, and must have been warmed by the sunbeams that beat so brightly upon her grave. He is an unfeeling minstrel who wrote these lines, and does not deserve to be inquired after when he is dead : I hate him for making thee talk thus."

"My mother's grave!" echoed Rosamond, disregarding Maud's censure of the poet ; " I dare not kneel beside it now,—dare not prostrate myself where the lowliest serf that tilled the earth on my father's wide domains may yet bend to offer up a prayer for the dead, lest she should rise and upbraid me for bringing dishonour upon her grave, and blame me for my father's death. Yet," added she, speaking to herself, " God above knoweth my innocence ; and last night my mother's spirit visited me in sleep,—bent over me with the same benignant aspect as she looked upon me when I was



worthy of her love ; and a tear lingered upon her pale face,—the only accuser of my guilt. And shall I then dwell with thee hereafter ?” added she looking upward ; “ hear thy voice speaking in the same kind tone that it was wont to address me in, in days of yore ? Oh ! for the certainty of this ! and I would hug death as a welcome brother.” While she spoke, the sinking sun, which had been buried a moment under a cloud, blazed forth in all his splendour, and cast around her a flood of radiance, and she stood amid the glare of sloping light in all her beauty, like an inhabitant of heaven. A faint smile broke over her features, as she watched the decline of the sudden brightness ; and her fancy traced the form of her sainted mother in the trailing glory, as if beckoning her to another home beyond the golden clouds !

They walked back to the entrance of the

labyrinth, and Rosamond again seated herself upon the short dry grass, with which the base of the high embankment was overgrown. She spoke not for several moments; but drawing the half-finished folds of embroidery from the pouch or pocket, she was soon busied in working a rose-leaf. "Maud," said she, after a long pause, "shall I tell thee what I dreamed yesternight?"

"An' it will give you no pain," answered the other, in a voice more sorrowful than Rosamond's; "I would fain hear it; and yet—"

"I will tell it thee," said Rosamond, interrupting her, while her beautiful fingers were busied in their task, and the last beams of the summer sun gilded the mound by which they sat. "I dreamed that I was a queen, and that Henry sat beside me pale as death; and before us stood the Archbishop of Canterbury,

surrounded with a thousand monstrous shapes, who held in their hands skulls and cross-bones, and moped and mowed before me, while in hollow sepulchral voices they hailed me as queen. Then I thought my father placed a crown upon my brow, and that his hands were cold as the icicles of winter; and yet I knew that he was dead: my mother was also there, and she alone smiled upon me. Then came Eleanor, and lifted a golden goblet to my lips, from which I drank: I fain would not have sipped; but her eye told me that I must drink, and I shuddered as the moisture passed between my lips,—it was cold and bitter as death; then—”

“ Tell me no more,” said Maud with an imploring look, her voice faltering as she spoke.

“ My dream is nearly told,” continued Rosamond; “ for then I felt my head grow giddy, and fancied myself about to fall from a tall

precipice,—below me all was darkness. Then I thought that thou didst stretch out thine hands towards me: I felt, but could not see thee, for my eyes had become very dim; and although I heard thy voice, I understood not the words thou didst utter, but felt myself gradually sinking into the deep chasm beneath; at length I fell—and in falling awoke. I attempted to shriek, but my voice failed me, and I—”

She raised her eyes when she had done speaking, and beheld Queen Eleanor within a few paces of where she sat. Rosamond uttered a loud shriek, and fled into the labyrinth. “Follow, knaves!” exclaimed Eleanor to Uglethred and four men-at-arms who had been sheltered in an adjacent copse, while she herself rushed foremost, like an enraged lioness in pursuit of the hunter who has stolen her cubs.

But just as she was about to enter the winding passages, Gamas Gobbo rushed out headforemost, and with such force, that he pitched full upon her breast, and the Queen measured her length upon the greensward. Maud was about to run past her fallen Highness, when she was caught by one of the soldiers, while Gobbo rushed back into the labyrinth; his loud buzzing was heard for a moment or two, until the sound was lost in the distance of the labyrinth.

The enraged Queen arose, with her hair dishevelled and falling over her flushed and angry features, while her eyes seemed to shoot forth fire, as they turned from one countenance to another, until at length they alighted upon Maud, who returned her angry glance without quailing.

“This is her of whom you spoke,” said

Eleanor, addressing herself to Ugglethred, who answered,—“The same.”

“If thou wouldst save thy life,” continued the savage Queen, looking at Maud as if she would strike her to the earth with a glance,—“lead us to the abode of yonder harlot. Dost understand me?” continued Eleanor, raising her voice, for Maud replied not. “Conduct us through this labyrinth to the hateful presence of thy mistress.”

Maud, who was the daughter of as brave a knight as ever sheathed a limb in mail, fixed her searching eyes on Eleanor, while her bosom heaved again beneath its gathering wrath, and as she replied in the fiercest tones that her tongue could utter, she made an attempt to spring upon the Queen, and had not her arms been held, would soon have buried her nails in Eleanor’s cheeks, while thus she spoke:—

“Cursed and cast-off harlot! thou art not worthy to kiss the ground that my mistress treads upon;” and she spat upon the Queen as she spoke, while her whole frame trembled with passion. “Even the fool, Louis, would not have thee with all thy possessions, for he found the slaver of the Saracen upon thy hateful lips. Oh! that my arms were free,” added she, clenching her teeth, and shaking her head, “I would tear the very eyes out of thy head, thou Saracen w——, thou wert a very bye-word in the camp of the Crusaders; and on that Holy Land, where others went to expiate their sins, didst thou pander to thy hateful lust. Thou art not worthy to be my mistress’s hound.”

Eleanor sprang forward, with her hand upon her girdle; but the dagger had slipped from her belt when she fell, or never word more would Maud have spoken, for the determination



of death sat upon her brow. UGGLETHRED, (who would have laughed outright at these home-thrusts of the maiden's at any other time,) perceived the danger, and ere the Queen had picked up the weapon, said, "We are losing time, and the taking away the life of this spirited wench, will avail us nothing in the discovery of her mistress."

"Thou refuseth to conduct us through this labyrinth?" said ELEANOR, now uplifting her dagger as she spoke.

"I will die first," answered MAUD, without exhibiting a sign of fear. ELEANOR set her teeth together, her hand trembled a moment as she clutched the dagger: she hesitated to strike, it was but for a moment; another instant of time, and it would have lodged in as true a heart as ever beat in the bosom of a woman; but that short delay, brief almost as our breathing,

saved her life, for Pierre de Vidal rushed in between them, and at one blow nearly severed the arm of the soldier who held Maud. Again was the ponderous sword upheaved, and made a circle of light in the gathering gloom as it swung over the head of Eleanor, and would have clove her from the scull to the teeth, had not his arm been seized by Oliphant Uggleshred, just as it was about to deal the fatal blow.

“Cursed be thine arm!” said the minstrel, dropping the sword, and instantly fastening his knuckles between the throat and gorget of Uggleshred, and bearing him to the earth. Eleanor gazed a moment or two upon the struggle as they grappled together, and bade the soldier fall back who had rushed to the aid of Oliphant; for as one was wounded, it required the other two, to hold Maud. There was a look of savage

triumph on the countenance of Eleanor as she beheld the features of Uggleshred blacken in the deepening twilight, and heard his heavy breathing, and the awful rattling in his throat, for he was already half strangled ; and at any other time she would have hastened the death of the ruffian ; for she well knew that in his bosom was deposited many of her darkest secrets. Nay, she even then hesitated an instant, whether or not to leave him to the death that was all but accomplished ; but remembering how necessary he was to the fulfilment of her revenge upon Rosamond, she sprung forward, run the point of her dagger over the back of the minstrel's hand, causing the blood to follow the stroke, and thereby weakening the grasp : and at the same time motioning the soldier to come to her assistance.

Pierre de Vidal was himself too much ex-

hausted to struggle with this new adversary ; and by the aid of the savage Queen, his hands and feet were speedily secured, and he lay bound upon the greensward. It was several minutes before Uggleshred recovered ; and by this time the soldiers had struck a light, —for they had provided themselves with torches,—the arms of Maud were also safely secured.

“ Cleanse this dagger,” said the Queen, throwing it to Uggleshred when he arose, for it had fallen into the blood, with which the ground was by this time plentifully stained. “ I little deemed that my own hand would ever be raised to save thy life.”

Uggleshred obeyed, and only muttered to himself, “ It is needed to accomplish a bloodier business ;” but expressed no thanks. Eleanor glanced upon his countenance, which shone

redly in the torchlight; and by the knitting of her brows, seemed as if she read his thoughts.

They now proceeded to explore the labyrinth. Maud, with her hands bound, was driven along between two of the armed attendants; while the wounded soldier was left bleeding and groaning without. Eleanor had, however, with her own hands, bound up his wound with her scarf or peplum, which was worn much after the manner of a modern veil. Pierre de Vidal was also left without, bound hand and foot.

The smoky torches threw a red and lurid light over the low-browed and vaulted labyrinth; and as the ruddy glare was flashed back by the armour of the soldiers, produced just such an effect as we love to gaze upon in the rich paintings of Salvator Rosa, where that great master has peopled some shaggy cave with his

banditti: but never did canvass show such a form as that of Queen Eleanor as she marshalled the way, with a torch in one hand, and a dagger in the other; while her arm was stained with blood, and her dark hair fell in wild disorder down her cheeks and neck, as her eyes glared round with a collected, but savage expression.

Passage after passage did they traverse, Eleanor still leading the way with her garments disordered; and as she waved her torch to and fro,—now to look down into some of those gloomy depths which had never been explored for ages,—then again to examine the distant darkness, and see if there was any outlet through the arched roof,—she looked like the fabled spirit of Death, who had lost her way while conducting her silent companions to the halls of Pluto.

From time to time she glanced upon Maud, seeking, as if in a chart, to trace in her countenance some mark that might denote the right path. But the face of the maiden was firm, as if chiselled in marble; and although her heart beat high, not a sign betrayed any emotion; for while the Queen passed the torch before her, she only saw the same sullen and collected expression, which had from their first entry been imprinted there.

Oliphant Uggleshred had lingered behind; and as Eleanor was by this time considerably a-head, and Maud at some distance from the soldiers, he whispered into her ear, not to be afraid, for all would yet end well. He had scarcely passed her before the Queen rushed by, holding the torch to the ground; and having gone back for some space, she again led the way, exclaiming with a shrill savage laugh,



which sounded awfully through the vaulted avenues, "She forgot to put up her silk before she departed; and although she went somewhat quicker than a snail, yet here is her trail."

Ugglethred held his torch to the ground;—it was even as she said,—Rosamond in her flight had dropped the clew of scarlet silk from her lap, and as one end was passed through the sheathe in her girdle, it became unwound, and at once betrayed her path. A deep groan escaped the lips of Maud at this discovery; and Eleanor turned upon her with just such a malicious grin as Satan is supposed to give, when the foot of a righteous man hath slipped from its even standing.

There was now no further difficulty; the few menials who waited upon, and might yet have aided Rosamond, had flown to such hiding

places as were only known to themselves. Gamas Gobbo alone dared to show his teeth before them ; but he, like a dog, kept barking and retreating, until one of the soldiers made a cut at him with his sword, and he fled before them.

True as a bloodhound to its track, did Eleanor follow the silken clue,—she came to the foot of the tower—it was still there :—step by step, like a silent guide, it pointed out the way ;—there was no obstacle,—not an arm was uplifted to contest the passage. They entered the chief apartment, which was dark, until their torches broke the gloom, and before the images of the Madonna and child, with clasped hands, and cheeks bedewed with tears, knelt fair Rosamond.

## CHAPTER IV.

Let me have  
A dram of poison ; such soon-speeding gear  
As will disperse itself through all the veins,  
That the life-weary taker may fall dead ;  
And that the trunk may be discharged of breath  
As violently, as hasty powder fired  
Doth hurry from the fatal cannon's womb.

SHAKSPEARE.

PRAYER hath power to disarm the evil-one ;—  
it can reach the star-paved vault, and even the  
ear of God himself, when thrice ten thousand  
hallelujahs peal through the golden domes,  
hymned by cherubim and seraphim, and all the  
winged ranks of Heaven : the devils themselves  
feel it and tremble. On the hearts of the  
children of men only is it lost ;—vengeance  
hath no regard for it,—the iron gates of revenge

are closed upon it,—it passes like a breeze over a lake chained down with the ice of a deep winter, and raises not a ripple.—Remorse lags behind the murderer;—the angel of pity follows the heels of death: and they range themselves beside the bier when it is too late;—even the tears of penitence drop not, until those for whom they are shed are unconscious that they fall. Our sympathies too often awaken when they are of no avail:—our regret comes when it is useless; and we sorrow for the deed done, which we never sought to prevent. Our good intents are but shadows cast before us in the morning, which at night we find far behind. Our best resolutions are but the frost-work on glass;—we breathe over them and they vanish. As the world was before the flood, so it still remains; and were the billows again to overwhelm us, but few would be found worthy, to

enter the ark of mercy. But these are thoughts that have grown out of the still midnight;—the mere fancies that precede a scene of death, and may vanish with the sunshine of the morrow.

Eleanor stood for a few moments over her victim, like a dark thunder-cloud lowering above the goodly oak, before the bolt is launched that prostrates it for ever. As her tall figure drew nearer, the form of Rosamond seemed to shrink before it; like a dove burying itself in its nest, while the wings of the fierce hawk flap coldly above her. The trembling victim raised her imploring eyes to the figure of the holy Virgin; but even her face seemed to have changed;—the benignant smile which Rosamond's fancy had in former days conjured up, seemed to have passed away, and she appeared as if only regarding her with a cold stony look;—even the God-child had, to her imagination, some-

thing stern in its countenance;—all around seemed to say, “thou must die!”

She ventured to turn her head as she knelt,—it was an unconscious movement,—her eyes also raised themselves of their own accord,—it might be that she looked up towards Heaven; but there only glared the fiery comet that denoted death,—the revengeful countenance of Eleanor hung over her. She uttered a loud shriek, and fell upon the floor. Maud was left without in the charge of the soldiers; so that only the Queen and Uggleshred were in the apartment.

“Hast thou got the phial from Belton!” said Eleanor.

“It is there!” said Uggleshred, pointing to the table, without evincing the least emotion; “but she will need a goblet to quaff it from.”

“Here is one,” said Eleanor, taking a silver

cup from a niche, and examining it minutely ; “ the very goblet,” added she, “ which I gave to Henry in France, and in which I drank to him at our own nuptials ;—cursed be the remembrance ! But here is that which will sweeten the bitter draught,” continued she, emptying the poison into the goblet ; “ rouse her, Ugglethred, to pledge the health of Henry of England.”

“ What would you with me ?” said Rosamond, starting up wildly, and throwing her hair back ; “ what wrong have I done, that ye cast such menacing looks upon me ? Whom have I injured, that ye seek to harm me ?”

Eleanor drew her mantle back with one hand, and fixing her baleful glance upon her like the fabled basilisk, as if she would strike her dead with her eyes ; while a cold-blooded scorn curled her haughty lips, and her nostrils



dilated like that of a savage when he is said to smell the blood of his enemy, as she exclaimed, “Cunning harlot! I do but demean myself to waste a word upon thee. Is it nothing to step in between me and the affections of the King? to lay out thy allurements and wean him from his Queen?—to sow dissension in our bosoms, and cause him to leave the mighty affairs of his realms to hold dalliance with a strumpet like thyself? Couldst thou fly at none other game? Would none but a king suit thy dainty taste, to pinch and play with thy pallid cheeks? Poor pitiful wretch! I do thee too much honour to administer with my own hand the death that shall crown thy ambition.”

“I am not what thou hast named me,” said Rosamond, in a low, but firm voice. “God is witness that I am no harlot! that I have never sought to sow dissension between thee and his

Highness ; but that long before I heard of thy name, or knew——” she paused—buried her face in her hands, and added, —“ Heaven knows my innocence !”

