



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>

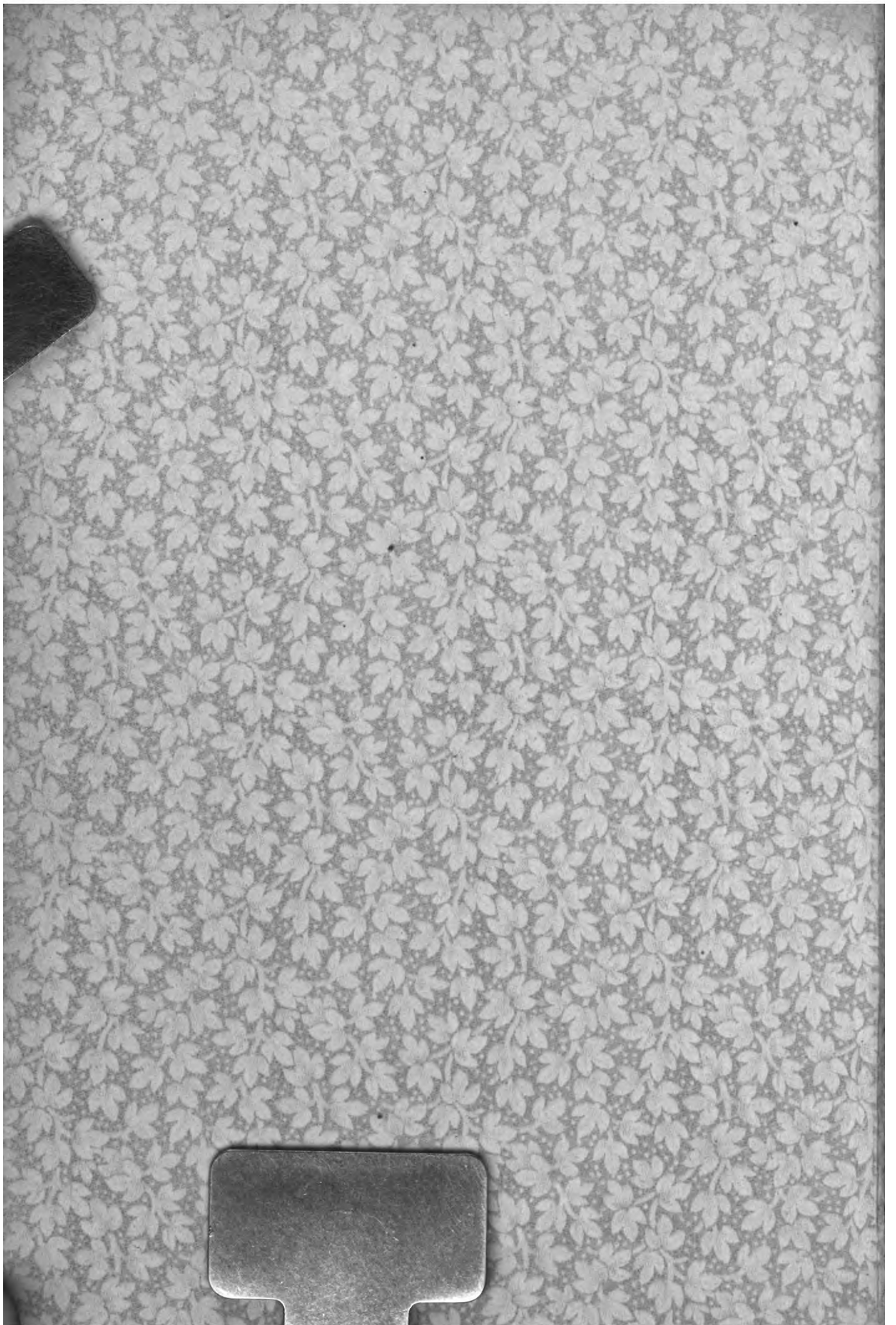


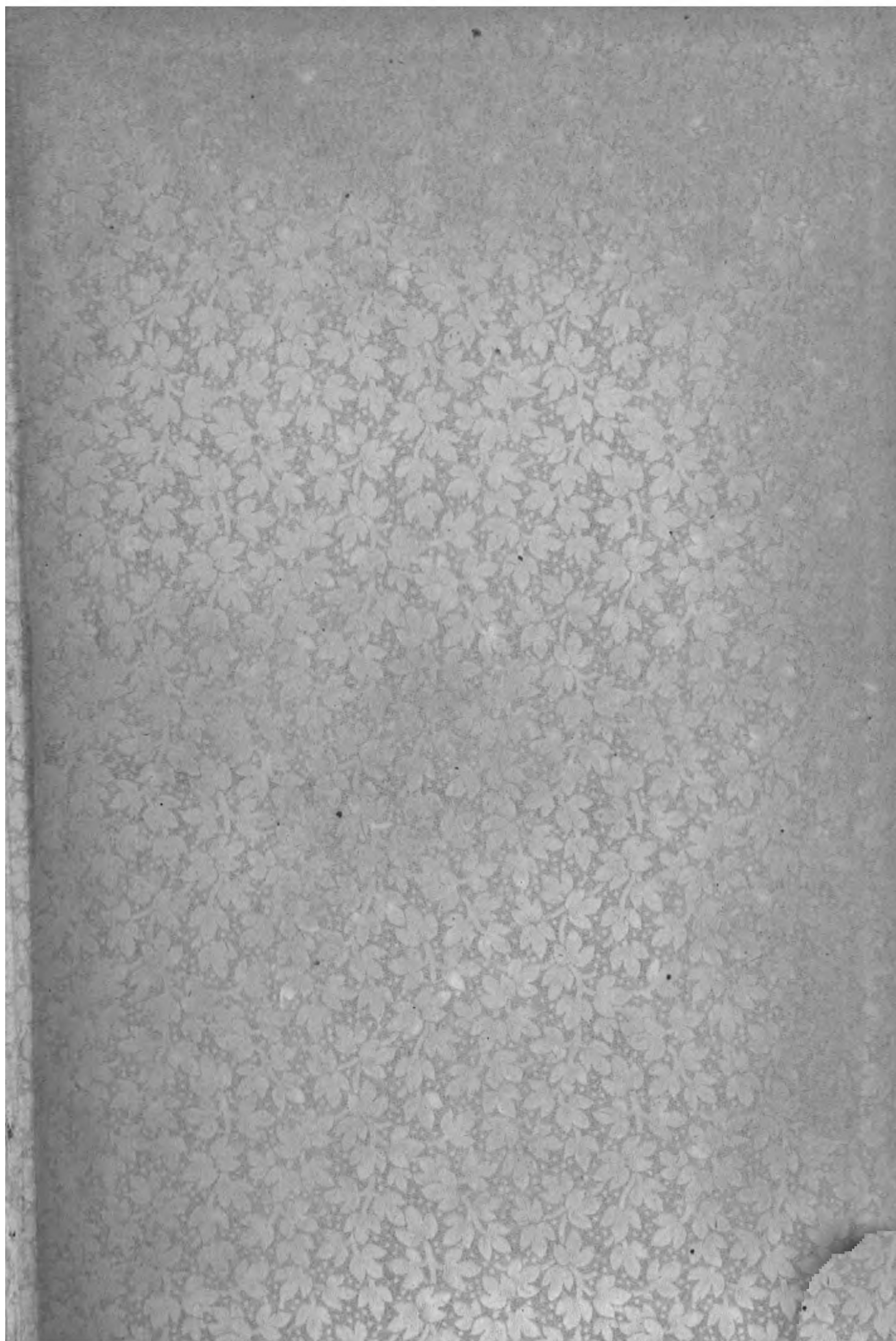
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.



The image shows the front cover of a book. The cover is a deep, dark green color. At the top, there is a decorative border consisting of a series of small, vertical rectangular elements. Below this, there are three circular medallions, each containing a stylized, multi-armed tree or plant with a starburst-like top, set within a decorative bowl. The central part of the cover is dominated by a large, rectangular frame with intricate, repeating patterns of leaves and scrolls. Inside this frame, the title "GESTA ROMANORUM" is printed in a large, gold-tooled, serif font. Below the frame, there are two large, circular medallions, each containing a series of concentric circles. At the bottom, there is another decorative border, similar to the one at the top, but with a more complex, repeating pattern of vertical elements.

GESTA ROMANORUM







600061805Q

GESTA ROMANORUM.



FRONTISPIECE.—See p. 174.

GESTA ROMANORUM

The Ancient Moral Tales of the
Old Story-Tellers.

London

W. SWAN SONNENSCHNEIN & CO.
PATERNOSTER ROW

224 J. 733.



Editor's Preface.

YOU have here, my good readers, several moral and entertaining stories selected and adapted from the *Gesta Romanorum*, and invented by the monks of old; they were used by them for amusement, as well as for instruction, and from them the most celebrated poets, of our own and other lands, have condescended to draw their plots.

The improvements and refinements of the present age naturally lead us to condemn as absurdities many of the incidents with which these tales abound. Considering the knowledge of the present day, we are perhaps justified in so doing. But we must bear in mind that few qualities are more dependent on time than probability and improbability. When we read these tales, we must retrace our steps to the age in which they were written; and though the tale may seem absurd to us of this day, yet

if it was calculated to impress the minds of those for whom it was invented, and to whom it was told, its merit was great, and therefore deserving of due praise. A giant or a magician was as probable, perhaps as *real*, to the people of the middle ages, as electricity is to us; and we must remember this when we judge these tales.

Romantic fiction pleases all minds, both old and young; the reason is this, says an old Platonist, 'that here, things are set down as they should be: but in the true history of the world, things are recorded indeed as they are, though it is but a testimony that they have not been as they should be. Wherefore, in the upshot of all, when we shall see come to pass that which so mightily pleases us in the reading the most ingenious plays and heroic poems, that long-afflicted Virtue at last comes to the crown, the mouth of all unbelievers must be stopped.'

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE UNGRATEFUL MAN,	I
JOVINIAN, THE PROUD EMPEROR,	14
THE KING AND THE GLUTTON,	28
GUIDO, THE PERFECT SERVANT,	32
THE KNIGHT AND THE KING OF HUNGARY,	39
THE THREE BLACK CROWS,	47
THE EMPEROR OF ROME AND HIS THREE DAUGHTERS,	50
THE TALE OF THE THREE CASKETS,	55
THE ANGEL AND THE HERMIT,	63
FULGENTIUS AND THE WICKED STEWARD,	69
THE WICKED PRIEST,	77
THE EMPEROR'S DAUGHTER,	81
THE EMPEROR LEO AND THE THREE IMAGES,	85
THE LAY OF THE LITTLE BIRD,	88
THE BURDENS OF LIFE,	95
THE SUGGESTIONS OF THE EVIL ONE,	100
COTONOLAPES, THE MAGICIAN,	102
THE GARDEN OF ALOADDIN,	105

	PAGE
SIR GUIDO, THE CRUSADER,	108
THE KNIGHT AND THE NECROMANCER,	127
THE CLERK AND THE IMAGE,	134
THE DEMON KNIGHT OF THE VANDAL CAMP,	138
THE EVIL ONE IN DISGUISE,	143
THE THREE MAXIMS,	146
THE TRIALS OF EUSTACE,	158
THE QUEEN SEMIRAMIS,	176
CELESTINUS AND THE MILLER'S HORSE,	188
THE EMPEROR CONRAD AND THE COUNT'S SON,	193
THE KNIGHT AND THE THREE QUESTIONS,	201
JONATHAN AND THE THREE TALISMANS,	206

GESTA ROMANORUM.

THE UNGRATEFUL MAN.

VITALIS, a noble Venetian, one day, at a hunting party, fell into a pit which had been dug to catch wild animals. He passed a whole night and day there, and I will leave you to imagine his dread and his agony. The pit was dark. Vitalis ran from the one side of it to the other, in the hope of finding some branch or root by which he might climb its sides, and get out of his dungeon ; but he heard such confused and extraordinary noises, growlings, hissings, and plaintive cries, that he became half dead with terror, and crouched in a corner motionless, awaiting death with the most horrid dismay. On the morning of the second day he heard some one passing near the pit, and then raising his voice, he cried out with

the most dolorous accent, 'Help, help! draw me out of this; I am perishing!'

A peasant crossing the forest heard his cry. At first he was frightened; but after a moment or two, taking courage, he approached the pit, and asked who had called.

'A poor huntsman,' answered Vitalis, 'who has passed a long night and day here. Help me out, for the love of God! Help me out, and I will recompense you handsomely.'

'I will do what I can,' replied the peasant.

Then Massaccio (such was the name of the peasant) took a hedgebill which hung at his girdle, and cutting a branch of a tree strong enough to bear a man,—'Listen, huntsman,' said he, 'to what I am going to say to you. I will let down this branch into the pit. I will fasten it against the sides, and hold it with my hands; and by pulling yourself out by it, you may get free from your prison.'

'Good,' answered Vitalis; 'ask me anything you will, and it shall be granted.'

'I ask for nothing,' said the peasant; 'but I am going to be married, and you may give what you like to my bride.'

So saying, Massaccio let down the branch—

he soon felt it heavy, and the moment after a monkey leapt merrily out of the pit. He had fallen like Vitalis, and had seized quickly on the branch of Massaccio. 'It was the devil surely which spoke to me from the pit,' said Massaccio, running away in affright.

'Do you abandon me, then?' cried Vitalis, in a lamentable accent; 'my friend, my dear friend, for the love of the Lord, for the love of your mistress, draw me out of this; I beg, I implore you; I will give her wedding gifts, I will enrich you. I am the Lord Vitalis, a rich Venetian; do not let me die of hunger in this horrible pit.'

Massaccio was touched by these prayers. He returned to the pit—let down another branch, and a lion jumped out, making the woods echo with a roar of delight.

'Oh certainly, certainly, it was the devil I heard,' said Massaccio, and fled away again; but stopping short, after a few paces, he heard again the piercing cries of Vitalis.

'O God, O God,' cried he, 'to die of hunger in a pit. Will no one then come to my help? Whoever you may be, I implore you to return; let me not die, when you can save me. I will give you a house and field, and cows and gold,

all that you can ask for; save me, save me only.'

Massaccio, thus implored, could not help returning. He let down the branch, and a serpent, hissing joyously, sprang out of the pit. Massaccio fell on his knees half dead with fear, and repeated all the prayers he could think of to drive away the demon. He was only brought to himself by hearing the cries of despair which Vitalis uttered.

'Will no one help me?' said he. 'Ah then, must I die? O God, O God!' and he wept and sobbed in a heart-breaking manner.

'It is certainly the voice of a man for all that,' said Massaccio. 'Oh, if you are still there,' said Vitalis, 'in the name of all that is dear to you, save me, that I may die at least at home, and not in this horrible pit. I can say no more; my voice is exhausted. Shall I give you my palace at Venice, my possessions, my honours? I give them all; and may I die if I forfeit my word! Life, life only; save only my life.'

Massaccio could not resist such prayers, and mingled with such promises. He let down the branch again.

‘Ah, here you are at last,’ said he, seeing Vitalis come up.

‘Yes,’ said he, and uttering a cry of joy, he fainted in the arms of Massaccio.

Massaccio sustained, assisted him, and brought him to himself; then, giving him his arm, ‘Let us,’ said he, ‘quit this forest;’ but Vitalis could hardly walk,—he was exhausted with hunger.

‘Eat this piece of bread,’ said Massaccio, and he gave him some, which he took out of his wallet.

‘My benefactor, my saviour, my good angel,’ said Vitalis, ‘how can I ever sufficiently recompense you!’