“ What art thou then?—speak !” said Eleanor, springing forward and grasping her by the arm, and dragging her towards the light, with as much ease, as if she had but seized the wrist of a child. “ Art thou his wife?—Down on thy knees, and swear by the Holy Virgin, that thou wert married to Henry before he knew me, and I will forgive thee. Bring me the damning proofs !” added she, her voice rising as she spoke, “ and confirm it in the eyes of all England, and I will give thee such a dower as never fell to the share of a Norman daughter. Thou tremblest !” continued she, grasping her wrist tighter : “ Thy voice falters !—Harlot, thou liest !” and she drove her back with such force

that Rosamond would have fallen had she not caught by the figure of the Madonna.

“Holy Virgin, protect me !” said Rosamond, folding her hands, and lifting up her beautiful eyes to Heaven, while her fair cheeks were pale as death ; “grant me strength to endure this trial, then take me to thyself.”

“Confess, lady,” said Uggleshred, who saw the struggle which was passing in the breast of Rosamond, and would have given his life to have accomplished a separation between the King and Eleanor. “Confess, lady, this is no time to think of past promises, and lovers’ vows. If he is thy husband, speak it at once.”

“I have nothing to confess,” answered Rosamond. “Heaven knows that I am innocent, and never entertained any evil wish against the Queen.”

“There is some mystery in this affair,” said

Ugglethred, turning to Eleanor; "were it not better to await the return of the King, and confront them face to face?"

"Hold thy peace, fool," replied the angry Queen; "art thou also in league with this concubine; and seekest to elude my vengeance by gaining time? No!" added she sternly, and seizing the goblet as she spoke, "her day of mercy is past. Here," continued she, holding the cup in one hand and brandishing the dagger in the other. "I give thee thy choice, drain me this goblet to the very dregs, or with my own hand I will let out thy lustful blood."

"Oh have mercy on me!" exclaimed Rosamond, throwing herself on her knees, and laying hold of Eleanor's garment. "Thou art thyself a mother! oh, spare me for the sake of my children."

"Wert thou my daughter, I would show thee

no mercy," replied the cruel Queen; "loose thy hold, viper! and implore me no longer, lest I set my heel upon all thy poisonous brood, and crush them as I would the eggs of a cockatrice. Answer me, wilt thou drink, or compel me to defile my hands with thy blood?"

"Oh, spare my life," continued Rosamond, still kneeling; "let me not taste of death so young; leave me to end my days in the Nunnery of Godstow, and I will never look upon Henry's face again, never set foot beyond those sacred walls."

"Thy words will as soon remove the strong walls of this tower from their place as me from my purpose," replied Eleanor, her brow growing darker as she spoke. "I am no reed to be shaken by every ripple: hadst thou an hundred tongues to plead with, they should not save thy life. Thou shalt die! therefore, choose thy

death instantly. I have nursed my revenge too long to abandon it at a moment like this."

"Grant me then a brief space for prayer," said Rosamond, in a more collected manner; "and may Heaven show you more mercy at the hour of death than you now extend to me."

"The moon is climbing above the dark trees," said Eleanor, glancing through the casement, and gazing on the bright orb of night, which was fast scaling the topmost branches. "When she hath past the highest bough, thou shalt die."

"Then is my hour indeed at hand," replied Rosamond, glancing at the sign, and without averting her face she folded her hands in prayer. Her lips moved, but still her eyes were fixed upon the moon; and although it arose calm and cloudless up a summer sky, thickly clustered with stars, yet never to her fancy did it make

such speed, when, sailing through the stormy heavens, it passed cloud after cloud like an arrow. She tried in vain to pray. She remembered the days when she had gazed through the same casement awaiting the return of Henry. Then her memory flew to her father's castle,— and oh! with what different emotions had she beheld the queen of night rise up and scatter her silver beams on her bower window.

She tried in vain to pray. The remembrance of other days came gushing upon her heart, and she fell with her face upon the floor, and wept bitterly.

Eleanor also watched with impatience the rising orb; half her disk already stood bold and bare upon the brow of Heaven, making the deep blue of the night around her look darker. But the Queen's face still retained the same cold, cruel expression; not a cloud had



faded from her brow ;—her compressed lips and steady eye told that she was firm to her purpose.

Ugglethred only seemed to contemplate the scene without emotion ; or if he did now and then gaze upon the countenance of Rosamond, her face only recalled a former scene, and he regretted that he had not accomplished the deed.

“ It is time,” said Eleanor, in a voice which, like the sound of the last trumpet, when it shall awaken the dead, caused Rosamond to spring instantly upon her feet, and without uttering a word, she held out her arm for the goblet. With steady hand and fixed eye, and such a look as would have driven the blood back into the boldest heart, did Eleanor deliver the cup to her trembling victim. Rosamond held it in her hand for a moment, uplifted her eyes to

Heaven, while her lips were seen to move, she then closed them—drained the cursed cup to the dregs,—and uttering a deep groan, fell upon the floor.

Ugglethred lifted her on the oaken settle, and she lay pale and almost breathless, in the same position as when the King took his farewell of her;—even her hair had fallen over the very same spot as when Henry severed from it the lock. She called on the name of Maud several times; and when Eleanor quitted the apartment, she ordered the attendant to be released, adding, “Thy mistress hath need of thee;” for she waited not to witness her death. When Maud reached the apartment, her fair mistress was speechless, and a feeble pressure of the hand was the only sign she gave of recognition. We will not dwell upon the sorrow of the attendant; it was such as

made her wish for death ; and grief without remorse can extend no further.

It was past midnight when the group again entered the labyrinth to depart ; but as Eleanor had taken up the silken clue while treading the passages (for the damp soil of the cavern rendered it necessary to be gathered, as it was difficult to trace it on the ground) the whole had been thrown up, ravelled and broken at the inner entrance ; and they were now at a loss to retrace their steps. Uggleshred led the way, bearing one of the torches ; and as he was anxious to be first in the park, to communicate with two accomplices whom he had ordered to await him without (for he still meditated a daring deed), he kept considerably a-head of the party. Several times was he compelled to retrace his steps ; and often did the group halt to see if they could discover any signs on the

roof, or along the damp sides of the labyrinth, which were in many places overgrown with fungi, and all those vegetable matters which hasten decay,—that might guide them aright. The party halted where three passages branched off in three several ways, and were at a loss which to take. Oliphant boldly marched along the broadest, holding his torch aloof, while the rest awaited his return ; but when he reached the end, the torch suddenly disappeared, and a hollow plashing sound was only heard beyond the darkness.

Eleanor was the first to snatch a torch from one of her mailed followers ; and hurrying to the spot, she halted on the verge of the dark and deep well into which Uggleshred had fallen. Far below was heard the struggling of the victim ; and while the water rattled in his throat, and the deep dashing which he made to

keep himself on the surface, sounded hollowly and fearfully through the vaulted galleries, he became aware of the light, which fell with a faint shimmering on his dying eyes: and in tones which were inaudible he attempted to make known some secret; but the name of "Rosamond" was all that reached the ear. Just at that moment the head of Gamas Gobbo was seen thrust through an aperture in the roof which overlooked the well, and while he twisted his sallow features into every hideous grimace, (as his face showed horribly in the red and murky light,) and kept up a loud and savage buzzing which he accompanied by gnashing his teeth; he looked like one of those evil spirits who are supposed to await the death of the wicked, and hurry off their souls to eternal perdition. And when the last plashing sound had ceased, and the deep gurgling of the throat told that the

dark waters had closed over their victim, the idiot also became silent: and amid the fearful awe which reigned around, the gloom of the cavern, and the savage features of the idiot, which appeared unearthly in that red and supernatural-looking light, Eleanor felt for the first time a cold shuddering pervade her frame. It was, however, but for a moment, for she remembered that in the gloomy depths below slept the only mortal she feared,—one who had too long been a treasurer of her secrets. She again cast her eyes downward, while her features were lighted up by a look of savage triumph, and half muttered to herself, “So perish all mine enemies!”

She was suddenly startled from her fiendish reverie by the sound of footsteps, approaching from the outer windings of the labyrinth; and Pierre de Vidal, followed by De Whycherly, and

several men in armour approached. The three soldiers who attended Eleanor were unprepared to make any resistance, and with a doggish and sullen reluctance, submitted themselves as prisoners.

“ You also,” said the knight, approaching Eleanor, “ I must remand, until we have discovered whether or not the Lady Rosamond is safe; if no harm hath befallen her, you shall speedily be restored to liberty.”

“ Unhand me, knave!” said the Queen, drawing her dagger; but two of the soldiers taking their signal from the eye of their leader, sprang forward and secured her arms. She threw the weapon into the deep well, and added, “ Work your will upon me;—the deed of vengeance is accomplished !”


“ Alas! our aid hath arrived too late,” said the minstrel in a mournful voice, and leaning



his brow on the cold wall of the labyrinth ;  
“ the deadly serpent hath been beforehand in  
the nest of the dove ;—the fairest bird that ever  
nestled in bower, is no more !”

But the tears of the faithful minstrel were of  
no avail. He had done all that could be done  
to save his mistress ; for when Gamas Gobbo  
(who had managed to escape as soon as Eleanor  
passed the labyrinth) unloosed the cords by  
which he was bound, he flew to the palace with  
the speed of a deer, and summoned Hugo de  
Whycherly to the rescue.

Eleanor and her attendants were led forth  
prisoners to the palace of Woodstock ; and the  
knight despatched one of his followers to the  
Nunnery of Godstow, with orders for the Abbess  
to bear away immediately the body of fair  
Rosamond ; while Pierre de Vidal entered the  
tower, and knelt beside Maud to weep ;—the



poor idiot also glided with stealthy step into the silent apartment.

Scarcely conscious of what had happened, Gobbo seated himself on the floor, and swayed his body to and fro with an uneasy motion, keeping up at the same time a low humming, scarcely louder than the murmuring of a bee ; but there was a mournfulness in the sound, very different from what he made when sallying forth into the sunshine. Pierre de Vidal knelt beside the form of his mistress ; and while his fingers were linked in silence within those of Maud, he took the cold pale hand of Rosamond and pressed it to his lips ; while tear after tear stole down his olive cheeks, and the deep sobs of Maud, and the low mournful hum of the idiot, were the only sounds that broke the silence of that gloomy chamber. Even the silver lamp which shed its flickering light over

the pale features of Rosamond, had burnt low, as if it was in the act of expiring; or shared in the deep gloominess which had fallen on all around.

The stars were still in the sky, and the broad moon was fast wheeling to the west, when a procession of nuns were seen moving in solemn order through the sylvan solitudes of Woodstock: they bore a bier, on which rested the body of fair Rosamond. They chaunted a low dirge as they moved along through the green avenues, which fell with a solemn sound on the surrounding silence; or was given back by the woodland echoes. At the foot of the bier walked the minstrel and Maud; while Gamas Gobbo headed the group, and accorded his humming to the melancholy dirge. Sometimes the procession wound along through an open glade, on which the moon threw her declining

rays;—then again the white drapery of the nuns was seen gliding along some gloomy avenue, the deep umbrage of which shut out the moonlight, until they were lost at a turning of the road; and only the sounding of their voices was heard as they grew faint and afar off,—then they became more remote,—and all again was still. The procession reached the Nunnery of Godstow just as the “grey-eyed morn”

“ Checkered the eastern clouds with streaks of light.”

## CHAPTER V.

How smooth and even they do bear themselves !  
As if allegiance in their bosom sat,  
Crowned with faith and constant loyalty.

I must show out a flag and sign of love,  
Which is indeed but sign.

SHAKSPEARE.

LIKE the shifting scenery in a theatre, so must our chapters be supposed to pass over time and space, and our readers prepare themselves for the changes which nearly six years had wrought. Passing by all that Becket had suffered during his long exile, and the attempts made to bring about a reconciliation between him and Henry,

by the Pope and the King of France, and which had hitherto failed ; we shall resume our narrative at the final conference between the King and Primate.

In a spacious and most pleasant meadow, that sloped down to the border of the river Loire (whose waters murmur for miles through the sunny vales of France), the chivalry of England, and the flower of her rival warriors, were assembled in honour of the interview which was that day to take place between the King and the Archbishop. It was one of those sweet summer mornings, such as only rise on the land of the vine, and shed their golden beams over the birth-place of minstrelsy, that now broke upon the long lines of white tents, and was flashed back by the armour of a thousand warriors. The silver trumpets rang out clear and shrill ; and their

deep challenges were answered back by a hundred echoes, which played along the broad river ; while the neighing of the steeds mingled with the loud tramping which shook the firm earth, and the low hum of voices from the armed throng, fell with a cheering sound upon the spirits of the beholders, and sent the blood racing merrily through the veins. Along the smooth greensward, which stretched between the opposing ranks of chivalry, rode Henry of England and Louis of France, in deep converse together ; and ever and anon, as they wheeled round their proud war-horses before the front of the royal tent, to confine their measured ride within the limits of their forces, they looked anxiously out on the distance from which they expected the Primate. After a few turnings, the brow of Henry began to darken, and his speech to evince impatience ;



for the hour appointed was now past ; and, as he had made a great sacrifice of feeling in granting the interview, no marvel that he thought himself slighted.

“ Some mischance may have befallen him,” said Louis, in reply to an outbreak of Henry’s.

“ Pshaw !” replied the King of England, impatiently ; “ thou knowest him not so well as myself ; it is his pride that keeps us thus waiting. Were His Holiness the Pope here, he would expect him to make some concession. By the true Lord ! I am half inclined to strike my tent and withdraw. The sun hath long since passed the appointed mark on the dial.”

“ There is no need of that,” replied the Majesty of France ; for, yonder comes the procession ; and I trust, good cousin, that thou wilt, for once, so shape thy discourse,

that we shall, without further parley, put an end to this matter. For, by the mass! I would rather that a whole army were at once let loose upon my dominions, than hold out a quarrel with one of these proud churchmen, who has got the whole Vatican at his back."

"Thou meanest well, good cousin," answered Henry; "and I would fain prevent my kingdom from being placed under an interdict, and myself excommunicated by name. But, be-shrew me, if I will grant any new inroads upon my privileges, or make a concession that in one jot abateth my honour. I will re-instate him in his former dignities—no more will I grant. I tell thee, I can never love him again; my heart hath been too long estranged; and, even now, I would rather tilt a long summer's day with the bravest knight in thy ranks, than smooth my brow for this interview."

“Tut ! tut ! brother of England,” replied Louis, with a smile ; “ thou art too violent in thy dislikes ; and wilt, if thou talkest after this manner, cause me to think that our late treaty had scarcely thy heart’s sanction, although it was bound by hand and glove ; which I ever hold more sacred than all the piles of parchment.”

The brow of Henry reddened for a moment, as he replied : “ Thou hast never found us approach thee without sound of trumpet, and the voice of herald ; and, were we not to lift our banners now and then, the blood would stagnate in the veins of our warriors. But we can ever heal our differences sooner with the sword, than by calling in the aid of the Church ; and now there is peace between us.”

“ I did but jest,” replied Louis ; “ but, by all the saints ! I scarcely know whether I love

thee better as a foe or a friend ; for, methinks, some of our meetings, after we have exchanged a few hearty cuffs on either side, have ever been of the pleasantest."

" They have ever soonest brought us to a right understanding," replied Henry, his good humour returning, when he remembered the advantages his arms had gained over France. " But, yonder comes the Primate ; and thou shalt see that I will so far prevent my feelings from marring this meeting, that I will be the first to welcome his arrival." So saying, he gave his steed the rein, and rode off to meet Becket.

Exile and long suffering had not in the least abated the Primate's love of splendour ; for he rode up robed in the rich costume of his office ; while the housings of his beautiful palfrey were emblazoned with mitres and crosses of gold,

and his own mitre shone radiant with jewels. Beside him rode the Archbishop of Sens; his episcopal robes even rivalling those of the Primate; while his short corpulent figure appeared to the greatest disadvantage beside the noble and commanding form of Becket. Behind them came the faithful Gryme, who had been true to his master through a thousand tribulations; and if there was one heart there that panted for peace, like a hunted stag for the water-course, it was that of the honest monk. A long line of priests of all degrees lengthened out the procession; which was enriched by the costly crosses and crosiers which they bore. While the eye glanced from the long line of churchmen to the armed ranks which were ranged on either hand, and contemplated that small band, moving weaponless and fearless along, it was at once struck by the mysterious

power which the religious order possessed, who, with no other shield than their holy profession, dared to enter the lists against a force; which, if they dared, could in an instant have scattered them like chaff before the wind.

Time and care had furrowed the manly brow of Becket; although his eyes still retained their former fire, and his tall figure was as erect as when, years ago, he unhorsed one of the bravest knights of France, on the borders of that very river which was rolling along in the distant sunshine. Becket cast down his eyes for a moment when he saw the King approaching, as if he sought to collect his thoughts; while Henry, without any apparent reserve, took off his rich cap to salute him,—an honour which he had never paid him before.

“Your Highness will pardon me,” said Becket, “for wearing my mitre a moment, as

I come on this mission from His Holiness ; but," added he, taking it off and handing it to Gryme, " if I meet as the former friend and servant of my sovereign, I will, as in duty bound, forego all ceremony."

A cloud gathered over Henry's brow for a moment when the Primate began to speak ; but it vanished again ere he had done, and he replied in a most kindly tone : " I would have us meet as we have done heretofore, burying all former grievances, and only endeavouring to make each other recompense after this long and painful absence. Wilt thou ride apart with me for a brief space, that we may converse more freely ?"

They rode together uncovered to the banks of the river. They were alone for the first time, after the absence of nearly six years ; and as they reined their steeds side by side, after a



brief embarrassment they gazed upon each other in silence.

“ Becket,” said Henry, in a tone which sounded like the kindness of by-gone years, “ why have we thus long been estranged from each other ? Why have we not before sought to heal this foolish breach ? ”

“ I know not,” answered Becket, with deep emotion ; “ but when your Highness refused me an audience at Woodstock, I deemed I had erred beyond all forgiveness ; and peradventure pride but increased our quarrel ; for I thought you might hold me in contempt if I humbled myself further.”

“ I knew not of thy coming until it was too late,” answered Henry in a tone of apparent sincerity ; “ it was to the interest of such knaves as the Bishop of Hereford to blow the flames which were kindled between us : on mine

honour, I knew it not until long after thy departure from England."

"I have ever held your Highness in high esteem," continued Becket; "and saving the honour of God and the church, would willingly sacrifice my own feelings for your welfare, and the increase of our peace."

"Truce! truce! with thy salvos," said Henry, with much ado preventing himself from breaking forth; "if I put the honour of my kingdom against the rights of the church, we shall never bring this matter to an end. I see," added he, reining his steed a little apart, "that we must yet stand upon the ceremony of our order;—that thou art not willing that we should become the friends we once were, when neither honour, church, nor kingdom, were bars to our friendship."

"Your Highness mistaketh my intent," re-

plied Becket in rather a severer tone ; “ there is nothing I so much covet, as peace between us ; and believe me, it shall be long ere I break it again with thyself.”

“ With myself you might not,” answered the King, still keeping his steed at the same cold distance. “ But I fear we shall but patch up a peace between us, as we do with our Cousin of France ; which is broken we scarce can tell how ; and find ourselves at blows before we have begun an enquiry ; and yet I would not willingly break it.”

“ I have never sought to push my quarrel with your Grace,” continued Becket, compelling himself with pain to proceed, like a foot-beaten traveller who finds himself in the midst of a painful journey, which necessity forces him to pursue ; “ but I have prayed to the saints to forgive you ; even when your anger

was most kindled against me, I sought not to retaliate."

"I owe thee some return for thy forbearance," replied Henry with emotion; "thou wert true to thy pledge, and revealed not my marriage with Rosamond. Cursed be the hand that cut her off," added he, remaining several moments in silence. "Becket," continued he, drawing his steed side by side with the Primate, "I have never set foot in the bowers of Woodstock since her death. It was her last wish that there should be peace between us, and for her sake I will yield thee all thou dost require,—all thy lands, livings, and privileges will I give up, I will withhold nothing from thee. We will again be friends, and thou shalt find me more ready to forgive than thou wilt be to offend."

Henry spoke this with sincerity, for all pride

and ill feeling vanished, while his nature was subdued by the remembrance of Rosamond; and he himself for the moment was unconscious of what then appeared the true state of his heart towards Becket. He spoke under the deepest excitement, and was in that state which only the remembrance of love or death can awaken; and at such moments no human bosom can remain in its true and natural state, no more than when it seeks to cherish anger.

“Heaven bless your Highness!” said Becket, while a tear gathered in his eye, “would that I had never offended so kind a master. I crave no more than you have offered: grant me the kiss of peace, and the past shall be for ever buried.”

“Not now! Not here!” said the King, at once recalled to a consciousness of his true feelings. “It was but a foolish vow which I

made in an angry mood. I will give thee the kiss of peace when we meet in England. Believe me, it is but—— No, I cannot —some other time—— But without it we are again friends,” said he, once more reining his steed apart.

The features of Becket crimsoned; pride brought the blood to his cheek; he felt in a moment that Henry had not entirely forgiven him, for the kiss of peace was in those days like the bread and salt of the Eastern nations, and the omission told that no true friendship reigned in the bosom of him who withheld it. “There is, then, a truce between us,” said Becket, speaking first after a long silence. “I would have sealed it firmer than the hollow armistice your grace holds with France, but”— he again remained silent. Had he but had humbled himself, and implored Henry again to render their peace perfect, the King would have

granted it. The coldness then between them was but the thin frostwork on glass; but neither of them breathed upon it. Pride alone, sheer unbending pride, as much of which lodged in the bosom of the churchman as the monarch's, alone prevented their complete reconciliation. We yet see such things daily in the world; mankind are still the same: those who meet each other with a frown upon the brow, heave a sigh for former friendship when they have passed.

We too often mistake our nature; what we consider the true state of our feelings, is very often only engendered by long habit, merely based on a fancied dislike which may appear real, and we smother those nobler dictates which arise to expel it. It may be years before we arrive at the true state of this feeling; but it as assuredly lives there, as the



seed which buried deep in the earth, has no power to vegetate, until it is brought nearer the surface, and receives the warmth of the sun. True, there may be, and are exceptions to this state; but even the murderer, after having accomplished his bloody deed, has been known to recal some good trait of his victim after death, and brood over his crime with remorse. Nor would Henry on a future day have spent a long night in tears of penitence at the shrine of Becket, if there had not been some traits in the man's character which he loved. Perhaps the historian has no right to cast such a lenient eye on this event; but we who seek only for the life and feeling which flows through our ancient annals, and endeavour to trace all motives from their great source, the human heart, are compelled to make allowances, which the stern mind of the true historian has no right to admit.

He must judge of his character, as if he was tried in a formal court ; while we listen to his confession in the silent cell, and even construe kindly that which seems to call loudest for his own condemnation. But it requires a more solid mind than ours, to bring these few simple reasons to proof, although from our very heart do we believe them.

But to return to our story. They rode back again without exchanging a word ; there was a painful silence between them, which both were afraid to break ; like two friends who having exchanged a few angry words, still move on together, each hoping that the other will, before they part, again begin some friendly conversation.

All that the king had promised was acceded to when they returned, and ratified in the presence of the King of France and the

Archbishop of Sens, besides numerous priests and barons. There was then nothing left but for Becket to take his farewell of Henry previous to his departure for England. The monarch was busied in consulting with several knights in the distance, when Louis approached the Archbishop, and enquired if Henry had granted him the kiss of peace.

“He hath not,” answered Becket, ashamed to acknowledge that he had yielded, without obtaining this ceremony; “but hath promised that he will withhold it no longer than while we meet in England.”

“Then be on thy guard,” continued the King, who had been friendly to Becket during his exile, and given him open shelter in spite of the menaces of Henry. “I warn thee, without believing that our cousin of England entertaineth any dishonourable intent; but when he

grants full forgiveness he withholdeth nothing, nay, would give away a province were it needed to seal his solemn pledge."

"It matters not," replied the Primate; "'tis but a form, that perchance would have been all the better fulfilled. But it is time that I was in England, for the garden of God needeth much weeding; it has become like a house which goeth to decay during the owner's absence; and I will, by the help of Christ, bring it back to its former order."

"Better dig and delve about the roots," replied the King of France; "I would not have thee return with the axe in thy hand to cut off every bough which hath run riot during thy exile. Every summer bringeth not fruit to the tree; nor doth the frost always destroy that which looketh dead. To be plain with thee;—widen not the breach which his Holiness

hath with so much difficulty built up. Remember that Henry is but a tamed lion; and may, in a moment of anger, leap back again into his former wildness:—I speak to thee as a brother.—But see! he approaches.”

“Here then we part,” said Becket, looking fixedly at Henry, as if he yet hoped that their separation would not take place without the important salutation; then added, “I fear this is the last time I shall look upon your Highness;—the sea is fraught with perils,—and the hand of Heaven hath marked out the bounds of all our lives.”

“Thou dost not suspect that I have placed dangers in thy path?” said Henry, his conscience taking fire because he had withheld the final ceremony;—then continuing in a milder tone: “Trust me, we shall meet again, and on such terms, that there will need no stinted

forms to seal our friendship: thou shalt not find me behindhand with thee in the offices of good fellowship."

"Other affairs now call for our presence," said Louis turning to Henry; "and as Blanch hath it, I would but see you kiss and depart in peace; then, Cousin of England, we will to horse."

"We have reserved that for our next meeting," replied Henry, the blood mantling his cheek as he spoke; "and—" he paused—looked confused—then seizing the stirrup of Becket's steed, added, "and will act the part of squire to our brother, if he will condescend to accept our shoulder to mount."

Becket replied not; but placing his foot in the stirrup which Henry held, pressed his hand lightly upon his shoulder, and with an agility which showed how little he needed such as-

sistance (nay, almost disdained to embrace it), sprang lightly into the saddle,—waved an adieu to each of the monarchs,—and the procession was again speedily in motion.

So they parted, never to meet again. Once did Becket turn in his saddle to look behind him, and he beheld Henry standing motionless, with folded arms, and eyes rivetted upon him. Had he gone back and sought a last embrace, the King would have won a sincere friend, and the calendar have lost a martyr; but he rode along in silence, and the monarch turned away.

A few more nights saw him rocking on the blue bosom of the deep, as with outspread sail and yielding oars, the galley made for the “pale-faced shores” of England. But he had dispatched the messengers of wrath beforehand, and sent those fatal documents which excommunicated several of the bishops; for he was still the un-



bending Primate, and sought not to humble those who had offended him, by using gentle measures ; but by sending before him the rumbling thunder of the Vatican, as if to announce that the god of the storm was at hand.

## CHAPTER VI.

Such a noise arose  
As the shrouds make at sea in a stiff tempest ;  
As loud, and to as many tunes ; hats, cloaks,  
Doublets, I think flew up ; and had their faces  
Been loose *that* day, they had been lost ;—such joy  
I never saw before.

SHAKSPEARE.

ALTHOUGH the Archbishop landed safely in England, he was not ignorant that many of his former enemies were lying in wait for him ; for the sentences of excommunication had been delivered before his arrival, against the Archbishop of York, and the Bishops of London and Salisbury ; and many of their friends had bestirred themselves to prevent his coming ashore at Dover. Becket, however, was ap-

prized of their intentions, and landed at Sandwich; and no sooner was his arrival blown abroad, than thousands assembled from all quarters to welcome him;—their numbers still increasing as he drew nearer to Canterbury. But few of the wealthy and influential, however, mingled in that dense procession, which was chiefly formed of the Saxon serfs, and those who were either disaffected to the Norman government, or looked upon Becket as a man who had suffered persecution for the sake of religion. But their numbers were great, and stretched as far as the eye could reach; and as it had already been rumoured abroad that the Primate's enemies were waiting for him, this motley assembly had snatched up such arms as chance threw in their way, and rushed along with all the confusion of a mob bent upon mischief.

Numbers of them were armed with scythes, spades, pitchforks, and every implement of husbandry which they could seize upon; while many tore up the fences, and moved along shouting and brandishing hedge-stakes, palings, and huge boughs which they had broken from the neighbouring trees.—Bond and free,—all jostled together;—now crowding around the Archbishop to receive his blessing; then again hurrying along with loud huzzas which sounded far and wide over the distant valleys. Becket was mounted on a beautiful steed, which pranced proudly along, as if conscious that it bore the burthen on which all eyes were rivetted; and had it not been for the excellent horsemanship of the Primate, many a poor Saxon would have been trampled under his hoofs as they endeavoured to touch the noble animal. Beside Becket rode John of Oxford,—a prelate

in high favour with Henry, and sent as a safe-conduct by the monarch with the Primate;—behind them came the faithful Gryme, who was followed by several other monks of his order.

The procession had by this time gained a picturesque turning of the road; by the side of which opened another path: its entrance was occupied by a party of horsemen. The foremost part of the mob passed on without regarding the group; but no sooner did Becket ride up, than two of the foremost horsemen rode out, and drew up their reins before him, as if to oppose his further progress. They were backed up by their companions, and the whole of them, hemmed in by the mob,—whose shouts of “Cut down the enemies of Christ!” “hew to pieces the limbs of the traitors!” etc.—pre-

vented the words of the foremost rider from being heard.

“Silence!” exclaimed the Archbishop; “hold your peace, I pray you, that we may hear and reply to these people.—Ranulph de Broc,” continued he, addressing the horseman who had thus suddenly confronted him; “what is thy will with me? or why hast thou dared to impede my progress?”

“Why hast thou excommunicated the bishops? enquired the knight, undaunted by the menaces of the mob; “and art marching through the land with these rebellious serfs around thee, withdrawing them from the labour and lash to which they were born? and—”

“Peace! peace! in the name of Heaven, I charge ye!” exclaimed Becket with a loud voice; for a deep murmur, as of a gathering storm, rose among the multitude, and had it not

been for the interference of the Primate, the small handful of horsemen, with De Broc at their head, would have been torn into a thousand pieces. "Art thou not afraid?" proceeded the Primate addressing the knight, "that I should hurl the thunders of the Church against thine own head, and those of thy followers, for thus daring to interrogate thy superior, who is accountable to none, saving God, and his Holiness the Pope, by whose sanction those enemies to Christ were excommunicated?"

"Thou hast entered the kingdom with fire and sword," replied De Broc, compelled in some measure to restrain his wrath before such a formidable assembly. "But if thou thinkest thus to over-run the land, and expectest to find the friends of those, against whom thy malice is directed, asleep, thou wilt speedily know with whom thou hast to deal."



“ And I,” said the Sheriff of Kent, “ shall send a messenger to France, to apprise his Highness that you are stirring up all the serfs and villeins of the land to rebellion.—You,” added he with a sneer, “ a man of no ancestry, are seeking to overthrow the power of the Norman nobles,—men of name and fame,—in whose veins run knightly blood.”

“ Peace! on your souls peace!” said Becket, putting back the points of the weapons, scores of which were now turned towards the Sheriff and De Broc. “ Peace an’ ye are faithful children of the Church,” added he, the blood mounting his cheek at the thought of being thus taunted with his birth; and raising his voice when he had appeased the murmurs of the mob, he said,—“ And what better blood runs in thy veins, Sir Sheriff, than in that of the meanest churls, who by a few favourable thrusts of the

sword, might be elevated to the rank of the proudest knight among you. Slaves !” continued he, his eyes blazing with all their former ardour, “ I scorn ye all ! ye are but paltry wretches who would have gone down to your graves unnoticed, had it not been for the fortune which favoured your ancestors. You have a name,” added he rising in his stirrups as he spoke, “ which is not your own ; while mine springs from my own actions, and not from the deeds of the dead. I have made myself a nobility such as the proudest of you can never attain. I’d rather be a porter at the gate,” added he, his haughty lip curling with unutterable scorn, “ one who shares his meals with the dog that barks beside the threshold,—a serf that feeds on acorns, and lives by the sweat of his brow, and the labour of his own strong arm ; than such miserable sycophants as ye are,—

wretches who only feed by virtue of those who lie in their graves,—mere echoes in the chambers of death,—slaves who live on the dead. Ride on," added he, motioning with his arm for the cavalcade to proceed, "lest by breathing the air of these living sepulchres, I become infected. Forward, but on your souls injure them not."