‘You have promised me a marriage portion for my bride, and your palace at Venice for myself,’ said Massaccio. But Vitalis had now begun to regain his strength.

‘Yes, certainly, I will give a portion to your wife, my dear Massaccio, and I will make you the richest peasant of your village. Where do you live?’

‘At Capalatta in the forest; but I would willingly quit my village to establish myself at Venice in the palace you have promised me.’

‘Here we are, out of the forest,’ said Vitalis;

‘I know my road now ; thank you, Massaccio.’

‘But when shall I come for my palace and the portion of my intended?’ returned the peasant.

‘When you will,’ said the other, and they separated.

Vitalis went to Venice, and Massaccio to Capalatta, where he related his adventure to his mistress, telling her what a rich portion she was to have, and what a fine palace she was to live in.

The next day, early, he set out for Venice, and asked for the palace of the Signor Vitalis,—went straight to it, and told the domestics that he should come shortly with his mistress, in a fine carriage, to take possession of the palace which the Signor Vitalis had promised to give him. Massaccio appeared mad to those who heard him, and Vitalis was told that there was a peasant in the hall, who asked for a marriage portion, and said the palace belonged to him.

‘Let him be turned out immediately,’ said Vitalis, ‘I know him not.’

The valets accordingly drove him away with insults, and Massaccio returned to his cottage

in despair, without daring to see his mistress. At one corner of his fireplace was seated the monkey, at the other corner the lion, and the serpent had twisted itself in spiral circles upon the hearth. Massaccio was seized with fear. 'The man has driven me from his door,' thought he; 'the lion will certainly devour me, the serpent sting me, and the monkey laugh at me; and this will be my reward for saving them from the pit.' But the monkey turned to him with a most amicable grimace; the lion, vibrating gently his tail, came and licked his hand, like a dog caressing his master; and the serpent, unrolling its ringy body, moved about the room with a contented and grateful air, which gave courage to Massaccio.

'Poor animals!' said he, 'they are better than the Signor Vitalis; he drove me like a beggar from the door. Ah! with what pleasure I would pitch him again into the pit. And my bride! whom I thought to marry so magnificently! I have not a stick of wood in my wood-house, not a morsel of meat for a meal, and no money to buy any. The ungrateful wretch, with his portion and his palace!'

Thus did Massaccio complain. Meanwhile

the monkey began to make significant faces, the lion to agitate his tail with great uneasiness, and the serpent to roll and unroll its circles with great rapidity. Then the monkey, approaching his benefactor, made him a sign to follow, and led him into the wood-house, where was regularly piled up a quantity of wood sufficient for the whole year. It was the monkey who had collected this wood in the forest, and brought it to the cottage of Massaccio. Massaccio embraced the grateful ape. The lion then, uttering a delicate roar, led him to a corner of the cottage where he saw an enormous provision of game, two sheep, three kids, hares and rabbits in abundance, and a fine wild boar, all covered with the branches of trees to keep them fresh. It was the lion who had hunted for his benefactor. Massaccio patted kindly his mane. 'And you, then,' said he to the serpent, 'have you brought me nothing? Art thou a Vitalis, or a good and honest animal like the monkey and the lion?' The serpent glided rapidly under a heap of dried leaves, and reappeared immediately, rearing itself superbly on its tail, when Massaccio saw with surprise a beautiful diamond in its mouth. 'A diamond!' cried

Massaccio, and stretched forth his hand to stroke caressingly the serpent and take its offering.

Massaccio then set out immediately for Venice to turn his diamond into money. He addressed himself to a jeweller. The jeweller examined the diamond; it was of the finest water.

‘How much do you ask for it?’ said he.

‘Two hundred crowns,’ said Massaccio, thinking his demand to be great; it was hardly the tenth part of the value of the stone. The jeweller looked at Massaccio, and said, ‘To sell it at that price you must be a robber, and I arrest you!’

‘If it is not worth so much, give me less,’ said Massaccio; ‘I am not a robber, I am an honest man; it was the serpent who gave me the diamond.’

But the police now arrived, and conducted him before the magistrate. There he recounted his adventure, which appeared to be a mere fairy vision. Yet as the Signor Vitalis was implicated in the story, the magistrate referred the affair to the state inquisition, and Massaccio appeared before it.

‘Relate to us your history,’ said one of the

inquisitors, 'and lie not, or we will have you thrown into the canal.'

Massaccio related his adventure.

'So,' said the inquisitor, 'you saved the Signor Vitalis?'

'Yes, noble signors.'

'And he promised you a marriage-portion for your bride, and his palace at Venice for yourself?'

'Yes, noble signors.'

'And he drove you like a beggar from his door?'

'Yes, noble signors.'

'Let the Signor Vitalis appear,' said the same inquisitor.

Vitalis appeared.

'Do you know this man, Signor Vitalis?' said the inquisitor.

'No, I know him not,' replied Vitalis.

The inquisitors consulted together. 'This man,' said they, speaking of Massaccio, 'is evidently a knave and a cheat; he must be thrown into prison. Signor Vitalis, you are acquitted.' Then, making a sign to an officer of police, the inquisitor said, 'Take that man to prison.'

Massaccio fell on his knees in the middle of the hall. 'Noble signors, noble signors,' said he, 'it is possible that the diamond may have been stolen; the serpent who gave it me may have wished to deceive me. It is possible that the ape, the lion, and the serpent may all be an illusion of the demon, but it is true that I saved the Signor Vitalis. Signor Vitalis,' (turning to him), 'I ask you not for the marriage-portion for my bride, nor for your palace of marble, but say a word for me; suffer me not to be thrown into prison; do not abandon me; I did not abandon you when you were in the pit.'

'Noble signors,' said Vitalis, bowing to the tribunal, 'I can only repeat what I have already said: I know not this man. Has he a single witness to produce?'

At this moment the whole court was thrown into fear and astonishment, for the lion, the monkey, and the serpent entered the hall together. The monkey was mounted on the back of the lion, and the serpent was twined round the arm of the monkey. On entering, the lion roared, the monkey spluttered, and the serpent hissed.

‘ Ah ! these are the animals of the pit,’ cried Vitalis, in alarm.

‘ Signor Vitalis,’ resumed the chief of the inquisitors, when the dismay which this apparition had caused had somewhat diminished, ‘ you have asked where were the witnesses of Massaccio ? You see that God has sent them at the right time before the bar of our tribunal. Since, then, God has testified against you, we should be culpable before Him if we did not punish your ingratitude. Your palace and your possessions are confiscated, and you shall pass the rest of your life in a narrow prison. And you,’ continued he, addressing himself to Massaccio, who was all this time caressing the lion, the monkey, and the serpent, ‘ since a Venetian has promised you a palace of marble, and a portion for your bride, the republic of Venice will accomplish the promise ; the palace and possessions of Vitalis are yours. You,’ said he to the secretary of the tribunal, ‘ draw up an account of all this history, that the people of Venice may know, through all generations, that the justice of the tribunal of the state inquisition is not less equitable than it is rigorous.’

Massaccio and his wife lived happily for many

years afterwards in the palace of Vitalis with the monkey, the lion, and the serpent; and Massaccio had them represented in a picture, on the wall of his palace, as they entered the hall of the tribunal, the lion carrying the monkey, and the monkey carrying the serpent.





JOVINIAN THE PROUD EMPEROR.

IN the days of old, when the empire of the world was in the hands of the lord of Rome, Jovinian was emperor. Oft as he lay on his couch, and mused upon his power and his wealth, his heart was elated beyond measure, and he said within himself, 'Verily, there is no other god than me.'

It happened one morning after he had thus said unto himself, that the emperor arose, and summoning his huntsmen and his friends, hastened to chase the wild deer of the forest. The chase was long and swift, and the sun was high in the heavens, when Jovinian reined up his horse on the bank of a clear bright stream that ran through the fertile country on which his palace stood. Allured by the refreshing appearance of the stream, he bade his attendants abide still, whilst he sought a secluded pool

beneath some willows, where he might bathe unseen.

The emperor hastened to the pool, cast off his garments, and revelled in the refreshing coolness of the waters. But whilst he thus bathed, a person like to him in form, in feature, and in voice, approached the river's bank, arrayed himself unperceived in the imperial garments, and then sprang on Jovinian's horse, and rode to meet the huntsmen, who, deceived by the likeness and the dress, obeyed his commands, and followed their new emperor to the palace-gates.

Jovinian at length quitted the water, and sought in every direction for his apparel and his horse, but could not find them. He called aloud upon his attendants, but they heard him not, being already in attendance on the false emperor. And Jovinian regarded his nakedness and said, 'Miserable man that I am! to what a state am I reduced! Whither shall I go? Who will receive me in this plight? I bethink me there is knight hereabout whom I have advanced to great honour; I will seek him, and with his assistance regain my palace, and punish the person who has done me this wrong.'

Naked and ashamed, Jovinian sought the gate of the knight's castle, and knocked loudly at the wicket.

'Who art thou, and what dost thou seek?' asked the porter, without unclosing the gate.

'Open, open, sirrah!' replied the emperor, with redoubled knocks on the wicket.

'In the name of wonder, friend, who art thou?' said the old porter as he opened the gate, and saw the strange figure of the emperor before the threshold.

'Who am I, askest thou, sirrah? I am thy emperor. Go tell thy master, Jovinian is at his gate, and bid him bring forth a horse and some garments, to supply those that I have been deprived of.'

'Rascal,' rejoined the porter—'thou the emperor! Why, the emperor but just now rode up to the castle, with all his attendants, and honoured my master by sitting with him at meat in the great hall. Thou the emperor! a very pretty emperor indeed; faugh, I'll tell my master what thou sayest, and he will soon find out whether thou art mad, drunk, or a thief.'

The porter, greatly enraged, went and told his lord how that a naked fellow stood at the

gate, calling himself the emperor, and demanding clothes and a good steed.

‘Bring the fellow in,’ said the knight.

So they brought in Jovinian, and he stood before the lord of the castle, and again declared himself to be the emperor Jovinian. Loud laughed the knight to the emperor.

‘What, thou my lord the emperor! art mad, good fellow? Come, give him my old cloak; it will keep him from the flies.’

‘Yes, sir knight,’ replied Jovinian, ‘I am thy emperor, who advanced thee to great honour and wealth, and will shortly punish thee for thy present conduct.’

‘Scoundrel!’ said the knight, now enraged beyond all bounds; ‘traitor! thou the emperor? ay, of beggars and fools. Why, did not my lord but lately sit with me in my hall, and taste of my poor cheer? and did not he bid me ride with him to his palace-gate, whence I am but now returned? Fool, I pitied thee before, now I see thy villany. Go, turn the fellow out, and flog him from the castle-ditch to the river-side.’

And the people did as the knight commanded them. So when they ceased from flogging the emperor, he sat him down on the grass, and

covered him with the tattered robe, and communed on his own wretchedness.

‘Oh, my God!’ said Jovinian,—for he now thought of other gods but himself,—‘is it possible that I have come to such a state of misery, and that, through the ingratitude of one whom I have raised so high!’ And as he thus spake, he thought not of his own ingratitude to his God, through whom alone all princes reign and live. And now he brooded over vengeance.—‘Ay,’ said he, as he felt the sore weals on his back from the scourging; ‘ay, I will be avenged. When he next sees me, he shall know that he who gives can also take away. Come, I will seek the good duke, my ablest counsellor; he will know his sovereign, and gladly aid him in his calamity.’ And with these thoughts he wrapped his cloak round him, and sought the house of the good duke.

Jovinian knocked at the gate of the duke’s palace, and the porter opened the wicket, and, seeing a half-naked man, asked him why he knocked, and who he was.

‘Friend,’ replied the emperor, ‘I am Jovinian. I have been robbed of my clothes whilst bathing,

and am here with no apparel, save this ragged cloak, and no horse; so tell the duke the emperor is here.'

The porter, more and more astonished at the emperor's words, sought his master, and delivered Jovinian's message to him.

'Bring in the poor man,' said the duke; 'peradventure he is mad.'

So they brought Jovinian unto the duke's great hall, and the duke looked on him, but knew him not. And when Jovinian reiterated his story, and spoke angrily unto the duke, he pitied him. 'Poor mad fellow,' said the good duke, 'I have but just now returned from the palace, where I left the very emperor thou assumest to be. Take him to the guard-house. Perhaps a few days' close confinement on bread and water may cool his heated brain. Go, poor fellow; I pity thee!'

So the servants did as their lord commanded, and they fed Jovinian on bread and water, and after a time turned him out of the castle; for he still said he was the emperor.

Sorely and bitterly did the emperor weep and bewail his miserable fate, when the servants drove him from the castle-gate. 'Alas, alas!'

he exclaimed in his misery, 'what shall I do, and whither shall I resort? Even the good duke knew me not, but regarded me as a poor madman. Come, I will seek my own palace, and discover myself to my wife. Surely she will know me at least.'

'Who art thou, poor man?' asked the king's porter of him when he stood before the palace-gate, and would have entered in.

'Thou oughtest to know me,' replied Jovinian, 'seeing thou hast served me these fifteen years.'

'Served you, you dirty fellow,' rejoined the porter, 'I serve the emperor. Serve you, indeed!'

'I am the emperor. Dost thou not know me? Come, my good fellow, seek the empress, and bid her, by the sign of the three moles on the emperor's breast, send me hither the imperial robes, which some fellow stole whilst I was bathing.'

'Ha! ha! fellow; well, you are royally mad. Why the emperor is at dinner with his wife. Well, well, I'll do thy bidding, if it be but to have the whipping of thee afterwards for an impudent madman. Three moles on the

emperor's breast! how royally thou shalt be beaten, my friend.'

When the porter told the empress what the poor madman at the gate had said, she held down her head, and said with a sorrowful voice unto her lord, 'My good lord and king, here is a fellow at the palace-gate that hath sent unto me, and bids me, by those secret signs known only to thee and me, to send him the imperial robes, and welcome him as my husband and my sovereign.'

When the fictitious emperor heard this, he bade the attendants bring in Jovinian. And lo, as he entered the hall, the great wolf-hound, that had slept at his feet for years, sprang from his lair, and would have pulled him down, had not the attendants prevented him; whilst the falcon, that had sat on his wrist in many a fair day's hawking, broke her jesses, and flew out of the hall: so changed was Jovinian the emperor.

'Nobles and friends,' said the new emperor, 'hear ye what I will ask of this man.'

And the nobles bowed assent, whilst the emperor asked of Jovinian his name, and his business with the empress.

'Askest thou me who I am, and wherefore I

am come?' rejoined Jovinian. 'Am not I thy emperor, and the lord of this house and this realm?'

'These our nobles shall decide,' replied the new king. 'Tell me now, which of us twain is your emperor?'

And the nobles answered with one accord: 'Thou dost trifle with us, sire. Can we doubt that thou art our emperor, whom we have known from his childhood? As for this base fellow, we know not who he is.'

And with one accord the people cried out against Jovinian that he should be punished.

On this the usurper turned to the empress of Jovinian—'Tell me,' said he, 'on thy true faith, knowest thou this man who calls himself emperor of this realm?'

And the empress answered, 'Good, my lord, have not thirty years passed since I first knew thee, and became the mother of our children? Why askest thou me of this fellow? and yet it doth surprise me how he should know what none save thou and I can know?'

Then the usurper turned to Jovinian, and with a harsh countenance rebuked his presumption, and ordered the executioners to drag

him by the feet by horses until he died. This said he before all his court; but he sent his servant to the jailor, and commanded him to scourge Jovinian, and for this once to set him free.