It will be readily conceived how such a speech, so much in accordance with the feelings of that vast multitude, was listened to; but it is beyond all power to describe the loud burst of applause which broke forth when he had ceased speaking; and the thousand mad expressions of triumph which they assumed. It was loud as the shouting raised by an immense army, when the enemy is first perceived flying before them, and, when those who are near at hand have ceased their loud huzzas, the air

still rings with shoutings afar off, as the sound is taken up by those stationed on the farthest hill and remotest valley. So rose one deep, deafening peal, when Becket's voice became mute, which was caught up and echoed back a mile away ; while the waving of their rude, but warlike weapons, and the grim triumph which settled on a thousand wild features, around the Primate, told how dangerous it would be to molest a man, in whose cause were enlisted so many desperate followers. The attendants of Ranulph de Broc and the Sheriff began to feel for the weapons which they had secreted under their tunics ; for they deemed it not prudent to display them before such a multitude ; and the hand of the Sheriff was already upon the hilt of his dagger, as if he meditated violence, though at the immediate risk of his own life. Ranulph de Broc saw his design ; and, seizing

his arm, said : " Cast not thyself into the jaws of these dogs. We will dispatch a messenger to Henry's court. Fitzurse and De Tracy have still their followers ; nor will De Morville's sword linger an instant longer in its sheath, after the excommunicated Bishops have laid their grievances at Henry's feet. Trust me, we will yet gratify our revenge." Saying which, the cavalcade departed, amid the loud hissing and hooting of the mob, one of whom threw a huge stone, which struck De Broc's helmet. The knight instantly turned round his steed, drew the sword from beneath the tunic which covered his armour, and clove the offender to the very teeth ; then, striking the spurs into the flanks of his war-horse, joined his companions, who now thought it high time to set off at full gallop.

It was well for them that they thus escaped ;

for hundreds of the crowd had now rushed forth to revenge the death of their comrade ; and had it not been for the commands of Becket, they would have given the enemy chase ; but the Prelate ordered them to fall back ; and not one refused to obey him. The dead and bleeding body was, however, taken up, and borne along by four stout-limbed serfs, in the front of the procession ; and many an aged head, which was thrust out of the little door-ways, when they reached the streets of Canterbury, shook, as they beheld this evil omen.

“ The Holy Virgin protect him ! ” said one old woman, uplifting her skinny hands, and speaking to another old crone, whose brow bore the wrinkles of eighty winters ; “ he looks as smiling as when he set out from Oxford to meet the King of Scotland at Lincoln. A

rare day was that, Joan ; just such a sounding of trumpets, and ringing of bells, and shouting, as there is even now. Ah ! marry," added she, shaking her head, and heaving a sigh, " such a sight can but be once seen. Would that these Normans were like him !"

" It bodes no good," said Joan, moving her head to and fro as she spoke, and accompanying her speech with a waving of her wrinkled hand. " It bodes no good, dame Rook, to see his way marked out with blood. Did you but see how his black horse set its foot wherever the red drops had fallen? And before our own door, where the crowd had to bend to let the wain and oxen pass ; even when they had gone by, and the Archbishop might have kept a straight course, the steed put his nose to the ground ; and, like a slot-hound, still followed the track of blood. It bodes no good,

I fear, dame Rook," added she, shaking her head, until her gray hairs fell loose from the hood. "I have heard my mother Maud say, that when Harold, the son of Godwin, passed on his way to meet William the Bastard, at Hastings, the bleeding body of Hadrada was borne foremost in the procession; and Harold, you wot well, went to his death. It bodes no good."

"But Harold swore a solemn oath on the bodies and relics of the Saints, that the bastard should be king after the death of Edward," replied dame Rook, "and he kept not his pledge. I have heard Bertha of Bayeux tell, how that her grandfather was in the hall when the son of Godwin took the oath, and that he trembled and became pale as the dead, when the cloth was withdrawn, and displayed the holy relics. No, Harold fell in the field of



Hastings, for breaking his vow. It was the judgment of God."

"Tell me not of that," replied Joan; "Harold was in the midst of feasting and revelry when tidings came that the invader had set his cursed feet in these realms, and he rushed into the fight, making sure of the victory. So returneth this Archbishop, looking as high and haughty as if he was even above his Holiness the Pope, and had come to trample upon all his enemies. It bodes no good, dame Rook, to see him return to his flock after so long an absence, more like a conqueror, than one who should mourn for the havoc the enemy hath made in the fold during his absence. Good old Theobald, who was Archbishop before him, aye, an' would listen to the confession of the lowliest handmaiden that ever numbered her beads,—never held his head so high and haughty

as this Thomas à Becket. Humility, dame Rook, sits not so erect as he did to-day in his saddle; and there is not room for many holy thoughts, when a man is bowing before every white favour, and casting smiles on every fair face."

"Out upon thee, Joan!" said dame Rook: "wouldst thou have him look upon us after so long an absence, as if he took no pleasure in the meeting; or bring a countenance as gloomy as a maid's returning from confession, who is doomed to some heavy penance? When didst thou ever see a proud Norman bend his body and wave his hand as the Archbishop did to us but now?"

"Nay, dame Rook," replied Joan, "his eye was directed to thy pretty niece at the lattice above. Holy man, though he may be, yet trust me, he threw not his smiles upon such furrowed

faces as ours; it was Edith's smooth cheek and blue eye that drew down the salute. An' she were akin to me I would make her draw the folds of her tunic a little closer, she is over fond of showing her white neck through the lattice whenever there is a crowd in the street. And the eyes of these monks are ever more ready to gaze on a slip of a beauty, than on their breviaries;—look to her, dame Rook."

But dame Rook only answered to these friendly admonitions in a tone of ill nature, which caused Joan to draw in her aged head, and slam to the old rickety door, which, when closed had crannies enow in it to admit all the winds of Heaven, and a good-sized hand would have found no difficulty to have thrust itself in between the door-post and the hinges. Dame Rook also retreated to vent her spleen on her niece Edith, and make her run in an extra-lace

through the top of her tunic, that it might be drawn closer when next she ventured abroad.

Meantime the unexpected approach of Becket had caused no little stir among the monks of the Cathedral, for, much like schoolboys in the absence of their master, these holy men had set no limits to their indulgences, well aware of the strict discipline they must undergo on his arrival.

“Is all cleared?” said father Philip, wiping his lips as he spoke, for he had but just drained the leathern bottle of its last mouthful : “Look round, brother Luke,—the shouts draw nearer,—let nothing be out of order, nor aught remaining to tell that we have been making merry. What doeth that cup there? let it be cleansed instantly, lest it smell of wine. Quick, brother, or reach it me, and thou hast no water at hand. Nay, stand not there confused, needs

must when —— thou knowest the rest : e'en dip it in the Holy water and wipe it on thy stole, while I get rid of these bones, which I must thrust among the relics of the saints. Marry ! they will be sweeter to kiss than the mouldy ribs of the blessed St. Dunstan ; and should any pilgrim say that they have a smell of roasting about them,—why, remember to tell him that he was burnt to the very bones while struggling with Sathanas, and it will the more increase his marvel."

" I must hasten, brother Philip," said Luke, " to put on my hair shirt, which, I fear, it will be difficult to draw over my ears, the rats have eaten so many holes through it. As to this hoarseness in my throat, which, I fear, hath come on through lingering so late to hear the Reeve's wife's confessions—for the jade would never enumerate her sins until the good man had

gone to rest — I know not what answer to make the Archbishop, an' he inquireth of me."

"Trouble not thy head about these trifles, brother Luke," said his holy colleague; "an' thou hast got enough of the hair shirt left to go round thy neck, and be seen above thy frock, thou canst easily twist thy body about, as if thou hadst the whole of it on; and those who see thy wry faces, will attribute them to the pain. As to thy hoarseness, thou canst say it was brought on by long chauntings, and continued prayers, for his safe return. And should he inquire after the grease in thy cowl, which hath held many a dainty morsel of late, thou canst say thou didst wear it before thee, to dry up thy tears, while weeping for his absence."

"But, holy brother, will it not smell too strongly of bacon?" inquired Luke.

"St. Augustine speaketh of salt tears," re-

plied brother Philip ; “and the garments we have preserved of the blessed Dunstan retain an ill fragrance, like bacon which hath been long kept : should he remark the redness of thine eyes, through emptying too many cups of late ; that also ariseth from weeping ; nay, thy very corpulency must spring from fasting ; for, what saith St. Augustine : ‘ while I were from you, ye fed upon the wind, and grew great beneath your emptiness.’ ”

“ Brother,” said Luke, “ I would fain confess to thee, before the Primate arriveth, that thou mayest absolve me ; for many of my sins have been committed under thy sanction, and some of them thou hast been a partaker of.”

“ Be brief, then, good brother,” said Philip, “ and remember that thou needest not to sum up every trifle, like a maiden who recounteth her dreams, and telleth what thoughts passed

through her mind, while repeating her aves."

"I have brought away the last capon of widow Wolfbarns," continued Luke, "and not a mass have we yet offered up for the soul of her husband, although I swore that he was safe out of purgatory."

"If she hath no more," replied Father Philip, "there is no hope for his soul. Proceed."

"When in my cups, holy brother," continued Luke, "I lost the sole of the shoe of the blessed St. Dunstan, and showed one of my own when I went round to collect eggs and cheese for the use of our brethren. Nay, allowed the good-wives to kiss it, as if it had belonged to the Holy Saint himself; and, when I replaced it in the blessed box, many of them said, that they felt their souls comforted."

"That is no crime, good brother," answered



Philip; "the real sole itself Rufus gave in exchange, years ago, for a runlet of wine, and substituted one of his own in its stead. The blessed box in which it was preserved giveth the same virtue to whatever it encloses. Neither is the box the same; for it was sold to a pilgrim: but the new one was put in the place where it stood; and the crypt still retains sanctity enough to give virtue to a dozen.

"But that is not all," continued he, whispering in the other's ear; then adding: "but absolution was given before quitting the cell; and I underwent my own penance, tasting of no more meat until the sun went down."

"I also have erred on the same grounds, brother Luke," replied Philip, with a sigh; "therefore, is our sin divided. Even the Jews would take out a sheep that had fallen into the pit on the Sabbath. We are sheep, good

brother, and fell not on that day. Hast thou aught more to confess ?”

“ Yea, my brother,” continued Luke ; “ I have heard of the temptations which have beset our Pardoner, and have fallen into the very error of the ways which he shunned : but I thought that, like him, I might resist them ; and but sought them out, to see how I could endure the trial.”

“ There thou didst unwisely,” replied Philip, “ but, for thy penance, I adjudge thee to bring the half-picked capon and the stoup of wine, to my cell ; and that thou partakest of none of these things until the morrow. I will undergo the mortification of eating them, for the love I bear thee ; although to-night is appointed to be kept as a solemn fast.”

“ But there is also the remains of a huge pasty,” said Luke ; “ had I not better bear a

portion of thy penance, that we may the more speedily betake ourselves to our prayers ?”

“ Even as thou wilt,” replied Philip ; and, if thou hast any one thou canst send, warn Blanche, the Blacksmith’s wife, not to come to confession until moon-rise ; and bid her be sure to enter by the Southern postern.”

So parted these holy men, practising the anthem which they were to chaunt on the Archbishop’s arrival, and which required some skill, as they had been trolling a merry stave the night before, and “ *O Crux ave Spes unica,*” mingled strangely with “ Then drink enow cups to outnumber your beads.” Such was, in too many instances, the state of the Church, which Becket endeavoured to reform ; and were the mask to be torn away from the faces of many a demure hypocrite in the present day, there would still be found such men as brother Luke

and father Philip. Let those who think that our picture is overdone, turn to the pages of Chaucer, who wrote a century and a half later than the period we have here taken up, and they will there see the strong colours in which this true old English poet, dared to portray the vices of the monks of his day. Were the veil but withdrawn by some daring hand in our own times, the picture would be found nearly the same ; for the cloak of religion, like that of charity, is too often worn only “to cover a multitude of sins ;” although we entertain no doubt but that there are thousands of exceptions to this evil rule. We live in an age which has accustomed itself to call vice by gentle names ; —it is even considered rude to use the strong expressive phrases of our ancestors to polite ears ; although the meaning is just as well understood ; and he who says, “ Really I could

scarcely have believed it from any other person," but goes a round-about way of saying, "Sir, you're a liar."

But to return to our narrative. The procession, which had by this time become considerably augmented by the hundreds who waited to welcome Becket at the gates of Canterbury, now halted before the wide doors of the cathedral, which were thrown open on the occasion, and the Primate, preceded by Gryme, bearing the cross, entered between the long line of monks who were drawn up to receive him, Luke and Father Philip making by far the lowest genuflection. The eye of the Archbishop kindled, as it wandered over the vaulted dome, or gazed upon the familiar shrines, and while the loud chaunt arose, and echoed through the pillared aisles, his lips were seen to move as if in prayer. He ascended the steps of the holy

altar of St. Bennet, and waving his hand to silence the deep hum of the multitude, who now filled the body of the church, he thus addressed them :—“ Brethren, I am once more in the midst of you in safety. It hath pleased Heaven to rescue me from a thousand dangers ; and I shall still be preserved until my appointed time. But I have come to die amongst you ;— even as the finger points to the dial, so is the hour of my death marked, and is now near at hand. As I have stood, so will I still remain, firm and fearless in upholding the dignity of the Church of Christ, until I perish beneath the burthen.”

He then proceeded to pronounce sentence of excommunication against Ranulph de Broc, and Gervas de Cornhill the Sheriff of Kent, adding, in the bitterness of his spirit, “ May they never find peace until they have humbled themselves

at the foot of the altar.—May their eyes never obtain rest. May their lands bring forth thistles, and their homes fall into desolation, and every wind of Heaven blow upon them unkindly. May their thoughts be unto them a torment. As for my own life,” continued he, after using many terms of unmeasured severity against his persecutors, “I only hold it in tenure of Heaven ; and when it is needed, I will resign it for the service of Christ. The church hath need of some one to fight her battles, and I am not one to look upon the struggle without striking a blow ; for when called upon I am prepared to die.”

So he proceeded :—his ancient military spirit bursting forth, and consuming all his better feelings ; for his proud soul could find no rest until he had humbled all his enemies ; and in his zeal for the dignity of the church, he forgot that

holy adage which says : “blessed are the peacemakers.” But the crowd soon dispersed ; and the man who that night, in the streets of Canterbury, dared to assert that there breathed a holier, or a better, man than Thomas à Becket, stood need to have had his scull cased in triple mail.



## CHAPTER VII.

My blood hath been too cold, and temperate,  
Unapt to stir at these indignities,  
And you have found me; for accordingly,  
You tread upon my patience: but be sure  
I will from henceforth rather be myself  
Mighty and to be feared.

I am burnt up with inflaming wrath;  
A rage, whose heat hath this condition,  
That nothing can allay, nothing but blood.

SHAKSPEARE.

OUR readers would feel but little interest in the narrative, were we to follow the progress of the Archbishop of Canterbury through all his numerous processions, or dwell upon the sensation his presence awakened wherever he appeared; to every reader of English history these are matters well known. Our story then carries us to Bares in Normandy, where King

Henry was keeping his Christmas, quite unconscious of those new outbreaks of the Primate's vengeance. Many of the Norman Barons who sat at the table on the evening in which we again resume our tale, remarked that the King had never appeared more cheerful; he seemed, indeed, to have regained the buoyant spirit of former years. The festive scene varied but little from that which we have described in a former volume, in which men in armour, and gold and silver drinking vessels threw back the light from the suspended lamps in a huge banquet hall of the oldest Norman architecture. The King occupied the seat of honour on the dais, and around him sat many of his favourites, among whom were Reginald Fitzurse, Hugh de Merville, Tracy, and Brito, all bitter enemies of Becket's; their conversation had turned upon a variety of matters, none of much import,

and the wine cup had also circulated freely, and all either were, or pretended to be, in excellent spirits.

“Thou art in a merry mood to-night, De Corbel,” said Henry, addressing one of his peers, whose jokes had before created much laughter among the barons; for these nobles made no scruple at jesting with religion over their wine cups:—“Thou art in a merry mood, but how thou canst prove that the saints sit laughing at the follies of us poor mortals surpasseth my understanding.”

“Nay! by the mass! I will make the matter clear to your Highness,” answered De Corbel, “and prove that no good Saint who attends to all the requests that are made, can look over his business with a staid countenance. Here comes the governor of a besieged castle vowing to offer up a candle half as long as his lance if

the Saint will but protect the fortress. Without are the besiegers, imploring victory at the same time, and vowing half the spoils of the castle, if they are but permitted to cut every throat within the walls. Then comes the bishop praying devoutly for the welfare of his church, and his own preservation; but before he has done, the saint is promised the spoils of an hundred pilgrims, if he will but remove the bishop to another world, and re-instate the other pious petitioner in his stead. Some old man who has seen eighty summers, prays that he may be blest with an heir before his death; while his young wife is also forwarding his petition, by craving the safe return of her gallant, for whose long absence she has grown uneasy: so that between them the prayer may be answered. Even the thief has his vow to offer up, and swears that if he is but allowed to knock out

the brains of the traveller in safety, the saint shall go shares in his booty. One bawleth aloud for rain, and another implores the saint for fair weather until his seed is sown. Then cometh the mariner praying for a south wind to waft him into the distant haven; while another is sailing to the north, and vows a barrel of stock-fish to some monastery, if the saint will but continue the gale until his voyage is ended,—and ten to one even then he will cheat his patron, by offering those which have been exposed to the sea, and are mouldy as the relics kept at some shrine which is scarcely visited by a pilgrim in a year.”

“Methinks the business of a saint savoureth somewhat of our own,” replied Henry; “and amid so many contending parties he will do well to leave them now and then to shift for themselves. What sayest thou Glanvil?”

“That I should not covet so many opposite causes in one court,” answered the great law-giver, “as neither saint nor sinner could satisfy all without giving the Devil half the fees, and making Justice deaf as well as blind.”

“Why did the Romans put a balance in the jade’s hands?” inquired another knight.

“Put that question to the Usurer,” answered De Corbel, “and he will show you his own scales, and decide for him who can plump down the beam with the heaviest interest. So doth his Holiness, with reverence be it spoken, by blessing with his tongue, and signing the cross with his finger, and also cursing with the same airy weapons, continue to keep in subjection the world, the flesh, and the devil; making kings enforce his laws, soldiers fight his battles, and husbandmen gather for him the fruits of

the earth;—thus putting out his sanctity on the highest security.”

“ I look upon him,” said the brutal Fitzurse, who was of no religion; “ as the largest dealer in damnation, seeing that he hath so many emissaries who buy up all crimes, and hunt after every secret wickedness, making it their business to find out where sin has the largest consumption, and taking it in exchange for pardons, absolutions, and penances, which they manufacture on the spot; neither can any crime be committed too high for their purchase; as they have store-rooms for murder, adultery, theft, and every other evil, which they take to their own cells in exchange for their creed.”

“ Methinks, if our grave primate were here,” said Henry, “ he would put a freezing check upon your mirth; though, by the way, there was

a time when he would have run at the ring with the boldest of you."

"He cared not then," said Fitzurse, "when the gates were thrown open, if the city itself escaped, as he had no charge of the wealth within its walls. But what groom would leap his own horse over the same fence that he would his master's. The priest who adviseth the layman to drink a gallon of holy water every night to drive away all dreams of the devil, would, I dare be sworn, have been content himself with a more moderate draught."

"Those who make laws," said Glanvil, "expect not to be tried by them, and yet I know not by what right they should be favoured when once found guilty of offending."

"But thou forgettest, my grave friend," replied the King, "that there are——" he was interrupted by an attendant, to whom he replied,



“admit them instantly;” then muttered to himself, “York, London, and Sarum;—what meaneth this?” All eyes were instantly turned upon the three prelates who now entered the hall, the Archbishop of York leading the way. Henry beckoned him to approach the dais; and, with a changed countenance, enquired: “What ill news have ye brought me? What—what hath brought ye from England?” Henry averted his head when he had put the question; for he saw at a glance that they were the bearers of evil tidings.”

“The Primate hath driven us from England, my liege,” said the Archbishop of York.

“He had scarcely set foot within the kingdom, before we were excommunicated or suspended,” continued the Bishop of London.

“He carrieth fire and sword through the land; and marcheth through every town with

an armed rabble at his heels," added the Bishop of Salisbury.

"Goeth prowling about the fortresses, and endeavoureth to get his armed ruffians within the walls," resumed York.

"Entered Canterbury with the bleeding bodies of his enemies borne before him," echoed London.

"And vowed that he would not rest until he had so trampled upon the blood of all who had opposed him," chimed in Salisbury, speaking from report.

"Nay, more; he even—" again began the Archbishop of York. But he was checked by Henry, who, springing up from his seat, exclaimed, in a voice of thunder: "Peace! peace! drive me not mad!"

It is almost impossible to convey to the reader a true picture of the scene up to the

time that the monarch sprung from his seat; the eagerness with which the ears of the barons drank in these rumours, the looks they exchanged with each other; but, above all, the countenance of the King. As the bishops proceeded, he turned from one to the other like a lion at bay, as if he had made up his mind to escape, by bursting through all that surrounded him, but was at a loss for the moment at what point to make the first rush. As one after another took up the complaint, his fierce eyes went from face to face, until they assumed that blazing fierceness which was so terrible to look upon; and that deep crimson hue glowed on his countenance, which gave him so much the looks of a lion, whose deep roaring was about to make every beast of the forest tremble. But when he had lashed himself into the very height of his anger and sprang up, (overturning De Cor-

bel and Glanvil as he arose,) and bellowed forth, "Drive me not mad,"—he placed both his hands on the upper folds of his rich tunic, ground his teeth together, stamped with his foot upon the earth, ripped the costly garment from his shoulders, tore off his belt and trampled upon it; seized a handful of rushes from the floor, threw them over his head, gnawed them between his teeth,—and acted the part of a raving madman.

Almost unconscious of what he uttered, he at length exclaimed, as he turned upon the barons in the fury of his agony,—“And this from one who hath fed out of my hand, a beggar whom I raised from the earth,—a fellow who came to my court upon a lame horse, now tramples upon my very heart!—now seeks to tear the kingdom from my grasp. And ye,” added he, his eyes flaming as he gazed along

the long lines of his guests; "cowards, whom I nourish daily at my table, not one of ye have courage enough to deliver me from this turbulent priest." He could say no more, his fierce passion had overpowered him, and he would have fallen upon the floor of the hall, had he not been caught by the bishops.

It was one of those fierce outbursts to which he was too often subject, and which were too terrible to last long, but which while raging tears on like an avalanche, that bears down all before it. He was, however, borne to his chamber by the attendants, and, after the lapse of an hour, he had so far recovered himself as to send for the Archbishop of York.

"Canst thou advise with me," said Henry, in a voice which had then more of sorrow than anger in its tones, "or suggest aught that we may put in force to humble this rebellious

Primate, without calling down the wrath of Rome?"

"I know not what can be done, my liege," replied the Archbishop, with a sigh, "but I fear that the kingdom will have no peace while he is alive."

"Traitor! thou wouldst not urge me to put him to death?" said Henry, the spark again kindling. "No! no!" added he, pressing his hand to his brow, and speaking again in a melancholy voice; "his own ingratitude may kill me, but I will never sanction his death."

"I intended not that his life should be sacrificed, my liege," answered the Archbishop; "but spoke of it as a hopeless matter to look for England's tranquillity, until it shall either please Heaven to remove him, or the Pope to divest him of his high power."

"Alas! I know not what to do!" said

Henry, after a long pause ; “ I would give the world for my old peace of mind. I am like a man who keeps himself awake by watching for sleep : I look around for rest ; but nowhere can it be found. Had this last blow come from any other than him, I could have forgiven it ; but were I to throw myself upon my knees before him, he would still be unsatisfied until I had fallen lower.” He buried his face in his hands, and remained several moments in painful silence.

“ All may yet be well,” said the Archbishop, “ his Holiness can no longer shelter him, under the shield of the Church, while he proceedeth in this rebellious manner.”

“ How have I deserved this treatment at his hands ?” continued Henry in the same sorrowful tone : “ I who raised him to the highest rank in my realm, honoured him as my friend instead

of servant, turned a deaf ear to all complaints, —even bowed my back that he might climb the more easily into my favour, and raised him on my own shoulders above all envy,—how am I rewarded?”

“Most true it is, my liege,” answered the Archbishop, “and you have at last had proofs that he was undeserving of all these favours. Would that our breasts were like a glass, that your Highness might see that all we then suggested was but for your own honour, and not those interests which it was believed we sought only for ourselves.”

Well was it for the Archbishop that this was not the case; for if in the heart could have been seen the source and spring of all human actions that of the prelate’s would have been loathly to look upon. It was even worse than hell itself; for although the latter is filled with all



evils, yet penitence reaches the dark abode ; but in the bosom of the Archbishop there lurked not even this least of all good qualities. Henry replied not to his affected sympathy, but summoning an attendant into the apartment, bade him usher Reginald Fitzurse into the chamber. The menial returned and announced that the knight had left the hall some time.

“ Bid Hugh de Morville speed hither, then,” said Henry ; “ strange that Fitzurse should have departed without our permission.”

“ De Morville is also absent, an’ it please your Highness,” said the attendant, “ together with the knights, Tracy, and Brito. But whither they have gone, no one within the hall knoweth.”

“ Perchance some sudden alarm hath summoned them to the coast,” said the King, harbouring no suspicion of the real cause of

their absence; "and seeing that we were ill at ease, they ventured not to break in upon us. No matter," added he, "bid them be with us at the dawn."

He waved good night to the Archbishop, and without unrobing, threw himself upon the couch. But vain were his endeavours to sleep. His mind run over all the incidents of past years, and at every turning of his memory stood the form of Thomas à Becket. Sometimes the face seemed to soften down, until it assumed the features of Rosamond, then it changed to the countenance of Queen Eleanor; but the form of the Primate was ever there. The King turned his eyes to the roof of the chamber,—the lamp was expiring; but amid the flickering light that played above his head, his heated fancy still traced the features of Becket:—sometimes they lessened to the size of his hand, then

were displayed broad and clear as the moon when the face of heaven is without a cloud. At length he fell asleep; but even in his slumber he found no rest; his uneasy spirit was tossed up and down like a ship on the bosom of the deep. That night the poorest serf, who groaned under the hand of the heaviest taskmaster, slept sounder than Henry of England.

## CHAPTER VIII.

With that they gave their able horses head,  
And bending forward, struck their armed heels  
Against the panting sides of the poor jades,  
Up to the rowel heads, and starting so,  
They seemed in running to devour the way,  
Staying no longer question.

SHAKSPEARE.

“AN angry man,” says an old writer, “seeth nothing clearly; and he whose judgment is blinded by passion, gropeth his way in the dark.” The truth of this excellent adage King Henry lived to prove, and the proof of it embittered the remainder of his life. Had he but have kept possession of himself, he would at once have read that there was danger in the eye of Reginald Fitzurse; that the shrug of the

shoulder and lowering of the brow of Hugh de Morville boded evil, and the clenched teeth and down-cast silence of De Tracy was but a brooding over revenge; while Brito, to make plain his meaning, half drew the dagger from its sheath. But Henry saw none of these,—he beheld them not bend low their heads and speak to each other in deep whispers, nay, he was unconscious that he had upbraided his barons with cowardice; he was “an angry man, and saw nothing clearly.” But scarcely had Henry quitted the hall, before Fitzurse arose from the banquet; he was speedily followed by De Morville; Tracy and Brito met them at an appointed place:—the night was dark, but the wind blew fair for the shores of England.

One after another did the knights spur to the appointed place, each taking a separate path to avoid suspicion. Many a passenger halted on

the road to listen to the furious tramping of their steeds in the darkness, when the distance no longer showed the sparks of fire, which their hoofs struck upon the pathway. They met together in the shadow of a rock by the sea-shore, where there was no sound but the heavy panting of their steeds, and the deep roaring of the breakers. Each horseman alighted, and stood with the reins of his steed thrown over his arm, and waited for several moments in silence. Reginald Fitzurse was the first to speak.

“If there is one amongst you,” said he, his voice half buried by the sound of the waves, and scarcely reaching beyond the ears of his companions,—“who feeleth his heart to falter, let him return ere it is too late. All we require of him being his knightly word to keep our mission a secret.”

All expressed their determination to proceed, befall what might.

“Let every man, then, draw his sword,” continued the baron, “and swear upon it that if the Primate refuseth to recall the sentences of excommunication which he hath issued against our friends, all and each of us shall do our devoir to deprive him of his life. That neither time nor place shall prevent us from shedding his blood, and that every one of us shall strike a blow to hasten his death. Swear!”

They crossed their swords over each other, and when Reginald Fitzurse again repeated the sentence, each knight swore,—“So may it befall us if we keep not our oath, and may we find no mercy in the day of doom.”

“Forward then,” said Fitzurse; “the very vessel which brought over the bishops lieth near at hand, and before another sunset her prow

shall graze the shores of England,—the wind bloweth fair for our revenge.”

They rode a little way along the coast, and halted where the sail of a Norman galley glanced through the darkness. A few words from Fitzurse served to explain that their business was urgent, and concerned the King, and the mariners were speedily in motion. Their steeds were safely placed in the hold, the plash of the oars was heard, the huge sail bellied itself before the wind,—and the carved dragon which ornamented the prow of the galley, now turned its scaly head to the broad ocean, and shot through the rolling waves.

A man with a horn in his hand was stationed at the head of the vessel; this he blew in case of danger. One broad sail was all they bore, and when the wind abated the mariners betook themselves to their oars, for navigation had



made but little progress since the Norman invasion. The galley rode like a sea-bird upon the billows, now swinging for a moment upon the summit of a surge, then dipping again into the deep trough of the sea, while the green billows broke over the gilded and scaly neck of the dragon, and the sea-foam hung on the shields of the knights, which were reared by the side of the ship. Before morning, the sky had changed; and the cold deep blue from which the stars shone so clearly was overcast, and huge masses of clouds loomed darkly to windward. The ocean towards the east also became overclouded, and the dull grey light of morning broke forth, dashing over the yeasty waves; for both sea and sky seemed to wear the same gloomy hue. Still the galley staggered bravely along her billowy pathway, and although the wind rung

like a shrill whistle through the shrouds, and bellied the broad sail until it cracked again, as if it fain would bear away the vessel from the fury of the waves, yet by the noon of next day they came in sight of the "pale-faced shore," and landed safely at Dover.

They halted not to refresh themselves, for no sooner were their steeds landed, than they again sprang into their saddles, nor once drew in the rein until they reached Saltwood, which was but a short distance from Canterbury. Here dwelt Ranulph de Broc, who took so active a part at the landing of Becket, and had since rendered himself more obnoxious to the Primate by maiming one of his sumpter horses.

"What brings ye hither in such haste?" said De Broc, as they alighted within the court-yard of the castle.

"Revenge!" muttered Fitzurse, slackening

the girths of his steed ; “ or we have come to redeem our honour, if thou wilt. The King hath upbraided us with cowardice for allowing this cursed Primate so long to disturb his peace. So we deemed it high time to bestir ourselves.”