The deposed emperor desired death. 'Why,' said he to himself, 'should I now live? my friends, my dependents, yea, even the partner of my life, shuns me, and I am desolate among those whom my bounties have raised. Come, I will seek the good priest, to whom I so often have laid open my most secret faults: of a surety, he will remember me.'

Now, the good priest lived in a small cell, nigh to a chapel about a stone's cast from the palace gate; and when Jovinian knocked, the priest, being engaged in reading, answered from within, 'Who is there? why troublest thou me?'

'I am the emperor Jovinian; open the window, I would speak to thee,' replied the fugitive.

Immediately the narrow window of the cell was opened, and the priest, looking out, saw no one save the poor half-clothed Jovinian. 'Depart from me, thou accursed thing,' cried the priest; 'thou art not our good lord the

emperor; but the foul fiend himself, the great tempter.'

'Alas, alas!' cried Jovinian, 'to what fate am I reserved, that even my own good priest despises me! Ah me, I bethink me—in the arrogance of my heart, I called myself a god: the weight of my sin is grievous unto me. Father, good father, hear the sins of a miserable penitent.'

Gladly did the priest listen to Jovinian; and when he had told him all his sins, the good priest comforted the penitent, and assured him of God's mercy, if his repentance was sincere. And so it happened that on this a cloud seemed to fall from before the eyes of the priest; and when he again looked on Jovinian, he knew him to be the emperor, and he pitied him, clothing him with such poor garments as he had, and went with him to the palace-gate.

The porter stood in the gateway, and, as Jovinian and the priest drew near, he made a lowly obeisance, and opened the gate for the emperor. 'Dost thou know me?' asked the emperor.

'Very well, my lord,' replied the servant; 'but I wish that you had not left the palace.'

So Jovinian passed on to the hall of his palace ; and as he went, all the nobles rose and bowed to the emperor ; for the usurper was in another apartment, and the nobles knew again the face of Jovinian.

But a certain knight passed into the presence of the false emperor. ‘My lord,’ said he, ‘there is one in the great hall to whom all men bow, for he so much resembleth you that we know not which is the emperor.’

Then said the usurper to the empress, ‘Go and see if you know this man.’

‘Oh, my good lord,’ said the empress, when she returned from the hall, ‘whom can I believe ? are there, then, two Jovinians ?’

‘I will myself go and determine,’ rejoined the usurper, as he took the empress by her hand, and, leading her into the great hall, placed her on the throne beside himself.

‘Kinsfolk and nobles,’ said the usurper, ‘by the oaths ye have sworn, determine between me and this man.’

And the empress answered, ‘Let me, as in duty bound, speak first. Heaven be my witness, I know not which is my lord and husband.’

And all the nobles said the same.

Thereupon the feigned Jovinian rose and spake : ‘ Nobles and friends, hearken ! that man is your emperor and your master ; hear ye him ; know that he did exalt himself above that which was right, and make himself equal unto God. Verily he hath been rewarded ; he hath suffered much indignity and wrong, and, of God’s will, ye knew him not ; he hath repented him of his grievous sin, and the scourge is now removed ; he has made such satisfaction as man can make. Hear ye him, know him, obey him.’

As the feigned emperor thus addressed the astonished nobles, his features seemed illumined with a fair and spiritual light, his imperial robes fell from off him, and he stood confessed before the assembly an angel of God, clothed in white raiment. And, as he ended his speech, he bowed his head, and vanished from their sight.

Jovinian returned to his throne, and for three years reigned with so much mercy and justice, that his subjects had no cause to regret the change of their emperor. And it came to pass, after the space of three years, the same angel appeared to him in a dream, and warned him of his death. So Jovinian dictated his troublous

life to his secretaries, that it might remain as a warning unto all men against worldly pride, and an incitement to the performance of our religious duties. And when he had so done, he meekly resigned himself, and fell asleep in death.

THE KING AND THE GLUTTON.

THERE once lived a king of Rome, who, out of charity to the blind, decreed that every subject of his that was so afflicted should be entitled to receive a hundred shillings from the royal treasury. Now there was in Rome a club of men who lived for the world alone, and spent all they had in rioting and eating. Seven days had they continued revelling at one tavern, when the host demanded to be paid his bill. Every one searched his pockets, but still there was not enough to pay the reckoning.

‘There still wants one hundred shillings,’ said the innkeeper; ‘and until that is paid, ye go not hence.’

These young men knew not what to do, as they were penniless. ‘What shall we do?’

said they one to another. 'How can we pay so large a sum?' At length one bethought him of the king's edict.

'Listen,' said he, 'listen to me; does not the king give one hundred shillings to every blind man that applies for it?'

'Even so,' said the rest; 'but what then? we are not blind.'

'What then?' rejoined the young man, 'Come, let us cast lots who shall be made blind, that when he is deprived of sight we may take him to the king's palace, and obtain the hundred shillings.'

So the young men cast lots, and the lot fell upon the man who had proposed this plan.

And the rest took him, and putting out his eyes led him to the king's palace. When they knocked at the gate, the porter opened the wicket, and demanded their business.

'Business,' said they; 'see ye not our companion is blind? he seeks to receive the king's benevolent gift.'

'The blindness is rather sudden,' muttered the porter, who knew the young man by sight. 'Well, well, I will fetch the almoner.'

So the almoner, who distributed the king's

charity, came to the gate, and looking on the young man, asked him what he wanted.

‘A hundred shillings, which my lord the king gives to those that are blind,’ replied the youth.

‘Thy blindness is very sudden,’ rejoined the almoner; ‘when did it happen, and where? for I saw thee yesterday with both eyes perfect in the tavern by the city wall.’

‘Last night, noble sir,’ replied the blind man, ‘last night, at that tavern I became blind.’

‘Go fetch the host,’ said the almoner sternly, ‘we will look into this matter more fully.’

So when the innkeeper came, he inquired of him how the matter was; and when he had heard all their deeds, he turned to the young man, and said :—

‘Of a surety thou knowest but half the law, and dost interpret it wrong; to such as are blind by God’s act does our gracious king give his charity; such the law protects and relieves. But thou—why art thou blind? Thinkest thou that thou deservest to be rewarded for voluntarily surrendering thine eyes, in order to discharge the debt thou and thy companions had contracted by gluttony and rioting? Be-

gone, foolish man : thy avarice hath made thee blind.'

So they drove away the young men from the king's gate, lamenting their folly and wickedness.





GUIDO, THE PERFECT SERVANT.

THERE was once a great emperor of Rome named Valerius, who would that every man, according to his wishes, should serve him; so he commanded that whosoever should strike *three* times on the gate of his palace should be admitted to do him service. In the emperor's kingdom was also a poor man named Guido, who, when he heard of his lord's commands, thus spake with himself: 'Now I am a poor man, and lowly born; is it not better to live and serve, than to starve and be free?' So he went to the king's gate, and knocked three knocks: and lo, it was opened to him, according as it had been said; and he was brought before the emperor.

'What seek you, friend?' asked Valerius, as Guido bowed before him.

‘To serve my king,’ was Guido’s reply.

‘What service can you perform for me?’ rejoined the emperor.

‘Six services can I perform, O king: as your body-guard, I can prepare your bed and your food, and attend your chamber. I can sleep when others watch, and watch while others sleep. As your cup-bearer, I can drink good wine, and tell whether it be so or not. I can summon the guests to my master’s banquet, to his great honour and benefit. I can kindle a fire which shall warm all that seek it, and yet not smoke. And I can show the way to the Holy Land, to the health of such as shall go thither.’

‘By my troth,’ rejoined the emperor, ‘these are great things that thou dost promise. See that thou do them. Each for one year. Serve me first as my body-guard.’

Guido was content to obey the emperor; and he prepared to perform his duties as his body-guard. Every night he made ready the emperor’s bed, and prepared his apparel. Every night he lay before the emperor’s chamber-door, armed at all points; whilst by his side watched a faithful dog to warn him of

the approach of danger. In every thing did he minister so faithfully to his lord, that the emperor was well pleased with him, and after his first year, made him seneschal of his castle and steward of his household. Then did Guido commence his labours in his second office. During the entire summer he gathered large stores of every thing needful into the castle, and collected much provision at little cost, by carefully watching his opportunities. Anon came on the winter, and when those who had slept during the times of plenty began to labour and lay up in their store-houses, Guido remained at ease, and completed his second year's service with credit to himself.

And now the third year of Guido's service came on; and the emperor called for his chief butler, and said, 'Mix in a cup good wine, must, and vinegar, and give it to Guido to drink; that we may know how he doth taste good drink, and what he knoweth of its qualities.'

So the butler did as he was ordered, and gave the cup to Guido, who, when he had tasted of it, said, 'Of a truth it was good, it is good, and it will be good.' And when the emperor asked

him how these things could be, he said, 'The vinegar was good, the old wine is good, and the must will be good when it is older.' So the emperor saw that he had answered rightly and discreetly of the mixture, which he knew not of before. 'Go, therefore,' said Valerius, 'through my country, and invite my friends to a banquet at the festival of Christmas now at hand;' and Guido bowed assent, and departed on his way.

But Guido did not execute his lord's commands—going not unto his friends, but unto his enemies. So that when the emperor descended into his banquet-hall, his heart was troubled; for his enemies sat round his table, and there was not a friend among them. So he called Guido, and spake angrily to him.

'How, sir! didst thou not tell me that thou knewest whom to invite to my banquet?'

And Guido said, 'Of a surety, my lord.'

'Did not I bid thee invite my friends? and how, then, hast thou summoned all mine enemies?'

And Guido said, 'May thy servant speak?'

So the emperor said, 'Speak on.'

And the servant said, 'My lord, there is no

season or time that thy friends may not visit thee, and be received with pleasure and honour ; but it is not so with thine enemies. Then I said to myself, "Conciliation and kindness would go far to convert enemies into friends."'

Now it turned out as Guido hoped ; for ere the feast was ended, the king and his enemies were reconciled to each other, and became friends even unto the end of their days. So the emperor called Guido, and said, 'With God's blessing, thy design has prospered. Come now, make for my reconciled enemies and me a fire that shall burn without smoke.'

And Guido answered, 'It shall be done as thou hast required, O king.'

So he sent and gathered much green wood, and dried it in the sun until it was quite dry, and therewith made a fire that did cast out much heat, and yet did not smoke. So that the emperor and his friends rejoiced greatly therein. And so it was when the emperor saw how well Guido had performed his five ministries, he bade him execute his sixth service—that he might attain to great honour in his kingdom.

'My lord,' said Guido, 'he that would know

the way to the Holy Land must follow me to the sea-shore.'

So a proclamation went forth from the king to that effect; and great multitudes of men and women flocked to the sea-shore after Guido. When the people were come, Guido said, 'My friends, do you see in the ocean the things that I see?'

And the people answered, 'We know not.'

'See ye in the midst of the waves a huge rock?'

And the people answered, 'It is even so. Why ask you this of us?'

'Know ye all,' replied Guido, 'that on that rock liveth a bird, that sitteth continually on her nest, in which are seven eggs. While she so sitteth, behold the sea is calm, and men may pass to and fro over the wide waters in safety. But when she doth quit her nest, the winds blow, and the waves rise, and many perish on the waters.'

Then said the people, 'How shall we know when this bird quitteth her nest?'

And Guido answered, 'She sitteth always, unless a sudden emergency happen; and then when she is away, there cometh another bird,

great and strong, that defileth her nest and breaketh her seven eggs, which, when the first bird seeth, she flieth away, and the winds and storms arise ; then must the shipman remain in port.'

Then said the people, ' Master, how may we prevent these things, and defend the bird and her nest from her enemy ? '

And Guido said, ' The enemy hateth the blood of the lamb, and cannot come where that is. Sprinkle, therefore, the inside and outside of the nest with this blood ; and so long as one drop remaineth, the friendly bird will sit in peace, and the waves will not rage and swell, and there shall be safety on the waters of the sea. '

And the people did as Guido said. They took the blood of a lamb, and sprinkled the nest and the rock therewith. Then passed the emperor and all his people to the Holy Land, and returned in peace and safety. And the emperor did as he had promised unto Guido, and rewarded the perfect servant with great riches, promoting him to high honour among the people.



THE KNIGHT AND THE KING OF HUNGARY.

THERE was a merry feast in the palace of Philonimus, the emperor of Rome, and his fair child, the maiden Aglae, sat by his side, whilst a brave knight that loved the maiden dearly sat on the other hand of the emperor. For the knight was bound for Palestine, to aid in rescuing the holy city from the power of the infidels, and the emperor held a high festival in honour of that knight.

The feast was over in the hall, and the knight led the maiden from beside her father's throne to the floor of the hall, and danced with her, whilst the king's minstrels played a measure.

And as he danced, the knight talked with the lady, and the lady talked with the knight, and often sighed she when he spoke of his voyage to the Holy Land, and the great deeds he would

perform for the glory of God, and the love of the fair lady. Then said the knight, 'Lady, fair lady! to-morrow's dawn sees me on my way to Palestine, and for seven years I bind myself to fight for the holy city. Plight me, dearest, thy troth, that these seven years thou take no other husband, and I will plight thee my troth that for that time I will take no wife; and if this day seven years I come not again, then art thou free from thy promise.'

The lady was pleased with the words of the knight, and they vowed their vow, the one to the other.

Then sailed the knight for Palestine, and for years they wist not where he was. At length, the king of Hungary came to the emperor's court, and he looked on the beauty of Aglae, and sought her of her father for his queen. And the emperor was glad; for the king was a great and good king. Then said he, 'So be it, if my daughter consent.'

And Aglae bowed her head, when the king of Hungary spoke to her, and said, 'Oh lord, the king, I am not free to be thy wife; for lo, these six years past I vowed to marry no man, and lo, one year more remains of my vow;

until the end of which, I cannot accept the honour of my lord the king.'

Then said the father, 'Since thou hast so vowed, I will not break thy vow. Wait then, my lord, yet one year, and then my daughter shall be thy bride.'

So the king of Hungary returned to his kingdom.

.

Aglæ sat at her chamber window, and looked out upon the road that led towards her father's palace. 'Alas, alas!' she said, 'it wants but one day to complete the seven years of my vow. To-morrow, my love promised to be with me again from the Holy Land. To-morrow, the king of Hungary comes to claim me. Ah me! what shall I do? If my love comes not, I must be the king's bride;' and she bent her face on her hand, and wept sorely.

As the day drew near, the king of Hungary prepared to seek his bride. A great company was gathered together, and many wagons of presents were prepared to accompany the king. But when he saw them, and how slowly they journeyed, he left all his company, and went his

way alone, eager to claim Aglae as his bride, so soon as the seven years were ended. The king was royally arrayed in purple, and his steed was clothed in gorgeous trappings. Now, as he drew nigh to Rome, a knight rode after him, who was covered from head to foot in a long black cloak, and bore on his shoulder a white embroidered cross. 'Hail, Sir Knight,' said the king, 'whither travellest thou? what news from the Holy Land?'

'To Rome, my lord,' rejoined the knight, halting his steed alongside of the king's, 'the Cross has gained the victory.'

'Thither, too, do I travel, Sir Knight; I am the king of Hungary, I go to seek my bride, the emperor's fair daughter; I pray thee bear me company on the road.'

The knight acceded to the king's proposal, and as they journeyed, they talked of the holy war in Palestine, and rejoiced that the city of the holy sepulchre was free from the power of the Saracens. As they thus talked together, the sky became cloudy, the wind howled through the woods, and the rain fell so fast, that the king's apparel was wet through.

'My lord,' said the knight, 'ye have done

foolishly in that ye have not brought your house with you.'