“ An that be your intent,” said De Broc ; “ I will e’en stir up more forces ; for, trust me, it will need some caution in approaching the lair of this wolf, for he stands high in the opinions of the multitude. But what say ye, have ye the King’s consent to dispatch him ?”

“ Have I not told thee,” replied Fitzurse, sternly, “ that Henry said we were cowards, or we should ere this, have given the turbulent priest his quietus. True, he was an angered when he spoke thus, but his wish, joined with what had long been our own, and we gave him not time to cool. Either this proud Churchman

shall recal his curses, or another sun shall set upon his bleeding corse."

"Nay, I am one of those against whom his anathemas have been thundered," said De Broc; "though the devil a wink have I slept the less for it. There are also several others who groan under the same yoke, and if we will but abide until the morrow, I doubt not but that I shall be able to raise such a force, as will keep the whole mob of Canterbury in awe."

"It were wisdom," said Hugh de Morville, "to wait until then, for the day is fast declining, and I would fain so begin this work, that we may be able to accomplish it before tidings reach us from the King."

"It is wisely said," added De Tracy, "and would but be folly to proceed without a sufficient power to quell the adherents of Becket ;

for, trust me, we shall find him no cur that flies before us. Remember his bold bearing at Northampton."

"I have fought by his side," said Brito; "and although I am now in arms against him, yet do I respect his valour, and had he but remained what he then was, I would rather have severed my arm from my body than have uplifted it against him."

"Were he my own brother," said Reginald Fitzurse, "and had worked so much woe in the bosom of the King, as this traitor hath done, I would take up arms against him; and I hold him but a coward, and no true knight, who would stand by his Sovereign, and see him thus racked and torn to the heart without striking a blow at the aggressor."

"I would fain that our victory should be bloodless," added Ranulph de Broc, "although

I hate this haughty Primate to the death. But it will be well if we can compel him to withdraw these sentences without shedding his blood ; for, trust me, it would be no light matter, for pope and priest would proclaim him a martyr, and though he had no more sanctity than Durand the Dane, who cut down monks as the serfs do billet-wood, yet would they be ready to register him among the saints. I speak not this to save his life, for if he refuses to retract the sentences, hand and glove will I go with ye, until we have either compelled him,—or so left him that he shall never utter his curses again.”

Fitzurse muttered something which was inaudible, and De Broc departed to muster a sufficient force together to overawe the adherents of Becket, should they offer any resistance.

## CHAPTER IX.

Why, what should be the fear ?  
I do not set my life at a pin's fee ;  
And, for my soul, what can it do to that,  
Being a thing immortal.

SHAKSPEARE.

ON the following morning, as was his custom, Becket rose long before it was day, to pursue his studies, and the faithful Gryme only was allowed to intrude upon his privacy at these hours. It was a dark December morning when they sat together in the parlour of the palace ; the monk busied in bringing the wood fire to a blaze, while the primate was absorbed in the perusal of the writings of that great philosopher, Epictetus ; and as his fine features caught the

full blaze of the lamp which swung by an iron chain from the ceiling, as he pored over the ancient manuscript, or from time to time raised his head to impart some portion of the deep morals to the monk, he seemed like the great sage himself studying in his own cell, and forgetful that such a tyrant as Nero reigned.

“Gryme,” said he, at length laying down the volume, “how little have we who call ourselves Christians to boast of; here is an heathen, a Roman slave, who possessed more virtue, than can now be found in all our church, and studied in the stern school of self-denial until he taught himself to look on death only as a necessary change, and considered the paths leading thereto as equal, or if aught, that the shortest and easiest way by which tyrants have sent so many thousands. Who learnt to satisfy his wants with but little, without boasting of it—under-



went painful penances privately, and to sacrifice all that we mis-name pleasure, without seeking to be observed or admired,—looking upon all display as affectation and vanity, and unworthy of a philosopher.”

“These were iron men, holy father,” said Gryme, “who only studied to render life miserable, as if virtue consisted in depriving themselves of all earthly comforts, and nothing was acceptable to the Gods but a life of self-denial and pain.”

“There thou errest,” said Becket, “it was by self-denial that they first purified their natures from all gross passions, so as to render themselves acceptable to the Gods, believing that all evil springeth from ourselves; likening man’s stay upon earth to him who alighted from a vessel to gather shells upon the sea-shore, who when the captain beckoneth him away, must

throw down all he has collected, and hurry on again to the ship to pursue the voyage of eternity. And what have we done all our lives but gather shells on the shores of the eternal sea, wandering too often far away; and, had the captain called, how stood we prepared to resume our voyage? We lower our anchor by a rope of sand, and while we think ourselves safely moored, it is washed away, and all our honours buried deep beneath the ruin. Gryme," added he, arising from his seat and pacing the apartment, "how has my life been spent? what sacrifices have I made, regardless of the opinion of men, and only for the glory of the church? alas! but few. What privations have I undergone that I might render myself only more worthy of Heaven? None!—they have all been more or less mingled with the dregs of ambition; pride threw its admixture into the

cup, and vanity lurked in the lees, even the bitter draught was half drunk in vain-glory, and the empty cup upturned with a boast. I have wept and prayed, and undergone long nights of penance, counting the hours of my vigils by tears; but pride and passion, ambition and a love of power, still lurked within; they had possessed themselves of the inmost citadel, and stepped forth at pleasure, and drove all my virtuous resolves before them—closing the gates of the fortress, and showing themselves in triumph on the battlements.”

“ But few, holy father, can look upon their past lives without a reproach,” said Gryme; “ if man could here become a perfect creature, how little should we need another and a better state of life. Even among those shells which we pick up on the great shore, a few costly pearls are to be found; and amid all this evil there

surely lurketh some good, that we have gathered in our pilgrimage, and although we ourselves may be unconscious of it, yet fear not but that it will one day be discovered."

"I have lain awake all night," said the Archbishop, "and weighed myself in the balance, and although I am found wanting, yet have I no fear of death. No," added he, uplifting his eyes to heaven, "were it come upon me now, and all that I have done for the liberties of the church would add to my existence an hundred years, if I were to retract and give up all I have battled for, I would on this spot and at this moment prefer death, rather than sacrifice my duty to God, my conscience, and my honour. I speak of death, Gryme," added he, "as being near at hand, even on the very threshold. Believe me, that there is a closer affinity between our souls and death than we wot of, and that

the spirit hath warning when the time draws near at hand for its departure. Even our dreams are communings with the spirits of those who hover around us, and doubtless are sent to prepare us for the good or evil that is about to befall us."

"Thou art much wiser than myself in these matters, holy father," said the monk, "yet do I believe that many of these visions but spring from the malignant humours that mount into the brain."

"There are more in these things than we know of," replied Becket; "did not Calphurnia, the wife of Cæsar, dream the night before his death, that she beheld him stabbed in the Capitol? did not Mauritius the Emperor dream of Phocas, who killed him and became his successor? Was not Caius Gracchus foretold in a dream of the death that he should die, and

many others mentioned by the ancients? Look even at our own country, at those who were in communion with the spirits, and are now themselves saints in heaven, how many of them were forewarned of their own death. I tell thee that these things are not sent to us without an object; and more, that I have this night been warned that my end is drawing near."

"Heaven will yet prolong thy days," said the monk, "until thou hast accomplished the great work which it hath destined thee to do. Brood not over these melancholy thoughts, they but spring up through too much meditation, the long hours which you are wont to pass in prayer and solitude."

"Not so," said Becket in a melancholy voice, "these but brought on a feeling of weariness, in which the spirit too often sunk oppressed with exertion. But what I now feel is allied to

death : it is not fear, but a solemn certainty that rises beyond all other thoughts, and warns me that the hour is at hand. Even as when we feel the air hot and sultry, and see the nimble lightnings stealing from the darkening sky, until the whole heaven is black with clouds, and the loud thunder at last uplifts its voice,—so sure as these things foretel and usher in storm, does this internal foreboding warn me to prepare for death.”

“ Perhaps thou art ill, reverend father,” said Gryme, “ and needest a skilful leech. Let me summons hither Druro the son of Dromas ; he hath knowledge in all healing herbs.”

“ I am well,” replied the Primate, “ and free from all ailments. Mine will not be a death on the quiet couch,—a sinking under the infirmities of old age, that needeth the cup and caudle. No ;” added he, “ I shall perish in the quarrels

of the church. I have launched her thunders at too many heads to escape. I have humbled the proudest and most powerful in the land;—have heard them mutter their vengeance without quailing; and though I shall fall beneath it ere long, yet will I die as I have lived,—true to myself and the cause of Christ.”

“ They will not—they dare not molest thee,” said Gryme, with deep emotion; “ all England would rise against them,—Rome would bare its powerful arm,—every true servant of the church would hold it a sacred duty to revenge such a deed.—No; there are none daring enough to execute it.”

“ And yet I would not seek to escape the blow,” continued Becket, pacing the apartment with a firm step, while his fine features were lit up with all that spirit of military daring which had marked his course through life.



“No, were their swords uplifted over my head, and the revoking of one sentence which I have passed, would save my life, I would rather perish on the spot than retract a syllable of what I have uttered. I have looked on death,” continued he, “a thousand times,—have seen the warrior breathe out his soul on the battle field without a murmur, and beheld the victim of affliction writhing upon his couch;—have seen the monk die inch by inch in his cell, and the soldier hurled to instant death from the battlements; and have beheld all this without my cheek blanching. And shall I, who have shaken a realm by my power, and humbled the proudest of the earth, shrink from the last brief trial? No! may I have ‘Craven’ engraved on my tomb if I quail! and my name held up as a scorn and a derision to future

ages! I will die as I have lived,—unconquered!”

“ Pardon me, holy father!” said the monk, “ these were not the feelings which the heathen sages sought to inculcate ;—they suffered not to obtain fame after death, and which only falls on the cold tomb unheard, unfelt, unregarded. If I am in error, I have drawn the false conclusion from yourself.”

“ But they were not unconscious,” replied Becket, “ that fame would follow them to the grave ;—that their lives would be held up as examples to others ; and that thousands would kneel beside their tombs when they were no more. If their names are enrolled in the archives of Heaven, why should they not be held up in imperishable characters upon earth ? To gain Heaven is a holy ambition ; and to leave a name on earth, which shall be revered

when long ages have passed away, becomes man, who was born in the image of God, and endeavours to tread in the steps of the great and good who have passed away before him ?”

Gryme, whose reasoning was at times the clearest of the two, replied, and even brought many of the Primate's own arguments to prove what he asserted ; but all were of no avail. Becket's mind was a strange compound of right and wrong ;—his very character was made up of the most contrary elements,—doing that out of piety one moment, which was maintained the next by pride, and too often bringing all his learning to bear upon the falsest of principles ; even such as he had in this instance combated against at the outset. Nor was this altogether display ; for his knowledge and judgment in many instances held contrary sway : he had studied up to the part he had to perform, and if

he did condemn some of the scenes in which he acted; still he deemed it necessary to go through with them to uphold the character; concluding that in any other case he would have been guided by his better judgment, but believing that the honour of the church called for such sacrifices. What he did was generally done in sincerity; if he swerved, it was never without great cause;—danger could not move him;—as to self-interest, he despised it;—ambition was the only plague-spot upon him,—it raised him to his high eminence, and from it sprung all that was little in his character. And had he moved in another sphere of life—been the commander of an army, instead of the head of the church—there would but have been one opinion about his character, and few names would have ranked higher in English history.

But the hour of service now drew near; and

as the cathedral stood adjoining the palace, he arose to perform the morning devotions ; for many and unnecessary, as numbers of the forms of worship then were, he insisted on the most rigid fulfilment of them all, and in general saw that they were performed under his own eye.

## CHAPTER X.

What I did, I did in honour,  
Led by the impartial conduct of my soul ;  
And never shall you see, that I will beg  
A ragged and forestall'd remission.

Alive, or dead,  
He will be found like Brutus, like himself.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was now past the noon of day, and Becket was seated in the hall of the palace, attended by Gryme, and others of his household ; when they were suddenly startled by the sound of voices, for the place was closely besieged. All saving the primate, showed symptoms of alarm ; but he scarcely deigned to raise his eyes from the missal he was perusing. Presently, four

men in armour entered the apartment, and sat down, without speaking, on a long oaken bench opposite the Archbishop; several men-at-arms also stood within the door-way. Becket saluted the mailed intruders, but they made no reply, and only knit their brows, or bit the ends of their gauntlets as they from time to time glanced upon him, or exchanged looks of dangerous meaning among themselves. Several monks who were in the hall, huddled together like a flock of affrighted sheep, were doubtless glad enough when they received a signal from Becket to retire; Gryme alone, out of the number, only remaining behind.

“What means this intrusion?” said the Primate, first breaking the painful silence, and speaking in a tone which scarcely accorded with the boldness of the interrogation. But not one of the knights replied, and the Primate gathered

courage as he again repeated the question, and added, "Speak, unless ye are ashamed to utter your errand. What would you with me?"

The knights gazed again upon each other, then looked savagely upon Becket, and, having muttered something among themselves, Reginald Fitzurse at last said, "We have come from the King; our business is to see that you absolve the excommunicated Bishops, and re-establish those whom you have suspended."

"Ah," muttered Becket, the blood instantly mounting his cheek, "you come from the King! and hath he then been bold enough to entrust you with such a commission?"

"We have brought no commission," replied Fitzurse, in a stern voice, "no parchment, with the broad seal of England affixed to it, that the Pope might hold as a bond, and utter his curses



until he obtained payment ; but we have come, with sharp swords and few words, to complete our errand."

"Such are the weapons of ruffians and robbers," said Becket, undaunted by their menaces, "and ye may carry them on the highways to lighten travellers of their mails. On me they will but be wasted."

"Speak in gentler terms," whispered Brito ; "he has been a brave soldier, and learnt to laugh at threats."

"Thou dost, then, refuse to absolve the Bishops," continued Fitzurse, with difficulty suppressing his fierce tones.

"I do," replied Becket, firmly, "unless they are willing to make submission, and abide by the decisions of Rome. As to the Archbishop of York, I will never recall his sentence ; but

have left him to be dealt with by his Holiness, the Pope, whose sanction I have had for what is done."

"Who gave you the Archbishopric?" said Reginald Fitzurse, in an authoritative tone, "the King or the Pope?"

"The spiritual power I hold from Heaven and his Holiness," replied Becket, briefly, "the mere temporal rights from the King; nor can he deprive me of them."

"Hath not the King given you all?" enquired Fitzurse, knitting his dark brows as he spoke.

"No, he hath not," replied Becket; "ye need not to have put such a question, well knowing that if he had, he could, ere this, have divested me of the power. I am not accountable to him for what I do."

Fitzurse gnashed his teeth, and grappled the

hilt of the dagger which was in his belt. The rest of the knights murmured deeply to themselves, and by their restlessness showed with what difficulty they subdued their feelings.

“It was but revenge that caused you to suspend and excommunicate the Bishops,” said Hugh de Morville. “They did but their duty, and merited it not.”

“Hugh de Morville, it is not for thee to dictate to thy superior,” said the haughty churchman. “Callest thou falling from their head, doing their duty? I, who stood up for their liberties, and would allow no one to trample upon their privileges with impunity; but underwent a thousand privations to ward off and baffle the invader. How did they reward me?—by going over to the enemy—by persecuting and punishing all who had the honesty to adhere to me during my exile. Thinkest thou, that I

have forgotten the sufferings of those who, barefooted and an-hungered, came for succour to my cell at Pontigny—who were banished and houseless beggars, while these unfeeling churchmen were fattening upon their spoils—were bartering their conscience and their creed, that they might pamper their gross appetites, preferring ease and comfort, and the world's possessions to the good of the church. Nay, went even the length to insult me in my misery, by sending taunting epistles, and insolent messages. And yet these are the men that I am to pardon, and such deeds as these you call duty.”

“They did their duty, inasmuch as they obeyed the bidding of their King,” replied De Morville, “and all are traitors who do not.”

“Even as thou art,” said Ranulph de Broc, who had by this time entered the hall.

“Hold thy peace!” said the Primate, turning

to De Broc; "lest I extend the curse which already rests upon thee, and doom all thy kindred to the third generation to share the dreadful sentence." Then addressing the knights, he added, "Think ye, that our duty to an earthly sovereign is paramount to that which we owe the King of Heaven? or that the rewards which may be showered upon us here, are worth a thought compared with those which are eternal, and may be gathered hereafter? Or, think ye?" added he, raising his voice, "that your threats or menacing looks, which, when put in force, can but torture for a few moments my body, weigh aught beside the holy resolves of my soul, that obeys no will but the dictates of Heaven, and which no earthly power can shake? If so, then are ye indeed to be pitied."

"We will do more than threaten," said the

fiery Fitzurse, but ill brooking the contemptuous look of Becket; "we will make ourselves feared, unless thou dost absolve all those who are under thy ban. Rise, knights!" added he, unsheathing his sword, "and remember your oaths; it is but a waste of time to hold further parley with him."

"Do as ye list," said Becket, confronting them, not a shadow of fear appearing on his countenance. "I stood firm in the hall of Clarendon, when a score of swords were pointed at my throat; nor can your weapons for a moment shake my firm resolve. Nor will I submit, were ye to kneel to me until your knees grew to the floor. Desist, Gryme!" added he, addressing the monk, who was about to ring a bell to alarm the monks; "we have no need of earthly aid. Heaven will preserve me if it be its pleasure; and I can never perish in a more holy

cause than that I am now maintaining. Ye have long sought my life," added he, again facing his enemies; "have hunted me through the land like a beast of prey; yet God delivered me from your vengeance, and the great work for which he preserved me is now accomplished; the bond but wants sealing with my blood, and I am ready to finish the deed."

"Fly!" said Fitzurse, uplifting the point of his sword to within an inch of the Primate's throat, yet fearing to strike; so much was he overawed by the bold bearing of Becket. "Swear that thou wilt never again set foot upon English ground, and thy life may yet be spared. Do this, or instantly absolve the bishops, or death is thy doom."

"Let us escape!" said Gryme, throwing himself at the Archbishop's feet; "why wilt thou shed thy blood in quarrelling with those

who have neither the fear of God nor man before their eyes?"

"Keep thy tongue silent," said the Archbishop sternly; "and leave me not at last to think so meanly of thee, as that thou wouldst sacrifice thy duty to Heaven, that thou mightest breathe a few more brief days." The faithful monk shrank back at this rebuke. Then turning to the knights he added, "Ye were my servants, sworn liege-men to me, as your lord; nor have I as yet freed ye from your oaths. How dare ye thus to enter my palace, and threaten me in my hall?"

"We have bound ourselves by a new oath since that day," said De Tracy.

"And it will grieve me if we are compelled to keep it," added Brito.

Just then the bell sounded for service in the cathedral, and bidding Gryme lead the way,



the Archbishop again looked upon the knights and said ; “ Ye have heard mine answer ; nor must I longer delay the service of the church ; ” saying which he departed with a firm step through a door which led to the cathedral.

The knights arose to follow him with their swords ready drawn ; but they hesitated a moment, and the door was closed upon them. “ Ye are but cowards ! ” exclaimed Fitzurse, “ to allow him to escape ; let us follow.”

“ That name never belonged to me or mine,” replied De Morville, stepping up and confronting him. “ Why did you not strike when your sword was at his throat ? it was the action of a coward to withdraw it.”

“ Ye stood like idle spectators,” answered the fiery knight ; “ had I but have been encouraged by your looks only, I would have struck ; but ye all quailed before him.”

“ It is but wasting time,” said De Tracy, thus to bandy words with each other; let us to the cathedral and make him prisoner; unless he will absolve the bishops: and fulfil our purpose.”

“ A quiet prisoner shall he be, when I next look upon him,” said the savage Fitzurse, “ unless he does my bidding: I will make up for this delay.” So saying he led the way into the court-yard, and was followed by his companions-at-arms.

## CHAPTER XI.

Look ! in this place ran Cassius' dagger through :  
 See, what a rent the envious Casca made :  
 Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed ;  
 And, as he plucked his cursed steel away,  
 Mark how the blood of Cæsar followed it ;  
 As rushing out of doors, to be resolved  
 If Brutus so unkindly knocked or no,

\* \* \* \* \*

But yesterday, the word of Cæsar might  
 Have stood against the world ; now lies he there,  
 And none so poor to do him reverence.

*Julius Cæsar.*

DISREGARDING the advice of his faithful attendants, who with tears in their eyes, knelt down and implored him to fly, the undaunted Prelate commanded Gryme to take up the crucifix, and lead the way along the cloisters ;—for the voices of the monks singing vespers in the choir fell upon his ear. With folded arms, his haughty

head elevated, and his fine features possessing even more than their ordinary dignity, he traversed the pillared cloisters with stately and measured steps, while the long train of his rich dalmatica swept over the rudely carved grave-stones, under which so many of his pious predecessors slept. They entered the northern transept, and his followers lingered behind a few moments to secure the door. Becket turned upon them with a stern look, and exclaimed in a deep tone,—“Why tarry ye there? fear ye to follow me?—if so retire, if not, in the name of God come along, for the hour of my last service draweth near.”

“We would but render the outer doors secure, holy father,” replied a monk, “that these men of blood may not pollute the threshold of Christ’s church by their unclean footsteps.”

“ Would ye fortify the house of God like a castle ? ” exclaimed the Archbishop sternly ; “ unbar the door instantly, and let it not be said that the representative of Christ made a fortress of the holy Church to save his life ;— unbar the door ! and whichever of you feeleth his footstep to falter, follow me not . ”

They all lingered behind, saving the faithful Gryme, who boldly preceded his master, bearing the silver crucifix before him, until they entered the church. The Archbishop lifted up his eyes as they gained the choir, and glanced at the vaulted and fretted roof, which stretched high above in its antique and gloomy grandeur, for the shades of evening were fast falling upon pillar and shrine ; and the deep niches, in which stood the figures of many a saint and angel were already darkened. Down the long aisles, however, the last rays of

the sinking sun fell with a solemn splendour, and flashed upon the silver crucifix, which the faithful monk held up at arm's length, while a portion of the dying glory crimsoned the lofty brow of Becket, and fell upon his rich drapery, and he stood revealed like a god in the midst of his own temple, looking upon the vast pile, which seemed as if but reared for himself alone to dwell in.

Here and there too a lonely lamp cast its shimmering light along the shadowy and obscure crypts, half revealing the shrine of the silver Virgin, or stony saint before which it blazed, and giving a deeper darkness to the pillared recesses which its faint beams endeavoured in vain to illumine. The setting sun also gathered his golden garments around him, until the last gleam of splendour hung athwart the rainbow dyes of the rich window, falling along the edge

of a descending cloud like a streak of flame, then leaving the deepening twilight to gather over the massy pile,—slow, and solemn, and soundless as the approach of sleep.

Meantime the monks from the choir had struck up the vesper song, and the deep melody of their voices rushed through the pillared aisles like the solemn sounding of the ocean. Then the tones were hushed for a moment or two,—and at length a solitary voice, low and sweet, stole out amid the silence, so dreamy and ethereal, that it rang through the reigning quietude,—and sounded as if it came from the vaulted roof, or stole singing from pillar to pillar, for so played the echoes with the sound. Again the full burst of the choir broke in, like the rushing of the mighty sea, mingled with the deep pealing of the organ, until the whole building seemed to throb again beneath the

sounds. Becket stood unmoved listening to that flood of holy melody, with his head slightly bent, and his hands clasped together, as if he had been suddenly transported to heaven, and felt afraid either to look up or cross the sacred threshold.

There was something strangely solemn and impressive in the whole of the scene; the dim daylight which was fast fading away, and had in many places given way to the grey tints of evening,—the lamps which stood silently burning before the different shrines,—the huge pillars which assumed strange shadowy and gigantic shapes in the spreading gloom,—all wore a mysterious kind of grandeur, which, whether combined or taken apart, struck upon the soul with a feeling of holy awe, that scarcely seemed to belong to earth.

Even Becket was bound down for a few mo



ments beneath the mighty silence which settled far and wide over the vast cathedral: it was but for a moment, and he sprang up like the gallant war-horse, that but listens until the sound of the trumpet dies away,—then rears, and is ready for the coming combat. So did he, in a voice which startled the calm of the cathedral, bid Gryme lead on to the altar, while he followed with rapid strides, and with a glance which, as it caught the flashing rays from the silver lamps, seemed to kindle with daring devotion. A meet genius to preside over that magnificent pile, appeared Thomas à Becket, as he ascended the steps before the altar of St. Bennet, and drew up the folds of his flowing drapery with a dignity that became a god. Nor did the group that knelt around the base of the altar, bear an inapt resemblance to the assembled devotees, who seemed as if they

had met to worship the idol of their devotion ; and well did the stately figure of the Archbishop, which seemed to fill the wide space, bear out the illusion, that he alone was the great object which they were about to adore.

Scarcely had the Archbishop ascended the steps of the altar, before the sound of axes was heard without, hewing at the doors of the cathedral ; for in spite of Becket's remonstrance, the affrighted attendants had secured more than one entrance. All trembled, saving he whose life they sought ; but not a shadow of fear rested upon the Prelate : his lips were slightly compressed, and his calm eye traversed the length of the gloomy aisle, as if it sought amid the distant gloom to discover the cause of the uproar.

“ Fly, my beloved master !” said Gryme, his voice tremulous with fear, and scarcely audible

above the battering of the axes, as they rung upon the ponderous doors of the cathedral; "they will search for you in vain amid the dark crypts and subterraneous vaults of the building;—escape! and leave us to bear the whole burst of their anger: they will harm no one but yourself;—it is your blood for which they thirst."

"Never!" replied the Archbishop in a firm voice; "were a thousand battle-axes brandished over my head, and each one could give me a separate death, I would not stir a foot. I have enlisted under the banner of Heaven; and, by the help of God, will die in fighting the battles of the church."

"If not for your own sake," continued the faithful monk, still retaining the hem of the mantle in his grasp, "O refuse not to save yourself for the sake of the church of Christ,—"

the remainder of his arguments were lost amid the deafening din of the assailants; for the door was now broken open with a loud crash, which rent off the very hinges.

At this moment the form of Reginald Fitzurse was seen approaching, sheathed in complete mail, which flashed back the blaze of the lamps that still burnt before the shrines; while his sword, as he waved it above his head, also glittered in the trembling light. "Where is the traitor?" exclaimed he, approaching and brandishing his weapon; while his voice, which was hoarse and thick with rage, echoed loudly through the vaulted aisle. No answer was, however, made, and for a few moments only the mailed steps of the savage barons were heard as they came up the centre aisle.

"Where is the Archbishop?" vociferated the stormy Norman in a voice of thunder, which

was caught up and given back by the awakened echoes.

“ Here am I, the Archbishop, but no traitor !” replied Becket in a firm tone of voice, and without either eye or lip betraying a symptom of fear. “ Here am I, ready to suffer in my Saviour’s name ! How dare ye enter into this holy place in arms ? What want ye here ?”

“ Your life !” answered Fitzurse, briefly and terribly.

“ Come hither !” said Tracy, pulling Becket by the sleeve ; “ thou art a prisoner.”

The Prelate jerked away his arm with such force, that the motion caused Tracy to stagger, and he would have fallen backward on the pavement, had he not caught the arm of Hugh de Morville and checked himself.

“ Fly, or thou diest !” said Brito, striking the Archbishop on the shoulder with the flat of

his sword. But Becket stirred not; and bold and brutal as these knights were, they at first feared to take away his life before the altar.

“Fly, or thou art dead!” said the savage Fitzurse, uplifting his sword as if to strike. But the attendant Gryme, now fully aroused to the danger, upheaved the silver cross and struck the Norman such a blow, that had it not been for his steel helmet, he would never again have uplifted sword.

“Ah! dealest thou such blows with thy spiritual weapon?” said Tracy, uplifting his sword, and aiming a blow at the monk; but Gryme parried the stroke with the crucifix, and was again instantly at his master’s side.

“Resist them not!” said Becket; “let them work their will upon me. Had it been my intention to resist, I would have met them in warlike guise; it beseemeth not that the temple

of Christ should be turned into a place of combat. Then turning to Fitzurse he said; "I have done thee many pleasures; why comest thou with armed men against me?"

"To compel thee to absolve the bishops whom thou hast dared to excommunicate," replied Fitzurse, grinding his teeth as he spoke; "do this instantly, or I will assuredly wet my weapon in thine heart's blood."

"And who art thou?" said Becket, "that thou shouldst dare to demand such concession at my hands? Thou! a fellow that I did raise in my service while chancellor; or who mightest otherwise have passed thy whole life as a squire of low degree? No! I tell thee again that I will never absolve them, until they have offered me that satisfaction which I have named."

The angry baron ground his teeth with sheer rage, while he listened to these biting taunts;

and his eye-balls flashed with madness as he exclaimed, "Then die, thou base reviler!" and uplifting his sword, he aimed a blow at the head of Becket; which, although the faithful Gryme interposed his own arm, which was nearly severed, nevertheless wounded Becket in the shaven part of his crown, and the blood instantly fell down his face in a torrent. Still the Archbishop moved not; but clasping his hands together and bowing his head, exclaimed; "To God, to Saint Mary, and to the Holy Patrons of this church, I commend my soul and the church's cause." A second blow from the sword of Hugh de Morville brought him to the ground, and he fell at the foot of the altar; and even then folded his robe in "dying dignity," that he might perish as became the bold leader of God's church. A third blow was struck by the brutal Brito, with such force upon the head,



that his sword broke upon the pavement. Tracy dealt the last savage stroke ; but it was scarce needed ; for the outstretched limbs of the dying Prelate were fast stiffening into death.

Meantime the faithful monk, his arm nearly severed, and himself stunned with the blows which he had received, still lay on the pavement grasping the silver crucifix, and uttering curses upon the murderers.

“ Sacriligious and blood-thirsty villains as ye are !” exclaimed Gryme, forgetting his own sufferings while he gazed upon the bleeding form of Becket ; “ the vengeance of Heaven will yet overtake ye, and the blood of the holy martyr ye have slain will call aloud for vengeance, even when ye have passed the gates of death. Oh God !” added he in a low tone, writhing with pain ; “ I would that ye had

severed every limb of my own, so that his own life had but been saved."

"Silence, mad priest!" said the savage Fitzurse, wiping his bloody sword on the Archbishop's mantle, "lest I cram thy curses down thine own throat, and send thee full-mawed to Sathanas."

"Nay, e'en let him rail on," said Tracy; "he hath caught a knack of cursing from this arch-traitor, and it would be a task to beat that out of the whelp which he hath so long studied."

"I will silence him," said Fitzurse, about to deal him his death blow, when Hugh de Morville, who stood leaning upon his sword, as if in deep contemplation over the deed which they had done, struck aside the point of Fitzurse's weapon as it was aimed at Gryme, and said,— "Nay! he stood up boldly for his

master, thou shalt do him no further harm, we have blood enough upon our hands, and I would to God that I could as easily wash the stain from my conscience as I can cleanse it from mine armour."

"And who gave thee a right to say what I shall not do?" said the fiery Fitzurse, standing with his weapon pointed to De Morville: "And what if I had an intent to let out the blood of this mumbling monk, thinkest thou I should crave thy permission? No, not if I were to shed thine to boot."

"Reginald Fitzurse!" exclaimed Hugh de Morville with a look under which the stormy baron quailed, "I wish not to quarrel with thee, although it was through thine arguments that I was tempted into this bloody matter. But if thou darest to provoke me further, or injure a hair of the head of this priest who hath so nobly

suffered in the defence of his master, either thy blood or mine shall wash out the quarrel, even upon the floor of this holy pavement."