'My house, Sir Knight! how meanest thou? my house is large and broad, made of stones and mortar; how should I bring with me my house? thou art beside thyself, Sir Knight!'

But the knight said nothing until they came to the bank of a broad stream, into which the king, being out of humour, plunged his horse, at the same time striking his spurs deeply into him; so he missed the ford, and would have been drowned but for the knight's help.

'My lord,' said the knight, when they were safe on the river's bank, 'thou shouldest have brought thy bridge with thee.'

'My bridge,' said the king, 'how strangely thou speakest, Sir Knight; my bridge is made of stones and mortar, and is half a mile long, and yet thou sayest, why have I not my bridge? thou art foolish, Sir Knight!'

'Perhaps,' replied the knight, 'my folly may turn thee to wisdom.'

And as they rode on, the king asked of the knight what hour of the day it was.

'For those that are hungry,' replied the knight, 'it is time to eat; dismount, therefore,

my lord, and honour me by partaking of the food I have with me.'

So they both sat down under a tree, and ate of the food that was in the knight's wallet, and drank of the clear stream that ran beside them. When their meat was finished, and they were once more mounted, the knight said :—

'O king, why didst thou not bring with thee thy father and thy mother?'

'My father, Sir Knight, is dead, and my mother is old and cannot travel; how then could I bring them? Verily, thou art the most foolish man that I did ever meet with.'

'That is as it may be,' said the knight with a smile, 'every thing is judged by its end. Now, O king, farewell! I may not ride with thee to the emperor's palace, thither lies thy road; farewell.'

'But stay, Sir Knight,' said the king, 'whither ridest thou then?'

'Seven years ago, I left a net in a place, and now I go to see. If I find it not broken, then will I take it home, and keep it, as a precious jewel; if it be broken, I will leave it to thee, O king. Once more, farewell.'

So speaking, the knight turned away from the

high road, and went by a shorter way towards Rome, to the emperor's palace. The king rode on the highway. Now, as the king drew near to Rome, one of the emperor's servants met him, and went and told the emperor, how that the king of Hungary was riding all alone towards the city, and was wet and weary with his journey. Then the emperor set out to meet the king, and received him royally, and took his wet clothes off him, and clothed him with his own imperial robes. Then the trumpets sounded to dinner, and the emperor and the king descended to the hall; but Aglae was not there, for she kept her chamber, and her father refused her not, as it was the last day of her seven years' vow.

'Brother,' said the emperor, as soon as the meats were removed from the table, 'I pray thee tell me of thy journey.'

Then the king told him how he left his own company to come after, and fell in with the crusader on his journey, and how he was dressed, and what he said as they rode together.

'Surely,' said the emperor, 'that knight was a wise man: for the house of which he spoke was thy cloak; the bridge was thy squire, that should have ridden before thee to try the depth

of the stream ; and what were thy father and mother save bread and wine, which thou shouldest have brought with thee ? But why did he leave thee ?'

'When we came where two roads met,' rejoined the king, 'he left me, saying, that seven years since he left a net in a private place, and he went to see whether it were broken or not, that he might treasure it as a jewel if it were unbroken, and if broken, resign it to me.'

Then the emperor cried with a loud voice, 'Ho ! my knights and servants, go ye to my daughter's chamber.'

So the knights and servants went, and found not the lady, for her lover had stolen her away while the kings dined.

'Even so, as I expected,' said the emperor ; 'brother, the knight's folly has taught thee wisdom.'

'Yea, brother,' rejoined the king sorrowfully ; 'truly said the knight, "Every deed is judged by its end."'

So the king returned to Hungary ashamed ; and when the knight and the maiden returned to her father, his heart yearned towards her, and he wept over her, and received them with joy.



THE THREE BLACK CROWS.

ONCE upon a time there lived two brothers, the one a cleric, the other a layman. The former was always saying that no woman could keep a secret, and as his brother was married, he bade him test the truth of this assertion on his own wife. The layman agreed; and one night, when they were alone, he said, with a sorrowful face, to his spouse :—

‘My dear wife, a most dreadful secret hangs over me; oh that I could divulge it to you; but no, I dare not; you never could keep it, and, if once divulged, my reputation is gone.’

‘Fear not, love,’ rejoined the wife; ‘are we not one body and one mind; is not your advantage my benefit, and your injury my loss?’

‘Well, then,’ said the husband, ‘when I left my room this morning a deadly sickness came

upon me, and after many a pang, a huge black crow flew out of my mouth, and, winging its way from the room, left me in fear and trembling.'

'Is it possible?' asked the wife; 'yet why should you fear, my life? be thankful rather that you have been freed from so noxious and troublesome an occupant.'

Here the conversation ended. As soon as it was day, up got the wife, with her thoughts full of the black crow, and hastened to a neighbour's house.

'Dearest friend,' said she, 'can I trust you with a secret?'

'As with your life,' rejoined the confidant.

'Oh, such a marvellous accident happened to my husband!'

'What? what?' asked the anxious friend.

'Only last night, he felt deadly sick, and, after a great deal of pain, two black crows flew out of his mouth, and took wing from the room.'

Away went the wife home, with her mind disburthened of the awful secret; whilst her friend hastened to her next neighbour, and retailed the story, only with the addition of one more crow. The next edition of the legend

rose to four; and at last, when the story had gone round the gossips of the village, a flock of forty crows was reported to have flown from the poor man's mouth; and there were not a few who remembered seeing the black legion on the wing from the man's window. The consequence of all this was, that the poor husband found himself saddled with the very questionable reputation of a wizard, and was obliged to call together the village, and explain to them the true origin of the fable. On this his wife and her confidants were overwhelmed with ridicule and shame, and the men of the village were the more impressed with the truth of the cleric's maxim.



THE EMPEROR OF ROME AND HIS THREE DAUGHTERS.

THEODOSIUS was emperor of Rome, mighty in power, and wise in counsel. He had no son, but three daughters, whom he loved exceedingly. Now when they were come of full age, the emperor called unto him the eldest and said, 'How much lovest thou me?'

'More than mine ownself,' replied the eldest.

'It is good,' rejoined her father, 'thou shalt be rewarded for thy love.'

So he married her unto a neighbouring king of great power and wealth. Then he sent for his second daughter, and asked her the same question.

'Even as I do myself,' was the reply.

At this the emperor was well pleased, and he kissed his child, and said, 'I will reward

thee for this thy love.' So he married her unto one of the greatest nobles of his realm.

At last he sent for his youngest daughter, and when she was come into his presence, he asked her likewise how much she loved him.

Theodosia bowed her head, and bent her knee to her father, as she mildly replied, ' Even as my father deserveth.'

Then was the emperor hurt with her reply, and he said, ' Lovest thou me no more than this? thy reward shall be less than thy sisters.' So he married her unto a poor but good lord, who was one of the lesser nobles of his kingdom.

Time passed away, misfortune came upon the emperor, and his kingdom was all but taken from him by the king of Egypt. Then said he to himself, ' I will appeal to my children,' so he wrote to his eldest daughter for aid.

' My lord the king, I have here a letter from my father,' said the eldest daughter to her husband, ' he asketh help of us in his misfortunes.'

' Is it not just that we should aid him?' replied the king; ' we will raise an army, and go and fight for him.'

' Nay, my lord,' rejoined his wife, ' consider

the expense; send my father five knights to keep him company in his wanderings.'

'Alas, alas!' said the aged emperor when he read his eldest child's answer, 'in her was my chief trust; she, that loved me more than herself, hath done only this much, how then shall I trust the other two!'

Then wrote he to the second daughter, who, when she read her father's letter, advised her husband to grant him food, lodging, and raiment, during the time of his need. The emperor was sore grieved at this reply. 'Now have I tried my two daughters, and have found them wanting, let me try the third;' so he wrote to his youngest child.

When the messenger brought the emperor's letter to Theodosia, she wept sorely as she read how that her father was driven from his capital, and was become a wanderer in his own kingdom. Then went she to her husband and said,—

'Oh, my dear lord, by thy love towards me, succour me in this great distress: my father is driven from his capital by the king of Egypt, and even now wanders up and down his own kingdom, homeless and unattended.'

‘As thou willest, Theodosia,’ replied the noble, ‘so will I do.’

‘Gather then a great army, raise again my father’s banner, and go, my lord, fight for my father’s throne, and under God’s blessing thou shalt conquer.’


Gladly the noble obeyed the wishes of his wife; gladly did he summon his retainers and friends, and raise the royal standard. His example was all that was required; numbers flocked to the royal standard, for they wished well to the emperor, but lacked a leader. Then led he his forces against the king of Egypt, and long and fierce was the battle; but at length the emperor’s friends prevailed, the Egyptian was driven from the land, and the emperor reseated on his throne. It was a happy day for his people when Theodosius reascended his throne: round him stood all his nobles, and on his right hand his youngest daughter, and on his left her noble husband, to whom he was indebted for his restoration. Before his footstool stood his other children and their husbands, and sought to do him homage. But the emperor forbade them, and turning to his nobles he said—

‘The child that loved me but as I deserved hath succoured me in this my time of trouble ; the twain that professed to love me more abundantly have failed in the trial God ordained to them and to me. I pray ye, my nobles and knights, to ratify this my wish. When I die, let the kingdom pass to her and to her husband, for she succoured her father and her country : but for these other two, let them go hence.’

And the nobles and knights with one accord said, ‘It is well said ; be it so.’



THE TALE OF THE THREE CASKETS.

ENTURIES have passed since Anselmus reigned in Rome, whose empress was the fair daughter of the king of Jerusalem, and gracious in the sight of every man. Long had they lived happily together, but were not blest with a child, to comfort their lives, and to inherit their powers and honours. And it came to pass that as the emperor walked in his garden, he bethought him of the constant wars of the king of Ampluy, his neighbour, who ceased not to trouble him, because he had no son to defend his dominions. And as he walked and mused, he looked on the moon, and fell into a trance, and dreamed a dream, how that the morning was very bright, and the moon looked paler on the one side than on the other. And then there flew towards him a bird of two colours; two beasts came and stood

by the bird, and warmed the little creature with their heat. And lo, other beasts, mighty and terrible, came and bowed themselves before the little bird, and went their way ; and then followed these many other birds of bright plumage and sweet song, and they sang pleasantly, and waked the emperor.

Anselmus was troubled with his dream, and he called for his wise men, his nobles, and his counsellors, and told them of his vision, and sought from them the interpretation of his dream. When the wise men, the nobles, and the counsellors had considered of these things, they spoke cheerfully unto the king.

‘Sire,’ said they, ‘the vision betokens good to the empire, its glory shall be clearer than it is. The loss of colour in the moon prefigures the loss of strength to our empress when a child is born unto you. The little bird is this child, our prince. The two beasts that warmed him are the good and the great of our empire, who will give of their substance to sustain and cherish their prince. And whilst the other nations, mighty and strong, shall bow down before him, as the beasts did in the vision, so shall our people rejoice and sing with exceeding joy, as

the birds sang sweetly and pleasantly in thy dream. Such, O king, is the interpretation of the vision.'

Exceeding glad was the emperor at these words, and his joy was the more increased when a son was born unto him, according to the words of the wise men.

When the king of Ampluy heard of the birth of the prince, he was afraid, remembering the wrong he had done to Anselmus, and foreseeing the vengeance he would experience from the prince when he should come of age and lead the armies of his father. So he turned his mind to peace, and wrote humbly unto the emperor. When Anselmus read the king's letter he replied in peaceful terms, and promised him his protection and friendship, if he would give securities for his conduct, and acknowledge his sovereignty by a small tribute.

King Ampluy read the emperor's letter to his council, and prayed their counsel as touching the matter. Then said the counsellors, 'The emperor's words are good, and to be obeyed. As for the surety that he asks, is there not to our lord one daughter, a maiden fair and goodly withal, and is there not to the emperor one son,

a noble prince? Contract, therefore, marriage between thy child and his, that there may be a perpetual peace.'

The king obeyed the advice of his counselors; he wrote their words unto the emperor, who received them gladly, and the marriage contract was signed.

So the king sent his child by sea to the emperor's court, The ship was a great ship, with fair masts, and able pilots, glittering with gay pennants and costly ornaments, and it bore a goodly company of nobles, knights, and titled dames, with many and rich presents to do honour to the marriage of the maiden and the prince.

And it came to pass that as they sailed towards Rome, a storm rose, and drove the ship hither and thither over the waves, until she broke against a rock, and sank into the waters. And all they that were in her were drowned, save the daughter of the king, who put her trust in God and was saved. At length the storm abated, and the ship, broken and helpless, rose from beneath the waves and floated. But, lo, a great whale followed after the ship, to swallow up it and the maiden. So the maiden struck a

light and lighted a fire, that terrified the whale, which dared not to approach the ship for fear of the fire. At break of day, she fell asleep, for she was weary of watching; and as she slept the fire ceased for want of fuel, and the whale came and devoured the maiden.

When she awoke, darkness was around her on every side, for she was in the belly of the whale; but she feared not, but struck with the stone until the fire came, and thrust with a knife into the sides of the whale, that he made towards the shore, for he felt that he was wounded.

In that country dwelt a noble, a servant of the emperor, who for his recreation walked on the shore the time the whale was making towards the land. When he saw the monster, he turned homeward, summoned his servants, and returning to the shore fought with the whale until it was sore wounded, and like to die. And even as they smote the fish, the maiden cried with a loud voice from within the whale,—

‘Mercy, gentle friends; mercy on me, for I am a king’s daughter.’

Wondering greatly at these words, the noble hauled the fish ashore, and opening the side of

the whale, released the lady from her prison. And when he heard her story, he pitied her sore, and took her to his own castle to comfort her until he could convey her to the court of the emperor.

When Anselmus heard of the maiden's safety, he rejoiced greatly, and came to her, and had compassion on her.

'Fair maiden,' said the emperor, 'sorely as thou hast been tried, and great woe as thou hast suffered for the love of my son, still must thou endure another trial ere thou be proclaimed worthy to be his wife! Let the caskets be brought hither.'

Then the king's servants brought three caskets. The first was of pure gold, richly set about with precious stones; but within was full of dead men's bones. On this was inscribed, 'WHOSO CHOOSETH ME, SHALL FIND WHAT HE DESERVETH.' The second casket was made of fine silver, filled with earth and worms; and its inscription was, 'WHOSO CHOOSETH ME, SHALL FIND THAT WHICH HIS NATURE DESIRETH.' But the last vessel was made of lead, and without was dull and useless; but within were precious stones. On this casket was written, 'WHOSO CHOOSETH

ME, SHALL FIND THAT WHICH GOD HATH DISPOSED FOR HIM,'

Then said the emperor, 'Maiden, look on these three vessels, they be rich vessels; if thou choose that wherein is profit to thee and to others, then thou shalt marry my son; but if thou choose that in which is no profit to thee or to others, then in peace return to thy father.'

The king's daughter lifted up her hands to God, and prayed for his grace in the hour of her trial. First she looked upon the golden casket, and as she read the words of its inscription, she said, 'Full, precious, and gay, art thou, O casket, but I know not what is within; therefore, dear lord, I choose not this.'

Then looked she on the silver casket, and its inscription. 'Whoso chooseth me, shall find that which his nature desireth.' 'Alas!' said the maiden, 'I know not what is herein; but this I know, that I shall therein find that which my nature desireth, even the wickedness of the flesh. Casket of silver, I will have none of thee.'

Lastly she looked on the leaden casket.

'Poor art thou, O casket, to look upon, and yet thy inscription giveth comfort; thou promisest "that which God hath disposed;" and

God never disposeth anything harmful ; by His permission, I take thee, O casket.'