Here Brito and Tracy stepped in between the enraged knights, just as they were in the act to assail each other, and mingle their own blood with that which they had so barbarously shed.

The monks had by this time gathered in great numbers from every corner of the vast cathedral; and, had not the aisles been filled with armed men, their looks left but little doubt of the course they would have pursued. Many of them stood over the lifeless form of the Primate with torches in their hands, which cast a grim and ghastly glare on the pale features of the dead,—rendered even more pallid, by being contrasted with the lines of blood which had traversed either cheek. Great as was the agony of the faithful Gryme, he forgot his own suffer-

ings while gazing upon the bleeding corse of his beloved master, whose gory hand he held within his own, and bathed it with tears, while the blood trickled from his own shoulder and mingled with that of the Archbishop, in spite of the bandages with which they had so hastily bound it.

By this time the last tramp of the intruders had died away; and no sound broke the awful silence that reigned around, saving the deep sobbing of the monks, as they stood revealed in the red and murky light of the torches, gathered around the dead body of their brave Archbishop. The silver crucifix had fallen upon the floor unregarded, and was in several places stained with blood,—while far away, throwing a feeble light along the gloomy perspective of the aisles, were revealed the lamps, as they burnt dimly before the various shrines, every

image of which seemed absorbed in silent grief, as if even the stony saints partook of the deep melancholy which had fallen upon all.

But this silence lasted not longer than while the murder was rumoured throughout Canterbury, and numbers instantly hurried to the spot, bearing with them the afflicted of all ages, that they might be healed by dipping their fingers in the blood of the martyr, for as such he was held. Onward rolled the dense crowd, each eager to mark the sign of the cross on their foreheads, and some of them, as they stooped forward, fell with their hands in the blood, and besmeared their features with it, which, as seen in the lurid light that was shed around, and rendered more awful by their loud lamentations, and hideous contortions of their visages, bore no bad resemblance to some of those unholy rites, over which the powers of evil

are said to preside. It was a scene that in any other age would have made the beholder shudder ; to have looked down upon that group, as they passed to and fro, until their faces were lost in the deep shadows of the cathedral, looking grimly and murderously upon each other, as if they all had been partakers of the deed ; even the cheeks of beauty were dyed with the blood of the martyr. But we will drop the curtain upon the scene, and bring our story to a close. Without following the fate of the murderers, we shall only add, in the words of the old chroniclers of the period, that they retired to the castle of Hugh de Morville, at Knasborough, in which they shut themselves up for a twelvemonth, and afterwards made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It is also on record that William de Tracy gave his manor of Doccombe to the Church of Canterbury, to

expiate his guilt. Some have asserted that all the murderers died miserable deaths, soon after they had perpetrated the horrid deed ; but this is doubted, nor does it belong to our task to combat the opinions of history.



## CHAPTER XII.

And so without more circumstance at all,  
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part :  
Like a cloistress, she will veiled walk,  
And water once a day her chamber round  
With eye-offending brine.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was at the close of a lovely day in autumn, when a jaded horseman entered the chase of Woodstock, and pursued his silent course along the sylvan paths which we have so often described. The countenance of the rider was care-worn ; his brow was marked with deep wrinkles, and his large black eyes wore a settled melancholy,—a sad softness which seemed to have quenched all their former fire. The noble animal on which he rode seemed to share the sadness which had fallen upon its master, and

as he had thrown up the reins, moved along at a slow pace over the ground, which was thickly carpeted with fallen leaves. The traveller glanced from time to time upon the scenery around him,—then bowed his head, and rode along in an attitude of deep thought; for the change that was wrought by the hand of nature had awakened a thousand solemn emotions in his bosom, and kindled the melancholy which had so long remained within. There was something in the rustling of the fallen leaves, and the faded foliage of the trees, now shorn of their summer beauty, in strange accordance with his feelings; and he heaved a deep sigh while he thought how soon all that is lovely to look upon perisheth!

“A fit livery do ye wear!” for so ran his thoughts while gazing around him upon the trees, “to welcome back your owner! Better

thus than if ye mocked me with the full-blown green of summer. The hand of time hath made deep ravages upon us both: the scenery and the master have changed; nor will I ever again break the stillness of these green solitudes by the sound of the horn;—no merry note shall ever again disturb this grave of all my pleasures. Oh, God!” continued he, still musing to himself, as he drew up his steed to gaze down a beautiful glade, on which the last sunbeams were shed; “here have I walked with Rosamond,—under yonder tree have we sat together;—sometimes listening to the song of the nightingale, or the voice of Becket, as he made our hearts feel light by his wit. And where are they now? The heart that loved me is mouldering in the silent tomb! and the friend that I would once have died for, was butchered at the altar! and the few hasty words which I un-

consciously let fall, were the cause of his death. Oh, ambition! thou art indeed the mother of misery! From thee springs all that is evil:—we offer up all our better affections for thee; and thou nursest our hopes until they become overgrown; and when we look for their fulfilment,—oh, misery!—all is hollow and false! and we sit down to gnaw our own hearts, and curse ourselves for our folly!”

So the unhappy monarch pursued his path, reproaching himself for being the cause of those ills, over which weak mortals have not always controul; for we are too often but the mere creatures of circumstance; and our firmest resolves are no guard against future evils, as they spring from long reflection; and danger itself takes us by surprise, leaving no time to ponder. The deed of the unguarded moment is too sudden to think upon, and in many instances is

done, ere even the will is apprized, and too quick for the judgment to reflect upon for even a moment; for our passions are often born without thought.

Henry halted not before the palace of Woodstock, but rode on until he reached the labyrinth, and dismounting at the entrance, he entered the well-known passages. He ascended the familiar stair, every step of which was damp and overgrown with grass and lichen. He pushed open the door, which grated harshly on its rusty hinges,—it was long since human foot had broken the silence of those apartments. The monarch stood with folded arms and aching heart, “a ruin amid ruins;” for all around was fast hastening to decay. A wild cat started from the cold hearth, where her young were nestled, and brushing by, shot through the broken casement; while the deep

hooting of owls only seemed to give a fitting voice to the solitude. All—saving the figures of the Madonna and Child—seemed in a state of decay. The faded arras was covered with mould ;—the floors were damp, and the furniture had a cold and uncomfortable look, and was covered with that slow-consuming vegetable matter, which in the end destroys everything. The blood ran cold in the monarch's veins as he stood in the gathering twilight, and gazed upon the silent destruction around him. He however mustered courage enough to enter into an inner apartment, where stood the couch on which Rosamond had slept in bye-gone years. But the moth and damp had also been busy there ;—there was a smell of death in the place. A hideous skeleton was stretched on what remained of the velvet coverlet,—it was all that was left of Gamas Gobbo ;—thither he had

crept for shelter in a former winter, and perished unknown to any one.

Henry hurried away with a faltering step and a heavy heart, and throwing himself into the saddle, galloped off in the direction of the nunnery of Godstow. It was dark when he halted before the gate of that ancient pile. A message was conveyed to the old Abbess, Agatha, that the King of England waited without; and she herself, now bent double with age, came to receive him.

“ I have come, good mother !” said the King, “ to kneel beside the grave of her who is now at rest ; be speedy and conduct me thither.”

The old woman led the way into the chapel, and, bidding him wait a brief space, retired.

Henry gazed upon the vaulted and heavy pile, which was only lighted by the feeble lamps that burnt before the different shrines,

and seemed to deepen the shadows of the stunted and Saxon pillars, that adorned each side of the building. While he stood in silence gazing upon a scene so calculated to awaken solemn feelings, he heard a door open behind one of the massy columns ; then there was a sound as of the rustling of drapery, and presently the veiled figure of a woman rose before him. The form stood immoveable and silent beside the shrine of the Virgin ; and the light of the lamp just showed her features through the veil. Henry sprang back, and while his breathing became quick and heavy, and his eyes seemed ready to start from their sockets, he exclaimed in a faltering voice ; “ Speak ! speak ! if thou canst speak ! or if thou beest but the spirit of my own beloved Rosamond, make some sign that I may know thee. What art thou that



wearest her likeness beneath that veil ? and——  
oh, answer me !”

“ I am no spirit,” said the form, in a sweet melancholy voice, and heaving a deep sigh ;  
“ it is Rosamond Clifford that stands before thee,—she who was thy wife, but is now the bride of Heaven !”

“ Keep not that cloud between us,” said the King, drawing nearer ; “ but remove the veil that I may again look upon that face, the recollection of which I have wept over, deeming that its light had long ago been hidden in the darkness of the tomb.”

“ Approach no nearer, then,” said Rosamond, “ and I will do thy bidding. Thou wert the first and only one that I loved ;—thou shalt be the last of thy kind to look upon me :—the eye of man shall never rest on me again.”  
As she spoke, she threw aside the veil ; and

although she was robed in the sober habit of her order, and her countenance wore the traces of sorrow ; still the beauty of her fine features was undiminished. There were the same clear blue eyes ; but where they before swam in the tenderness of love, and shed a halo that made every heart beat ; they now wore a solemn softness,—the look of an enwrapt seraph whose thoughts all led heavenward. She looked like some masterly statue, too beautiful ever to have had a living resemblance,—something that stood mourning in marble,—as if the artist had tried his skill, and made a Goddess of sorrow, giving her the features of a Venus ; or endeavoured to chisel a sad look upon all that he could imagine of loveliness. It was a beauty to kneel before, but not embrace—a face that could only awaken such sensations as we feel when gazing upon some of those masterly crea-

tions which have delineated such features as bring before us the Virgin Mother, with all her love centered upon the Holy Child—in which the soul beams through the eyes, and nought but what is akin to Heaven reigns in the calm countenance.

Henry gazed upon her in silence, and stood as if rivetted to the spot, so much was he struck by the solemn grandeur of her beauty; nor did he speak, until Rosamond uplifted her arm, as if she was again about to throw the veil over her lovely features. “Stay! in pity, stay a few moments longer!” said the King, bending his head nearer to her, without advancing a step: “All that I loved in the world, saving thyself, are gone; and thou, too, art about to leave me. Oh! why didst thou throw this barrier between us? and make a vow which is to separate us for ever? Where can I now

look for comfort? Becket is no more. My children, stirred up by the revengeful Eleanor, have rebelled against me. Only those who call thee mother are faithful to me. They are indeed my sons. Let me appeal to Rome to absolve thee from thy vow : the savage queen is now in prison, where she shall end her days. Oh ! say that thou wilt give thy consent to be released from these trammels of the Church ; and I shall yet close my unhappy days in peace !”

“ It is too late !” said Rosamond, sobbing deeply, as she again threw the veil over her. “ Oh tempt me not further, Henry,” continued she, weeping aloud ; “ make me not sin against Heaven. Alas ! these feelings become not one who has devoted her future days to the service of God ; but I must tear them from me, although my heart will bleed afresh. Thou wilt

not forget my children ; and Eleanor thou must —” The last sentences seemed to tear up her very heart ; and she would have fallen on the cold pavement of the chapel, had she not been suddenly caught by a nun, who stood sheltered in the shadow of the pillar.

Henry sprang forward to support her ; but it was too late ; for a door suddenly opened, and Rosamond was forced in ; then it closed upon her for ever. The monarch fell, just as the last glimpse of her drapery vanished ; and when his eye rested on the ponderous door, he beheld the form of a crucifix, which was carved on the solid oak ; and he remained, almost unconsciously, kneeling before it. Rude as was this device, it awoke such sentiments in the bosom of the unhappy King as he had never before felt ; and, while he gazed upon it, he wept like a child ; for a sound, or a feeling,

went through his heart, which said : “ Here only canst thou find peace.” The monarch clasped his hands, and prayed unaware. It was no studied effort ; but his feelings shaped themselves into words. He confessed himself weak and sinful ; and felt thankful that God had brought him into such a state of humility. He arose, and felt his heart more at ease than it had been for many a long day. The tears which he had shed had fallen like the rain from a dark cloud, when the heaven again becomes clear : his earthly nature was refreshed by the shower. If all within was not yet happy, there was, at least, such a resignation as he had hitherto been a stranger to ; for he had never before thrown all his sorrows at the foot of the Cross of Christ.

To account for the presence of Rosamond we need only add, that the potion which she

swallowed on that fearful night, when Eleanor entered the labyrinth, had been prepared by Oliphant Uggleshred; and, had not fate ordained otherwise, it was his intention, after the Queen had departed, to have removed her to a place of security, where she would have been wholly in his own power. Although the draught was free from all strong poisonous qualities; yet, for several hours, Rosamond was in a state of unconsciousness; nor was it until she had lain some time in the chapel that she recovered. The joy and surprise of Maud, who knelt weeping beside her at the time, may be better imagined than described. None, saving herself and Pierre de Vidal (excepting the nuns of Godstow), knew that she was still living; the secret had been faithfully kept.

The minstrel was promoted to a high and honourable station in the King's service; and,

as he had long before won the heart of Maud, he had no difficulty in obtaining her hand. Their nuptials were honoured by the presence of Henry, and many of the Norman nobility ; and, as the King seldom resided at Woodstock, they occupied the chief apartments of the palace.

Queen Eleanor, as every reader of history is aware, was confined in a prison, from which she was never released until the death of the King. We shall not dwell upon Henry's penance at the shrine of Becket, where he knelt all night on the cold pavement, and bared his shoulders to the lash of the monks ; neither does it belong to our task to comment upon the rebellion of his sons, and all those domestic calamities which embittered his latter days. Suffice it to say, that he died with a full conviction, that the road to ambition



is beset with thorns; that power brings not happiness; nor immense possessions peace; and that "he who sows the wind must expect to reap the storm."



## NOTES.



“THE history of ‘Fair Rosamond’ has been enveloped in romantic traditions, which have scarcely any foundation in truth; but which have taken so firm a hold on the popular mind, and have been identified with so much poetry, that it is neither an easy nor a pleasant task to dissipate the fanciful illusion, and unpeople the ‘bower,’ in the sylvan shades of Woodstock. Rosamond de Clifford was the daughter of a baron of Herefordshire, the beautiful site of whose antique castle, in the valley of the

Wye, is pointed out to the traveller between the town of the Welsh Hay and the city of Hereford, at a point where the most romantic of rivers, after foaming through its rocky, narrow, bed in Wales, sweeps freely and tranquilly through an open English valley of surprising loveliness. Henry became enamoured of her in his youth, before he was king \* \* \* but long before his death Rosamond retired to lead a religious and penitent life, into the 'little nunnery' of Godstow. As Henry still preserved gentle and generous feelings towards the object of his youthful and ardent passion he, made many donations to the 'little nunnery' on her account ; and, when she died, the nuns, in gratitude to one who had been, both directly and indirectly, their benefactress, buried her in their choir, hung a silken pall over her tomb, and kept tapers constantly burning around it. These few lines, we believe, comprise all that is really known of the Fair Rosamond. The legend, so familiar to the childhood of all of us, was of later and gradual growth—not been the product of one imagina-

tion. The chronicler Brompton, who wrote in the time of Edward III., or more than a century and a half after the event, gave the first description we possess of the secret bower of Rosamond. He says that, in order that she might not be 'easily taken unawares by the queen,' Henry constructed, near 'Woodstock, a bower for this most sightly of maidens,' of wonderful contrivance, and not unlike the Dædalean labyrinth; but he speaks only of a device against surprise, and intimates, in clear terms, that Rosamond died a natural death."—*Pictorial History of England*, vol. i. p. 481.

"Drayton\* says that the ruins of Rosamond's labyrinth, together with the well, which was paved with square stones at the bottom, and also her tower, were yet remaining in his time. The labyrinth was altogether underground; being vaults arched and walled with brick and stone, almost inextricably wound one within another; by which she was at any time able to escape from her pursuers; and

\* Michael Drayton was born before Shakspeare.

could, if necessity required, let herself out by numberless private passages, many furlongs round about Woodstock.”—*Notes to Drayton's "HEROICAL EPISTLES."*

THE END.