Then cried the emperor, ' Well done, thou fair and good maiden ; open thy casket, for it is full of precious gifts. Well hast thou chosen.'

Then appointed he the day of the wedding ; and the maiden and the prince were married with great solemnity, and with much honour among all the nation lived they until their lives' end.





Open thy casket, for it is full of precious gifts.—See p. 62.

THE ANGEL AND THE HERMIT.

HER in a wild unknown to public view, in a cell which he had hollowed out with his own hands, on the edge of an open down, from youth to age a reverend hermit dwelt. The neighbouring lord's shepherd was wont to feed his sheep on short but sweet pasture of the hermit's down.

One day the poor shepherd, fatigued with watching, fell asleep, and a robber came and stole the lord's flock. When he awoke, he discovered the loss, and stoutly maintained that the sheep had been stolen, but the lord would not believe the shepherd, and commanded him to be put to death.

The hermit saw the deed, and thus communed with himself:—'Merciful God, seest thou what this man hath done, and how the innocent suffers for the guilty? Why permittest thou

these things? If injustice is to triumph, why remain I here? Verily I will re-enter the world, and do as other men do.'

Impressed with these thoughts the hermit left his cell, and wandered back to the world and the abodes of men, and on his way an angel sent from God met him, and being in the form of a traveller, he joined himself to the hermit, and asked him which way he journeyed.

'To the city that lieth before us,' rejoined the hermit.

'I will accompany you,' replied his companion; 'I am an angel sent from God, to be the associate of your wanderings.'

So they walked onwards to the city. When they entered the gates, they sought the house of a soldier, and entreated him, by God's love, to give them harbourage during the night. The veteran complied with cheerfulness, and spared not of the best of his substance for the entertainment of the travellers. The hospitable soldier had but one child, an infant in the cradle. And so it happened, that when supper was ended, the veteran lighted the guests to his best chamber, and the angel and the hermit retired to rest. About midnight the hermit

awoke, and saw the angel rise from the bed, enter the chamber where the infant slept, and strangle it with his own hands.

‘Surely,’ said the hermit to himself, ‘this cannot be an angel of God; did not the good soldier give us everything that we required? and now, lo, the only child that he had is slain by this, his guest.’ And yet he feared to reprove his companion.

With the morning the hermit and the angel arose, and sought a neighbouring city, where they found a hospitable reception in the house of one of its chief persons. This man had a valuable drinking cup of gold, which the angel purloined during the night, but the hermit yet was silent, for he feared more than he doubted.

On the morrow the travellers continued their journey, and on their way they came to a river, over which was a bridge thrown. They ascended the bridge, and met, midway, a poor and aged pilgrim.

‘My friend,’ said the angel to the old man, ‘show us the way to yonder city.’

As the pilgrim turned him to show the angel the road, he seized him by the shoulders, and

cast the old man headlong into the river that ran beneath.

‘Alas! alas!’ cried the hermit to himself, ‘it is the Evil One himself. Why? what evil had the poor man done?’ and yet, with all his thoughts, the hermit feared to give utterance to his fears.

About the hour of vespers, the travellers reached another city, in which they sought shelter for the night; but the master of the house refused them rudely.

‘For the love of heaven,’ said the angel, ‘spare us of thy house for shelter against the wolves and other wild beasts.’

‘That,’ rejoined the man, ‘is my pigsty, lie ye there if it so please ye; for ye come no other whither.’

‘Necessity,’ replied the angel, ‘forces us to accept thy ungracious offer.’

On the morrow, the angel called the host, and said, ‘Friend, I give thee this goblet,’ presenting to him the cup he had stolen from his former host.

‘Now,’ said the hermit, ‘know I that this is no angel; doth he not reward evil for good, and good for evil? No longer will I travel

with thee : fare thee well, I commend thee to God.'

'Dear friend,' rejoined the angel, 'hear me ere thou depart. Whilst thou wert in thy hermitage, the lord of the flock unjustly slew his careless but innocent servant. For his innocence he will be in a fit state to enter another world ; but had he lived, he would have fallen into sin, and died before repentance could have followed. Eternal punishment shall follow them who stole the sheep ; but repentance and acts of faith shall repair the error which the owner of the flock committed in his ignorance. Truly the soldier was hospitable, but he loved his son overmuch ; ere then, he was charitable and merciful, but on the birth of his child, he grew parsimonious and covetous, that he might leave a fortune to his son. With his child's death have returned his Christian virtues to his parent. Before the cup was made, which I stole from our host who owned it, there was not a more abstemious person in this world ; but with that cup came the love of indulgence and inebriety. I took away the temptation, and our host is once more abstemious. Again, I cast the poor pilgrim into the river. He

whom I drowned was a good Christian ; but had he proceeded further, he would have fallen into mortal sin : now he is saved and is reigning in heaven. Neither did I bestow the cup on the unhospitable citizen without reason : he gave us his swine's house ; he has received his reward—the temptation of gluttony and pleasure. Guard, therefore, thy lips ; detract not from the Almighty ; to Him all things are known.'

At these words, the hermit fell at the feet of the angel, and besought his pardon. It was accorded to him, and he returned to his hermitage a wiser and a better Christian.



FULGENTIUS AND THE WICKED STEWARD.

WHEN Martin was Emperor of Rome, his uncle Malitius was steward of his household, and his nephew Fulgentius, his only sister's son, an orphan, was his constant attendant, his cup-bearer at meals, and the page of his chamber. For Martin loved his nephew, and was kind to him; and regarded him as his own child, for he was not a father. Malitius hated this Fulgentius, seeing that if he should succeed to the kingdom, his own son would lose that crown, which he had so long regarded as his by right of inheritance. Day and night he thought how he might cause Martin to discard Fulgentius.

'My lord,' said he with a face of assumed distress, one day to the emperor, 'it is with great pain, my lord, that I speak unto you, but

in that I am thy true servant, it is my duty to warn my sovereign of any thing that lessens his honour and repute.'

'Speak on,' said the emperor.

'Will my lord,' rejoined the steward with apparent anxiety, 'keep what I shall tell him a secret between him and me?'

'If thou wishest it, Malitius,' said the emperor.

'Oh, my dear lord, how ungrateful is the world!' began the steward.

'Well, well, that is as it may be,' rejoined the emperor; 'but to your secret—the sun is rising high in the heavens, and my horses wait me.'

'Your nephew, Fulgentius—'

'Ha!' said Martin, 'Fulgentius; what of him?'

'I grieve to say, my lord, he most ungratefully defames you among his companions, speaking ill of your habits, and especially of your breath, and saying, that it is death to him to serve you.'

'If I could but prove this!' muttered the emperor.

'Remark him, my lord, when he next serves you with the cup, and if he turns away his head when he gives you the goblet, be sure that he so accuses, and thus endeavours to

make the bystanders believe that his accusation is true.'

'It is well,' replied the emperor; 'go, good Malitius, we will remember thy advice.'

Then went the steward unto Fulgentius, and spoke kindly to him, and professed, as a friend and a near relative, to warn him how nearly he was about to lose the good wishes of Martin, and perhaps forfeit his succession to the throne.

'Fulgentius, my dear relative,' said he with a fawning smile, 'thy breath is sadly displeasing to the emperor, and he talks of removing thee from near attendance on his person.'

'O, good sir,' replied the youth, 'can this be true?'

'Alas! I fear it is so. I have experienced it myself; but be sure it is merely temporary ill health, it will soon pass off.'

'And before then, I shall have lost my uncle's good opinion. What shall I do, Malitius?'

'There is but one thing,' replied the steward; 'when thou dost hand the cup to the emperor, turn away thy head from him; then will he not be incommoded by thy breath, and will see that thou dost thy best to please him.'

‘Thanks, good Malitius. Thy advice has made me feel happy.’

‘Thy happiness be thy ruin!’ muttered Malitius to himself as he turned away.

That day Fulgentius attended on his uncle at dinner; and as he handed to him the cup he held it far off, and turned away his face, lest he should distress the emperor.

‘Wretch!’ cried the emperor, at the same time striking Fulgentius on the breast; ‘now know I that it is true what I have heard of thee; go, go from my sight, thou varlet, I thought to have made thee a king; but now see my face no more.’

Sorely wept Fulgentius as he passed from the hall, amid the jeers and scoffs of his former companions; for he was now disgraced, and they cared not for him.

‘Malitius,’ said the emperor, ‘let thy son supply the place of this ingrate. Come, my good lord, counsel me how I may rid myself of this varlet that disgraces me before the world.’

‘Sire, this would I propose; some miles from this city your workmen burn lime in a vast forge in the forest; send to them this night, and bid them cast into their furnace whoever

first comes to them to-morrow morning, and asks of them "Have you performed the emperor's will?" Call also Fulgentius to thee, and bid him early on the morrow go to the lime-burners, and ask them whether they have fulfilled your commands: then will they cast him into the fire, and his evil words will perish with him.'

And the emperor did so. He bade Fulgentius be at the kilns before sunrise, and that night sent a horseman to the lime-burners, bidding them burn the first man that on the morrow should inquire of them whether they had performed the emperor's will.

Long before sunrise, Fulgentius rose from his sleepless couch, and hastened to perform his uncle's commands, hoping by this means to regain the goodwill of the emperor. As he went on his way with a heavy heart, and drew near to the wood within the depths of which the lime-burners dwelt, the sound of the matin bell of a neighbouring chapel arrested his steps. The tones of the bell seemed to bring peace to his troubled mind, and he turned from the path towards the way-side chapel, and offered up his prayers and thanksgivings to his God.

But as the service was ending, the fatigue he had undergone disposed him to rest himself, so he sat himself down in the porch of the chapel, and fell asleep.

‘Poor child,’ said the good priest as he passed through the porch, ‘thou lookest wearied and careworn ; sleep on, no one shall disturb thee.’ When he awoke, the sun was going down in the heaven.

Malitius was as sleepless during the night as the poor youth, and his anxiety drove him early from his bed, and suffered him not to be at peace all the day. Now when it was noon the steward could no longer remain in the palace, but he hastened to the lime-kilns, and demanded of the lime-burners ‘whether they had performed the emperor’s will?’

‘Not yet,’ cried they with hoarse voices, ‘but no fear, master ; it shall be done forthwith.’

With these words, one of the men seized Malitius, and hurried with him in their arms to the mouth of the kiln.

‘Mercy, mercy, good sirs,’ cried the steward, ‘it is Fulgentius you should burn ; not me.’

‘Ha ! ha !’ laughed the lime-burners ; ‘we know neither thee nor Fulgentius ; thou art

the first man that has come here this day and asked us whether we have done the emperor's will; so peace, man, peace. Ha! ha! his will is done.'

So Malitius died in the fire.

It was past noon when Fulgentius awoke, and the sun was going down in its course.

'Alas! alas!' he said, 'I have delayed to perform my lord's will.'

And he hastened through the wood, and came to the lime-kilns.

'What wantest thou, boy?' asked the chief of the lime-burners.

'Tell me, tell me, sirs,' asked Fulgentius anxiously, 'have ye performed the command of the emperor?'

'Ay, my lad, right well; come, look into the furnace—and see, his bones yet burn.'

'His bones; whose bones, sirs?' asked Fulgentius, aghast with fear.

Then they told him all that had been commanded them, and how Malitius coming first to the lime-kilns had been cast into the fire and burnt.

'Thanks be to God,' said the youth, devoutly kneeling, 'who hath saved me from this

terrible death.' With these words he bade the burners farewell, and returned to his uncle's palace.

'Ha,' said the emperor, when Fulgentius bowed himself before his uncle's throne, 'thou here, sir varlet; hast thou not been to my lime-burners?'

'Verily, my lord, I have been there and performed thy commandment: but before I came thy will had been performed.'

'Performed,' rejoined the emperor, 'how performed? Malitius; is he not here?'

'No, my lord, he is burnt in the lime-kiln,' replied the youth; 'he came first to the kiln, and the burners obeyed thy commands, and he is dead, and I have escaped. But, O my dear uncle, how couldest thou contrive such a death for thy poor nephew!' and he wept bitterly.

Then did they each declare to the other the deceits of the wicked steward; and the emperor raised up the youth, and acknowledged him before all his people as his very true and good nephew, his heir and successor to the throne; rendering thanks to God who had preserved the uncle from so deadly a sin against his relative, and the nephew from so horrible a death.



THE WICKED PRIEST.

IN the reign of Otho there was a certain wicked priest who created much dissatisfaction among his parishioners; and many were extremely scandalised. One of them, in particular, always absented himself from the mass when it was the turn of this wicked priest to celebrate it. Now it happened on a festival day, during the time of mass, that as this person was walking alone through a meadow, a sudden thirst came upon him, insomuch that he was persuaded, unless present relief could be obtained, he should die.

In this extremity continuing his walk, he discovered a rivulet of the purest water, of which he copiously drank; but the more he drank, the more violent became his thirst. Surprised at so unusual a circumstance, he said to himself,—

‘I will find out the source of this rivulet and there I will satisfy my thirst.’

With these thoughts he went up the stream. And as he went, a venerable old man met him and asked whither he was going.

‘Father,’ he replied, ‘I am oppressed with an unquenchable thirst, and even now I drank of this rivulet; but lo, the more I drink, so much the more I thirst; and I now seek its source, if, perchance, I may there quench my thirst, and not die.’

The old man pointed with his finger, ‘There,’ said he, ‘is the spring-head of the rivulet. But tell me, my honest friend, why art thou not at church, and with other good Christians hearing mass?’

‘Truly, master,’ answered the man, ‘our priest leads such an execrable life, that I think it utterly impossible that he should celebrate it so as to please God.’

‘Suppose what thou sayest is true,’ replied the old man; ‘observe this fountain, from which so much excellent water issues, and from which thou hast so lately drunk.’

He looked in the direction pointed out, and beheld a putrid dog, with its mouth wide open,

and its teeth black and decayed, through which the whole fountain gushed in a surprising manner. The man regarded the stream with terror and confusion of mind, ardently desirous of quenching his thirst, but apprehensive of poison from the fetid and loathsome carcase, with which, to all appearance, the water was imbued.

‘Be not afraid,’ said the old man, observing his repugnance, ‘thou hast already drunk of the rivulet, drink again; it will not harm thee.’

Encouraged by these assurances, and impelled by the intensity of his thirst, he partook of it once more, and instantly recovered from the drought.

‘Master, dear master,’ exclaimed the man, ‘never man drank of such delicious water.’

‘See now,’ the old man answered, ‘as this water, gushing through the mouth of a putrid dog, is neither polluted, nor loses aught of its natural taste or colour, so is the celebration of the mass by a worthless minister; and, therefore, though the vices of such men may displease and disgust, yet shouldst thou not forsake the duties of which they are the appointed organ.’

Saying these words, the old man disappeared; and what the other had seen, he communicated to

his neighbours, and ever after punctually attended mass. He brought this unstable and transitory life to a good end, and passed from that which is corruptible to inherit incorruption.



THE EMPEROR'S DAUGHTER.

MANY centuries ago, there reigned a great and good emperor, whose name was Pompey. He had an only daughter, of remarkable beauty, whom he loved so dearly, that day and night he ordered five of his most valiant knights to watch over her; and on pain of their lives to guard her from harm. Day and night did these brave men keep watch and ward over the lady's chamber. A lamp burned above the door, that the approach of an enemy might be more readily detected; and a faithful mastiff lay on the threshold, whose watchfulness was as unremitting as his bark was loud and shrill. But all these precautions were fruitless. The princess loved the world and its pleasures, and sighed to mingle in its busy scenes, and gaze upon its gorgeous pageants. One day as she looked from her window, a certain duke rode

by, and he looked upon her beauty, and loved her with a false love.

Day after day did the duke endeavour to withdraw the princess from her guardians, and numerous were the devices by which he sought to accomplish his designs upon her and her father's throne. At length by the promise of unbounded pleasure, the duke persuaded the princess to overturn the lamp that burned at her chamber door, and to poison the dog that lay at her threshold.

That same night, when the lamp was quenched, and the mastiff silenced, the duke stole upon the guard and bore away with him the maiden.

On the morrow, great was the confusion at the emperor's court. Men rode hither and thither in pursuit of the fugitives, for no one knew which way they had fled. One knight alone hit upon their track ; a great and terrible knight he was, the emperor's champion : and he came upon them and slew the duke, and brought the maiden back to her father.

Very wroth was the emperor with his daughter, and he left her to bewail her sins in solitude. Time and reflection brought repentance, and the princess bewailed her sins bitterly.

Now there was a good old man at Pompey's court, who was ever ready to intercede with the emperor on behalf of penitent offenders, and to whose words Pompey listened willingly. This lord came to the emperor and told him of his daughter's repentance; and his words were pleasant to the emperor, so that the father was reconciled to his child, and she was betrothed by him to a nobleman of worth and power.

Many and precious were the bridal gifts the princess received.

The good old lord gave her a robe of the finest and richest wool, on which was worked this moral—'I have raised thee up, beware lest thou fall again.' He gave her also a ring, of which the legend was, 'What have I done? How much? Why?'

From her father she received a golden coronet, on which was engraved, 'Thy dignity is from me.'

From the king's champion, who rescued her from the false duke, she received a ring, and the legend was, 'I have loved thee, do thou return my love.'

The king's son gave her a ring, and on it was written, 'Thou art noble, despise not thy


nobility.' Whilst on that which her brother presented to her was engraved, 'Approach, fear not, I am thy brother.'

The last gift was from her husband, a golden signet that confirmed her inheritance, and which bore this motto, 'Now thou art espoused, be faithful.'

The princess received these gifts with gratitude, and parted not with them but with her life.



THE EMPEROR LEO AND THE THREE IMAGES.

 CERTAIN Roman emperor, Leo, was so fond of looking upon a pretty face, that he made three fair female images, and placed them in a temple, that all his subjects might look on them and worship. One statue stood with its hand extended towards the worshippers, and bore on its finger a golden ring, on which was the legend, 'My finger is generous.' The second figure had a beard of beaten gold, and on its brow was written, 'I have a beard; if any one be beardless, let him come to me, and I will give him one.' The third figure had a cloak of gold and a purple tunic, and on its breast was written, 'I fear no one.' With so many temptations came a law, that whosoever stole either the ring, the beard,

or the cloak, should surely die. A thief was soon found. According to the poet:—

‘There was a clerk, one Lucius,
A comelier, a famous man;
Of every wit somewhat he can,
Out-take that him lacketh rule,
His own estate to guide and rule—’

So he took to riotous living, ‘and was not wise in his doing;’ *ergo*—

‘After the need of his desert,
So fell this clerkè in povertè.’

The thief, whether poor man or ruined clerk, removed the treasures, was seen by the people, and brought before the emperor, on the charge of breaking the royal edict.

But the thief said, ‘Good my lord—suffer me to speak.’

And the emperor said, ‘Speak on.’

Then said the man, ‘Lo, as I entered the temple of the three images, the first image extended to me its finger, as though it would say, “Take this ring,” but yet I doubted of its wishes, until I read the superscription, “My finger is generous;” then knew I that it was the pleasure of the statue to give the ring, and I obeyed and took it. Then came I to the image with the beard of gold. Methinks the maker

of this had no beard; shall the creature be better than the creator? that were a plain and manifest wrong. But still I was modest, and hesitated, until the words of the inscription, "Let him that is beardless come to me, and I will give him one," forbade me to refuse to supply my own wants by the statue's gift. As for the golden cloak, it was in pure charity that I took it away. Stone is cold, and metal is cold; the image is of the former, the cloak of the latter. In winter it was adding cold to cold, in summer it was too heavy and warm for the season. Still should I have forborne to rob the statue of its cloak, had I not seen the words, "I fear no one." Such intolerable arrogance, in a woman too, was to be punished. I took the cloak to humble the statue's pride.'

But all these excuses were useless.

'Fair sir,' replied Leo, 'do you not know the law, that he who robs the statues shall die?—let the law be obeyed;' and it was as the emperor said.



THE LAY OF THE LITTLE BIRD.

IN days of yore, at least a century since,
There lived a carle as wealthy as a
prince.

His name I wot not ; but his wide domain
Was rich with stream and forest, mead and plain ;
To crown the whole, one manor he possess'd
In choice delight so passing all the rest,
No castle, burgh, or city might compare
With the quaint beauties of that mansion rare.
The sooth to say, I fear my words may seem
Like some strange fabling, or fantastic dream,
If, unadvised, the portraiture I trace,
And each brave pleasure of that peerless place.
Foreknow ye then, by necromantic might
Was raised this paradise of all delight :
A good knight owned it first ; he, bowed with
age,
Died, and his son possess'd the heritage :

But the lewd stripling, all to riot bent,
(His chattels quickly wasted and forespent,)
Was driven to see this patrimony sold
To the base carle of whom I lately told.
Ye wot right well there only need be sought,
One spendthrift heir, to bring great wealth to
naught.

A lofty tower and strong, the building stood
Midst a vast plain surrounded by a flood ;
And hence one pebble-pavèd channel strayed,
That compass'd in a clustering orchard's
shade;

'Twas a choice charming plat ; abundant round
Flowers, roses, odorous spices clothed the
ground ;

Unnumber'd kinds, and all profusely shower'd
Such aromatic balsam as they flower'd,
Their fragrance might have stay'd man's parting
breath,

And chased the hovering agony of death.
The sward one level held, and close above,
Tall shapely trees their leafy mantles wove,
All equal growth, and low their branches came,
Thick set with goodliest fruits of every name.
In midst, to cheer the ravish'd gazer's view,
A gushing fount its waters upward threw,

Then slowly on with crystal current pass'd,
And crept into the distant flood at last :
But nigh its source a pine's umbrageous head,
Stretch'd far and wide in deathless verdure
spread,

Met with broad shade the summer's sultry gleam,
And through the livelong year shut out the beam.

Such was the scene : yet still the place was
bless'd

With one rare pleasure passing all the rest :
A wondrous bird of energies divine
Had fix'd his dwelling in the tufted pine ;
There still he sat, and there with amorous lay
Waked the dim morn, and closed the parting day :
Match'd with these strains of linkèd sweetness
wrought

The violin and the full-toned harp were naught ;
Of power they were with new-born joy to move
The cheerless heart of long-desponding love ;
Of power so strange, that should they cease to
sound,

And the blithe songster flee the mystic ground,
That goodly orchard's scene, the pine-tree's
shade.

Trees, flowers, and fount, would all like vapour
fade.

‘Listen, listen to my lay!’
Thus the merry notes did chime;
‘All who mighty love obey,
Sadly wasting in your prime,
Clerk and laic, grave and gay!
Yet do ye before the rest,
Gentle maidens, mark me tell!
Store my lesson in your breast,
Trust me it shall profit well:

Hear, and heed me, and be bless’d!’

So sang the bird of old; but when he spied
The carle draw near, with alter’d tone he cried—
‘Back, river, to thy source! and thee, tall tower,
Thee, castle strong, may gaping earth devour!
Bend down your heads, ye gaudy flowers, and
fade!

And wither’d be each fruit-tree’s mantling
shade!

Beneath these beauteous branches once were
seen,

Brave gentle knights disporting on the green,
And lovely dames; and, oft, these flowers among,
Stay’d the blithe bands, and joy’d to hear my
song:

Nor would they hence retire, nor quit the grove,
Till many a vow were pass’d of mutual love;

These more would cherish, these would more
deserve

Cost, courtesy, and arms, and nothing swerve.

‘O bitter change! for master now we see
A faitour villain carle of low degree;
Foul gluttony employs his livelong day,
Nor heeds, not hears he my melodious lay.’

So spake the bird; and, as he ceased to sing,
Indignantly he clapp’d his downy wing,
And straight was gone; but no abasement stirr’d
In the clown’s breast at his reproachful word:
Bent was his wit alone by quaint device
To snare and sell him for a passing price.
So well he wrought, so craftily he spread,
In the thick foliage green his slender thread,
That when at eve the little songster sought
His wonted spray his little foot was caught.

‘How have I harm’d you?’ straight he ’gan to
cry,

‘And wherefore would you doom me thus to
die?’

‘Nay, fear not,’ quoth the clown, ‘for death or
wrong;

I only seek to profit by thy song:

I’ll get thee a fine cage, nor shalt thou lack

Good store of kernels and of seeds to crack;

But sing thou shalt ; for if thou play'st the mute,
I'll spit thee, bird, and pick thy bones to boot.'

'Ah, woe is me!' the little thrall replied,
'Who thinks of song, in prison doom'd to bide?
And, were I cook'd, my bulk might scarce
afford

One scanty mouthful to my hungry lord.'

What may I more relate?—the captive wight
Assay'd to melt the villain all he might ;
And fairly promised, were he once set free,
In gratitude to teach him secrets three ;
'Three secrets, all so marvellous and rare,
His race knew naught that might with these
compare.'

The carle prick'd up his ears amain; he loosed
The songster thrall, by love of gain seduced ;
Up to the summit of the pine-tree's shade
Sped the blithe bird, and there at ease he
stay'd,

And tricked his plumes full leisurely, I trow,
Till the carle claim'd his promise from below :
'Right gladly,' quoth the bird ; 'now grow thee
wise :

All human prudence few brief lines comprise :
First then, lest haply in the event it fail,
YIELD NOT A READY FAITH TO EVERY TALE :'

‘ Is this thy secret ? ’ quoth the ‘ moody elf,
 ‘ Keep then thy silly lesson for thyself ;
 I need it not : ’ — ‘ How be, ’ tis not amiss
 To prick thy memory with advice like this,
 But late, meseems, thou hadst forgot the lore ;
 Now may’st thou hold it fast for evermore.
 Mark next my second rule, and sadly know,
 WHAT’S LOST, ’TIS WISE WITH PATIENCE TO
 FOREGO.’

The carle, though rude of wit, now chafed
 amain ;
 He felt the mockery of the songster’s strain.
 ‘ Peace,’ quoth the bird ; ‘ my third is far the
 best ;
 Store thou the precious treasure in thy breast :
 WHAT GOOD THOU HAST, NE’ER LIGHTLY FROM
 THEE CAST : ’

—He spoke, and twittering fled away full fast.
 Straight sunk in earth, the gushing fountain dries,
 Down fall the fruits, the wither’d pine-tree dies,
 Fades all the beauteous plat, so cool, so green,
 Into thin air, and never more is seen.
 Such was the meed of avarice :—bitter cost !
 The carle who all would gather, all has lost.



THE BURDENS OF LIFE.

A CERTAIN king once went to a fair, and took with him a preceptor and his scholar. Standing in the market-place, they perceived eight packages for sale. The scholar questioned his teacher respecting the first of them. 'Pray,' said he, 'what is the price of poverty? that is, of tribulation for the love of God?'

Preceptor.—The kingdom of heaven.

Scholar.—It is a great price indeed. Open the second package, and let us see what it contains.

Preceptor.—It contains meekness: Blessed are the meek.

Scholar.—Meekness, indeed, is a very illustrious thing, and worthy of divine majesty. What is its price?

Preceptor.—Neither gold nor silver will be taken; they are too contemptible. I demand earth for it; and nothing but earth will I receive.

Scholar.—There is a spacious tract of uninhabited country between India and Britain. Take as much of it as you please.

Preceptor.—No; this land is the land of the dying: the land which devours its inhabitants. Men die there. I demand the land of the living.

Scholar.—I muse at what you say. All die, and would you alone be exempt? Would you live for ever? Behold, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. What is there in the third package?

Preceptor.—Hunger and thirst.

Scholar.—For how much may these be purchased?

Preceptor.—For righteousness. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Scholar.—Therefore you shall possess righteousness, provided there be no neglect. What does the fourth contain?

Preceptor.—Tears, wailings, and woe;

Moisture above, and moisture below.

Scholar.—Is it not customary to buy tears and

wailings, yet I will buy it ; because the saints desire it at this price. Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted. What is the fifth package ?

Preceptor.—It is a divided parcel, and contains *mercy*, which I will weigh to please you. At a word I will take mercy for mercy ; eternity for time.

Scholar.—You were a bad umpire to ask this, unless mercy should plead for you. Nevertheless, she shall become your surety. And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. In this life we abound in poverty and wretchedness and hardship. Undo the sixth package, perhaps it may contain something better.

Preceptor.—It is clearly full ; but it loves not, like a purple robe, to be exposed before the common eye ; you shall see it in private, and then we will agree about the price.

Scholar.—Very well ; what is next ?

Preceptor.—Purity ; which is extremely valuable. That gold and silver vase contains piety, goodness, charity, and spiritual joy. Now then let us open these precious garments. Here are lectures, meditations, prayers, and contempla-

tions. The judgments of the Lord are justified in themselves, and more to be desired than gold and precious stones.

Scholar.—There is a great reward in the possession. Ask, therefore, what you will.

Preceptor.—To see God.

Scholar.—Therefore, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Open the seventh package.

Preceptor.—It contains *peace*.

Scholar.—What! are you going to *sell* me your peace?

Preceptor.—It does not accord with my poverty, nor would it with your justice and great wealth, to take anything of me for nothing. But your liberality will make me rich. What then? I am a mean country fellow, and made of clay; formed of the very dust of the earth. My want of nobility oppresses me, and I would no longer bear the reproach which says, ‘You are earth, and to earth you shall go.’ I would rather have it said to me, ‘You are heaven, and to heaven shall you go.’ I eagerly desire to fulfil the destiny of the sons of God; I would become a son of God.

Scholar.—I have done: I confess the truth,

and distrust you no longer, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. If, therefore, you preserve the love of a son, you shall receive the paternal inheritance. Now what is contained in the last package? Explain it.

Preceptor.—It contains only tribulation and persecution for the sake of righteousness.

Scholar.—What do you want for it?

Preceptor.—The kingdom of heaven.

Scholar.—I gave you that as the price of poverty!

Preceptor.—True; but month after month, week after week, man wanders in his wishes. Before the present week or month expires, what will remain of it?

Scholar.—I marvel at your sagacity in making a bargain. Now hear, good and faithful servant! because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will appoint thee lord over many.

THE SUGGESTIONS OF THE EVIL ONE.

THERE was a celebrated magician, who had a vast castle, surrounded by a very beautiful garden, in which grew flowers of the most fragrant smell, and fruits not only fair to look upon, but most delicious to the taste. In short, it was a garden of Paradise; no one was allowed to see its glories, or taste its pleasures, but fools or personal enemies of the magician. When the gate was opened to any one, great was his wonder and delight; and few who once entered ever wished to return. Nay, the pleasures they there enjoyed so affected their minds, that they yielded forthwith to the will of the magician, and were ready to resign to him everything that they had.

To the fools, this garden appeared to be Paradise itself: its flowers and its fruits they looked upon as of immortal growth, and regarded

themselves as chosen from among the inhabitants of the world as the happy possessors of the land. Beyond this they gave not one thought. Day and night they revelled in pleasure, and surrendered themselves to lawless gratifications.

At last the day of reckoning came, and the magician prepared to reap the fruits of his scheme. Their inheritances once placed in his power, he waited but for some moment when his victim was steeped in intoxication, and then fell upon him and slew him. Thus, by his fictitious Paradise, he acquired great wealth and power.



COTONOLAPES, THE MAGICIAN.

IN the Isle of Pentexiore, that is in the land of Prester John, is a great isle, long and broad, and men call that isle Milsterak. There was a man there that was called Cotonolapes; he was full rich, and had a fair castle on a hill, and strong, and he made a wall all about the hill right firm and thick; within he had a fair garden, wherein were many trees bearing all manner of fruits that he might find, and he had planted therein all manner of herbs of good smell, that bare flowers, and there were many fair wells, and by them were made many halls and chambers well dight with gold and azure, and he had made there divers stories of beasts and birds, that sung and turned by engine and orbage as they had been quick; and he had in his garden all things that might be to man solace and comfort; he had also in

that garden maidens within the age of fifteen years, the fairest that he might find, and men children of the same age, and they were clothed with cloth of gold, and he said that they were angels; and he caused to be made certain hills, and enclosed them about with precious stones of jasper and crystal, and set in gold and pearls, and other manner of stones; and he had made a conduit under the earth, so that when he would, the walls ran sometimes with milk, sometimes with wine, sometimes with honey, and this place is called Paradise; and when any young bachelor of the country, knight or esquire, cometh to him for solace and disport, he leadeth them into his paradise, and showeth them these things, as the songs of birds, and his damsels and wells; and he did strike divers instruments of music, in a high tower that might be heard, and said they were angels of God, and that place was Paradise, that God hath granted to those that believed, when he said thus: *Dabo vobis terram fluentem lacte et melle*; that is to say, I shall give you land flowing with milk and honey. And then this rich man made these men drink a manner of drink, of which they were drunken; and he said to them, if they

would die for his sake, when they were dead they should come to his paradise, and they should be of the age of those maidens, and should dwell always with them, and he should put them in a fairer paradise, where they should see God in joy, and in his majesty : and then they granted to do that he would, and he bade them go and slay such a lord, or a man of the country that he was wroth with, and that they should have dread of no man. And if they were slain themselves for his sake, he should put them in his paradise when they were dead. And so went these bachelors to slay great lords of the country, and were slain themselves in hope to have that paradise ; and thus he was avenged of his enemies through his desert : and when rich men of the country perceived this cautel and malice, and the will of this Cotonolapes, they gathered them together and assailed the castle, and slew him, and destroyed all his goods and his fair places and riches that were in his paradise ; and the place of the walls there is yet, and some other things, but the riches are not, and it is not long ago since it was destroyed.

THE GARDEN OF ALOADDIN.

THALABA stood mute,
And passively received
The mingled joy which flow'd on
every sense.

Where'er his eye could reach
Fair structures, rainbow-hued, arose ;
And rich pavilions through the opening woods
Gleam'd from the waving curtains sunny gold ;
And winding through the verdant vale
Went streams of liquid light,
And fluted cypresses rear'd up
Their living obelisks ;
And broad-leaved plane-trees, in long colon-
nades,
O'erarched delightful walks,
Where round their trunks the thousand tendrill'd
vine
Wound up, and hung the trees with greener
wreaths,
And clusters not their own.

Wearied with endless beauty, did his eyes
 Return for rest, beside him teems the earth
 With tulips like the ruddy evening streak'd.
 And here the lily hangs her head of snow ;
 And here amid her sable cup
 Shines the red eye spot, like one brightest star,
 The solitary twinkle of the night ;
 And here the rose expands
 Her paradise of leaves.
 Then on his ear what sounds
 Of harmony arose !
 Far music and the distance-mellow'd song
 From bowers of merriment ;
 The waterfall remote :
 The murmuring of the leafy groves,
 The single nightingale.


 And oh what odours the voluptuous vale
 Scatters from jasmine bowers,
 From yon rose wilderness,
 From cluster'd henna, and from orange groves.

 Full of the bliss, yet still awake
 To wonder, on went Thalaba :
 On every side the song of mirth,
 The music of festivity,
 Invite the passing youth.

Wearied at length with hunger and with heat,
He enters in a banquet room ;
Where round a fountain's brink
On silken carpets sat the festive train.
Instant, through all his frame
Delightful coolness spread ;
The playing fount refresh'd
The agitated air ;
The very light came cool through silvering panes
Of pearly shell, like the pale moonbeam tinged.



SIR GUIDO, THE CRUSADER.

ENTURIES have gone by since the court of the king of England was adorned by two valorous knights named Guido and Tyrius. Many a hard battle had they fought side by side against the enemies of their king, for the sake of the smiles of the fair ladies to whom they had dedicated themselves. After several years of brilliant deeds of daring and numerous perils, Sir Guido married the lady of his devotions. Happy were the early days of his marriage, for the knight and the lady loved each other greatly. One night Sir Guido saw a vision, as it were an angel of God talking with him, and he was afraid.

Then said the angel, 'Why weepest thou, Sir Guido? arise, put on thy arms, and fight for the Holy Cross.'

‘Verily, Lord,’ replied Sir Guido, ‘much and often have I fought.’

‘Yes,’ replied the angel, ‘much, often, and valiantly hast thou fought for the love of woman; now fight for the love of God, the glory of the Holy Cross. Contend against God’s enemies, as thou hast against those of men.’

With these words the vision faded away, and Sir Guido knew that he was called to battle in the Holy Land against the infidels. Then he turned to his wife and said,

‘Felicia, we must part, but for a time only; I am called to the Holy Land, to fight under the banner of the Cross.’

‘Alas! alas! my lord,’ replied Felicia, clasping her husband in her arms, and weeping hot tears upon his neck; ‘alas! and wilt thou leave me? death were to be preferred; then welcome death!’

As she spoke, she snatched up a dagger that lay beside her, and would have killed herself, had not Sir Guido wrenched it from her grasp.

‘Felicia,’ said the knight, ‘be comforted; I am vowed to go to the Holy Land; bear with it, my love: it is but for a time; be comforted.’

‘God’s will be done,’ murmured the lady.

‘Take this ring, and as often as thou lookest upon it, in happiness or in misery, in joy or in woe, think of Felicia.’

Sir Guido gathered together his vassals, and his friend, Sir Tyrius, added his to those of Sir Guido, and thus combined, they marched for the Holy Land, and journeyed by land and not by sea, until they came to the borders of Dacia, a Christian country overrun by the infidels.

‘Brother,’ said Sir Guido, ‘go thou to the king of the country, and with thy good sword rescue his kingdom from the power of the Saracen ; I will proceed to the Holy Land, and when the foes of God are vanquished will rejoin you here, and so together we will return to England.’

‘Even as thou wishest,’ said Sir Tyrius, ‘I will await thy return here.’

Thus did the friends separate. Sir Guido reached the Holy Land, and fought valiantly against the Saracens. Many and dire were his conflicts with the infidels, but in all of them he bore aloft the Cross, and in his hands it never bowed before the Crescent. Every one spoke of his deeds of arms, of his charity, and of his

kindness; the minstrels made songs of his exploits, and spread his fame over the whole Christian world. Sir Tyrius, too, was successful in Dacia; by his aid the king regained his throne, and the infidels were driven from the kingdom. Rewards and thanks followed his successes; the king regarded him as the preserver of his throne, and considered no rewards too great or too good for the Christian warrior. The rewards of the good are ever sources of envy to the wicked. So was it at the court of the Dacian king. The prosperity of Sir Tyrius was gall and wormwood to a knight of Dacia, Sir Plebeus, who, until the coming of this stranger, had been looked upon as the greatest warrior of the Dacian people. To envy succeeded hatred, to hatred falsehood. Treason, he insinuated, was in the mind of Tyrius; he aspired to the crown which he had recovered from the infidel.

Alas! how easily do we credit falsehood, how readily do we believe that every one is as wicked as ourselves. The king believed the words of Plebeus. He called his preserver before him, charged him with treason, and upbraided him with ingratitude.

‘Go,’ said he, ‘leave my court. I have honoured thee much, I would have honoured thee yet more. Now I give thee thy life, in return for the valiant blows thou hast struck for me ; go in peace, but in poverty.’

‘Miserable creature that I am,’ murmured Sir Tyrius : ‘whither shall I flee in this my abject poverty ?’

Sadly and slowly he wandered on, his eyes cast down, his hands crossed upon his breast. At last he sat down by the wayside.

‘Friend,’ said a tall pilgrim, whose careworn look showed how long he had been journeying ; ‘friend, whence comest thou ?’

‘Father,’ replied Tyrius, ‘I am of Rome ; years have I lived in this land, and now I seek another home. Years have passed since my companion parted with me, but a few miles from here ; he sought the Holy Land, and whether he be dead or alive, I know not.’

‘Friend,’ replied the palmer, ‘I am wearied ; suffer me, by the memory of thy friend, I pray thee, suffer me to repose my head on thy knees, that I may sleep awhile.’

Tyrius pitied the poor pilgrim, and acceded to his request. The palmer’s cloak was drawn

over his face, so that he could distinguish but a portion of his features.

As the palmer slept, of a sudden a weasel, small and white, leapt out of his mouth, and ran to a neighbouring hill-side, where it entered a small hole; after a time the creature returned, and appeared to enter the mouth of the sleeping man. At that moment the palmer awoke.

‘Friend,’ said he to Tyrius, ‘I have dreamed a strange dream. Methought a weasel, small, and white as snow, ran from out my mouth to a hole in yonder hill, and thence returning, re-entered my open mouth.’

‘Father,’ replied Tyrius, ‘it was no dream; so did it appear to me also, as I sat and watched thee. What the weasel did in yonder hill I cannot conjecture.’

‘Come, let us arise and look; peradventure we may find some good treasure.’

‘Even as I thought,’ continued the palmer when they entered the hole in the hill-side, that led to a large cave; ‘see—a dragon dead, and filled with gold; the treasure he was thus guarding is our own; ay, too, a sword. What do we read on its bright blade?—“*By me shall Guido overcome the enemies of Tyrius.*”’

‘Alas, Guido,’ said Tyrius, ‘where art thou, O my friend?’

‘Come,’ said the palmer, ‘we will divide the treasures;—to thee the piles of gold and jewels; to me this sword.’

‘To thee the sword of Guido!’ exclaimed Tyrius; ‘nay.’

‘To me the sword of Guido,’ said the pilgrim, interrupting the knight in his words, and gradually raising the cowl of his dress from off his face. ‘Yes, to me, Tyrius.’

‘Guido, my friend, my brother!’ cried the knight, as he looked on the pilgrim’s features. ‘And have we met, my brother! It is enough, O my brother;’ and the tears came in the eyes of both.

‘Courage, courage, Tyrius; weep not, for I will do battle with thy enemy; with this sword will I beat down thy foes; do thou go to thy own home, and leave me to deal with thy traducers.’

The friends embraced and parted. Tyrius went to his home with his treasure, and Guido repaired to the Dacian king’s palace.

‘Who art thou, and whence?’ asked the porter, as Sir Guido knocked at the king’s gate.

‘A humble pilgrim from the Holy Sepulchre.’

‘Enter, father ; I crave thy blessing,’ said the porter, as he knelt before Sir Guido.

‘Thou hast it, my son ; peace be on thee and this house ; I seek the king.’

The king sat at meat, and all his nobles were round him.

‘Is the Holy Land at peace?’ inquired the king, as the pilgrim entered.

‘At peace, my lord ; the Holy Sepulchre is delivered from the infidel.’

‘Ho ! give place ; sit, father ; bring wine and bread. Father, hast thou heard of a Christian knight named Guido?’

‘Both heard and seen him, my lord : we have eaten of the same bread, and shared the same couch.’

‘What say they of the Christian kings?’

‘They say the Dacian king has regained his kingdom and crown by the aid of a brave knight of Rome, whom he promoted to great honour and riches.’

‘They say true, Sir Pilgrim,’ said the king, on whose brow an angry spot began to show.

‘They further say, that you, O king, have driven away this good and brave knight, misled

by the malice of one Plebeus, who has poisoned your royal ear with his falsehoods.'

'False pilgrim,' cried Plebeus, who stood by the king's chair; 'false pilgrim, thou utterest lies, that thou darest not to defend with thy life. That Tyrius was a traitor; he would have dethroned our king.'

'Sir Knight,' replied Guido, 'I have both spoken the truth, and dare prove it; if thou art Sir Plebeus, and sayest Tyrius was a traitor, go to, thou art a liar, and by the king's leave I will prove thy falsehood on thy body.'

'It is well,' said the king, 'let the wager of battle decide the truth, and God defend the right.'

'Give me, my lord, such arms as be necessary for the field, and the ordeal of battle shall prove the truth. Save this sword, I have no armour.'

'Be it so as you desire; to-morrow, at noon, we will see this combat.—Daughter, to thy care I commit this pilgrim knight, see that he be forthcoming by to-morrow's noon.'

It was a bright day when the lists were prepared for the contest. Before the hour appointed drew nigh, all the population of the royal city poured towards the scene of the approaching

combat. Some trusted to the known prowess of the Dacian knight, others sided with the pilgrim, speculated upon who he was, and wished him success for the sake of Tyrius.

‘Haste thee, haste thee, Sir Pilgrim Knight,’ said the king’s daughter; ‘thy adversary even now stands in the lists, and exclaims, “False pilgrim! why tarriest thou?”’

Sir Guido hastened to put on his armour, and to gird his sword about him. At noon the king entered the lists, the combatants took oath to the justice of their quarrel, and prepared to engage. Long and arduous was the battle; Guido pressed upon his adversary so fiercely that he thirsted almost to death.

‘Good pilgrim,’ he said, ‘if thou wilt courteously permit me to quench my thirst this once, I will do the like to thee, shouldst thou require it of me.’

‘I consent,’ replied Guido.

His thirst thus quenched, Plebeus renewed the combat with redoubled animation. At length Guido also thirsted, and claimed of his adversary his promise.

‘Go to, fool! thou shalt taste no water but by the strong hand,’ replied the Dacian.

‘By the strong hand, then,’ rejoined Guido, ‘be it so.’

With these words he made towards the water, guarding himself with his shield. As soon as he gained the edge of the pond he jumped in, drank freely of the water, and rushed out refreshed and re-invigorated, against his treacherous foe. His prowess and his courage alike deserted the Dacian, and he turned and fled.

At that moment the king threw down his sceptre, and the combat closed for that day.

The king’s daughter led the knight to his chamber, bound up his wounds, tended him softly, prepared his evening meal, and smoothed his bed with her own hands : a deep sleep soon came over Sir Guido, for he was wearied with the exertions of the combat.

‘My sons,’ said Plebeus to the seven stout warriors that called him father, ‘my sons, if tomorrow’s sun sees yonder pilgrim in the lists, I die ; never yet did I meet so stout an opponent.’

‘Fear not, sir,’ replied they all, ‘we will take care of the pilgrim.’

Sir Guido slept heavily; at midnight his chamber-door was carefully opened, and the sons of Plebeus crept into the room.

‘He sleeps soundly,’ whispered the eldest, ‘how shall we dispose of him? If we slay him here as he sleeps, what are we but dead men on the morrow?’

‘Does not the sea flow beneath the window?’ asked one of the sons.

‘Yes, but if we touch him he will wake.’

‘Nay, let us take him bed and all and throw him into the sea.’

Sir Guido slept on, and knew not what was plotting against him.

It was midnight, and the moon shone brightly on the sea. A fisherman beneath the wall of the Dacian king’s palace was casting his nets, when a sudden splash in the water arrested his attention. ‘Halloa!’ said he to himself, ‘what villainy is this?—a bed floating on the sea, and a man on it! Ho, friend! ho, I say! awake, or be drowned!’

‘Where am I?’ exclaimed Sir Guido, as he awoke with the fisherman’s clamour. ‘Help;

friend,—I am sinking : I am the pilgrim that fought yesterday in the lists—thanks—thanks,’ he continued as he reached the fisherman’s boat; ‘but how got I here?’

‘I hardly know : just now I heard a splash, looked round, and by the moon’s light saw you and your bed floating on the water.’

‘Ah, well! the treachery has failed, good friend ; to-morrow will confound the traitors.’

The morrow came in fair and bright ; again the people hastened to the lists, eager to see the issue of this wondrous combat. The king was seated, the lists were ready, and the heralds sounded. Then stepped forth Sir Plebeus with his visor up, and a fair and smiling countenance.

‘My lord the king,’ said the Dacian champion, as he bowed before the king’s throne, ‘I demand the combat with the pilgrim.’

‘It is well, Sir Plebeus—ho, herald! go to my daughter, and demand of her the pilgrim knight.’

‘The princess is even now coming to the royal presence,’ replied the herald, as the

crowd formed a lane, through which the king's daughter was seen approaching her father's throne, with a meek and sorrowful aspect.

'My child,' said the Dacian king, 'where is the pilgrim knight, the champion of Sir Tyrius? we await his coming forth.'

'Father, and dear lord,' replied the maiden, 'I know not whither he is gone; but last night I left him in deep sleep in his chamber, and now neither he nor his bed whereon he slept are to be found.'

'Cowardly boaster,' exclaimed Sir Plebeus, 'dares he not meet me in the list? The coward has fled.'

'That is not so, my lord,' exclaimed a poor man in the crowd, 'he has not fled.'

'Ah! how sayest thou?'

'Even now he sleeps at my hut; last night I found him floating on his bed beneath the palace wall—I took him into my boat, and he is safe.'

'Thou hast done well—summon him to the list. Sir Plebeus, you shall not be disappointed of your combat; see, even now your adversary comes; now, marshals, arm the stranger.'

'Nay, my good lord,' said the Dacian knight,

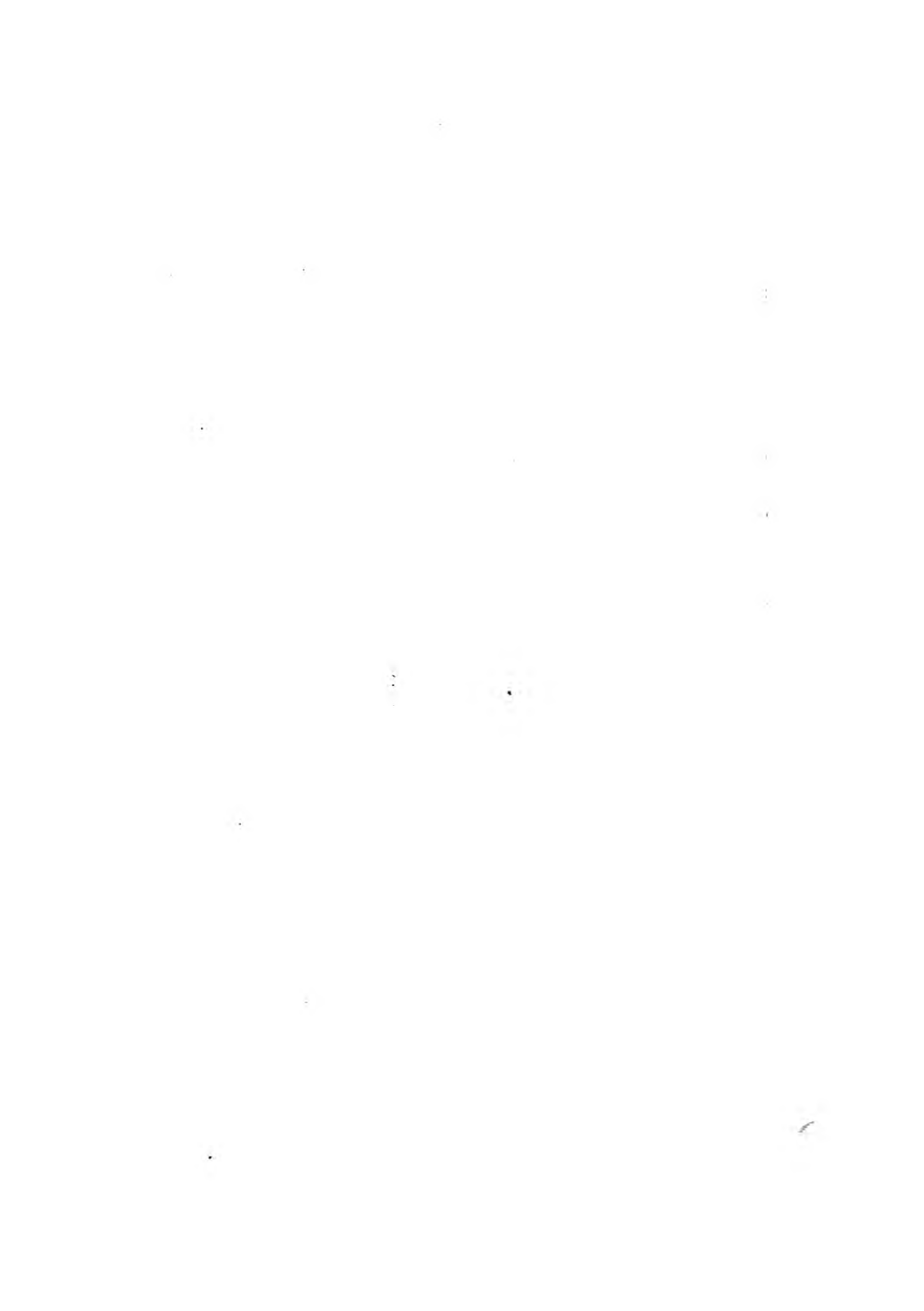
‘press not on the pilgrim—I pray you, my lord, give him time to recruit his strength.’

‘Not for a minute, Sir Knight,’ exclaimed the pilgrim as he entered the lists, and hastened to don his armour; ‘not for a minute—I have much to reckon with you: remember last night.’

The combat was short; each knight struck twice without fatal effect; the pilgrim’s third blow ended the battle, and the Dacian rolled on the ground a headless corpse.

‘Sir Pilgrim,’ said the king, as he knelt before the throne, ‘God has defended the right; even now have I been told of the treachery of that senseless corpse, and of the villainy of his sons towards thee; they now are going to their reward—to death. Come, Sir Knight, for thy sake I restore Sir Tyrius, renew his honours, and add to them those which thou dost so steadfastly refuse. One boon I ask, before you leave our court and our kingdom: disclose thy name; let me and my people know to whom they owe the punishment of a traitor, and the defence of their best friend, their former preserver.’

‘My lord,’ replied the pilgrim, ‘my name is not unknown to you: I am the knight of the Holy Land, the Guido of whom men speak.’





Low bowed the Pilgrim his head, but not a word did he speak, as the Lady passed onwards.—See p 123.

Loud were the exclamations with which that famous name was hailed by the assembled Dacians, as their king fell on the pilgrim's neck, and embraced him as a brother.

Seven years had passed since Guido left his castle and sailed for the Holy Land. Day by day did Felicia minister to the poor, and bestow alms on every applicant, with this one request, that they would pray for the safety of her husband, Sir Guido, and that once more before her death she might rejoice in his presence. Felicia stood at her castle gate, and the inner court-yard was filled with her poor pensioners. One by one, she accosted them, and bade her almoner give to each his accustomed alms. Her young son ran by his mother's side.

'Mother, dear mother,' said the child, as he heard Felicia commend Sir Guido to the prayers of the poor men; 'is it not my father for whom thou dost ask these poor people to pray?'

'Yes, my child; seven years have passed since he left me: but a few months had we been married, before God summoned him to the Holy Land, and he took the cross, and went against the infidel.'

As she thus spoke to her son, Felicia drew nigh to a tall pilgrim, who stood apart from the rest of the poor people. She gave him the alms, and asked of him his prayers for her husband's return; low bowed the pilgrim his head, but not a word did he speak, as the lady passed onwards. Her son followed after Felicia; as he passed the pilgrim, he bowed himself forward and embraced the youth.

'God give thee grace,' said he, with a trembling voice, 'God give thee grace to do his will.'

'Thanks, father, for thy blessing,' said Felicia; 'can I do aught to reward thy good wishes?'

'Lady,' said the pilgrim in a low stifled voice, 'I crave the small hermitage below the eagle's rock; there let me live and die.'

'Ha!' exclaimed Felicia, 'the eagle's rock; art thou of this place, good father, that thou knowest the name so well?'

'I was of thy people once, fair lady; now I am God's poor servant.'

'Be it as thou desirest; go, father, and pray for this house and its long-lost master.'

Those who could see the pilgrim's face saw

the tears start in his eyes, as he accepted Felicia's gift and turned towards his lonely hermitage. Many years did he live there, many a time did he come to the castle-yard, and his daily companion was Felicia's child, Sir Guido's son. Day after day did he talk to him of adventures of knights in the Holy Land, of those that had fallen fighting for the Sepulchre, and those who had passed through the fiery ordeal of that expedition. At last death came upon him.

'Dear boy,' said he to Sir Guido's son, 'take this ring to thy mother, and bid her, if she would see me ere I die, come hither quickly.'

'Mother, dear mother,' said the youth, when he entered Felicia's chamber, 'the good pilgrim is sorely ill; he sends you this ring, and bids you see him ere he die.'

Felicia cast one look upon the ring. 'Haste, haste, my child,' she exclaimed, 'it is my lord's, thy father's ring; come, come to the forest.'


Quickly as she rushed to the hermitage, she found but the dead body of her husband.

'Woe, woe is me!' she exclaimed, casting herself on the cold corpse, 'woe, woe is me! where are now my alms? My husband asked

charity of me, and I knew him not ; thy father talked with thee, my child, he embraced thee, and thou knewest him not ; O Guido ! thou didst look upon thy wife, and didst not tremble ; thou didst look upon thy child, and kiss him, and bless him ; alas, alas ! my husband.'



THE KNIGHT AND THE NECROMANCER.

MONG the knights that graced the court of the emperor Titus, there was one whom all men agreed in calling the GOOD KNIGHT. For some years he had been married to one whose beauty was her fairest portion, for she loved not the knight, her husband, but delighted in the company of others, and would gladly have devised his death, that she might marry another courtier.

The good knight could not fail of discovering the wickedness of his wife. Ofttimes did he remonstrate with her; but to all he said she turned a deaf ear, and would not return the affection he felt for one so unworthy of his love.

‘My dear wife,’ said the good knight, ‘I go to the Holy Land, to perform a vow: I leave thee to thine own discretion.’

The knight had no sooner embarked, than the lady sent for one of her lovers, a clever sorcerer.

‘ Know,’ said she to him, when he arrived at the house, ‘ my husband has sailed for the Holy Land ; we live together ; ay, and for all our lives, if thou wilt but compass his death ; for I love him not.’

‘ There is danger,’ replied the necromancer ; ‘ but, for the sake of thee and thy love, I will endeavour to perform thy wishes.’

Then took he wax and herbs, gathered at dead of night in secret places, and unguents made of unknown ingredients, and moulded a figure of the good knight, inscribing it with his name, and placing it before him, against the wall of the lady’s chamber.

The good knight commenced his pilgrimage towards the Holy Land, and wist not what the lady and her lover were plotting against him and his dear life. As he descended towards the vessel in which he was to embark, he observed a man of some age, and of lofty and commanding stature, regarding him with interest. A long robe covered him, and its hood, drawn over the face, concealed, in a great degree, the

features of the wearer. At last the old man approached the knight :

‘ Good friend,’ said he, ‘ I have a secret to communicate to thee.’

‘ Say on, good father,’ rejoined the knight ; ‘ what wouldest thou with me ?’

‘ I would preserve thee from death.’

‘ Nay, father, that is in God’s hands ; I fight not against His will.’

‘ To-day, then, thou diest ; unless thou obeyest my commands :—and, listen, the lover of thy unfaithful wife is thy murderer.’

‘ Good sir,’ replied the knight, ‘ I perceive thou art a wise man ; what shall I do to escape this sudden death ?’

‘ Follow, and obey me.’

Many and winding were the streets through which the good knight followed his mysterious guide. At last they reached a dark, dismal-looking house, apparently without any inhabitant. The guide pressed his foot on the door-step, and the door slowly opened, closing again as the knight followed the old man into the house. All was darkness, but the guide seized the knight’s hand, and led him up the tottering staircase to a large room, in which

were many strange books, and figures of men and animals, interspersed with symbolic emblems of triangles and circles, whose meaning was known to that aged man alone. In the midst of the room was a table, on which burned a lamp without a wick, or a reservoir of oil, for it fed on a vapour that was lighter than air, and was invisible to the eye. The old man spoke some words to the knight unknown; in a moment the floor clave asunder, and a bath, on whose sides the same mystic symbols were written as on the walls of the room, arose from beneath.

‘Prepare to bathe,’ said the old man, opening a book on the table, and taking a bright mirror from a casket.

No sooner had the knight entered the bath, than the old man gave him the mirror, and bid him look into it.

‘What seest thou?’ asked he of the knight.

‘I see my own chamber; my wife is there, and Maleficus, the greatest sorcerer in Rome.’

‘What does the sorcerer?’

‘He kneads wax and other ingredients; he hath made a figure of me, and written under it

is my name : even now he fastens it against the wall of my chamber.'

'Look again,' said the old man ; ' what does he ?'

'He takes a bow ; he fits an arrow to the string ; he aims at the effigy.'

'Look on : as thou lovest thy life, when that arrow leaves the string, plunge beneath the water till thou hear'st me call.'

'He shoots!' exclaimed the knight as he dived beneath the water.

'Come out : look again at the mirror ; what seest thou ?'

'An arrow is sticking in the wall, by the side of the figure. The sorcerer seems angry ; he draws out the arrow, and prepares to shoot again from a nearer place.'

'As thou valuest thy life, do as before.'

Again the good knight plunged, and at the old man's call resumed his inspection of the mirror.

'What seest thou now ?'

'Maleficus has again missed the image ; he makes great lamentations : he says to my wife, "If I miss the third time, I die :"' he goes nearer to the image, and prepares to shoot.'

‘Plunge,’ cried the old man ; and then, after a time, ‘Raise thyself, and look again ; why laughest thou ?’

‘To see the reward of the wicked ; the arrow has missed, rebounded from the wall, and pierced the sorcerer ; he faints, he dies ; my wife stands over his body, and weeps ; she digs a hole under the bed, and buries the body.’

‘Arise, Sir Knight : resume thy apparel, and give God thanks for thy great deliverance.’

A year and more elapsed before the good knight returned from his pilgrimage. His wife welcomed him with smiles and every appearance of pleasure. For a few days the knight concealed his knowledge of his wife’s conduct. At length he summoned all his and her kinsfolk, and they feasted in commemoration of his return from his dangerous pilgrimage.

‘Brother,’ said the knight during the feast, ‘how is it that I neither hear nor see aught of Maleficus, the great magician ?’

‘He disappeared, we know not whither, the very day that thou didst depart for thy pilgrimage.’

‘And where did he die ?’ asked the knight, with a look at his wife.

‘We know not that he is dead,’ replied the guests.

‘How should a sorcerer die?’ asked the knight’s wife with a sneer.

‘If not dead, why didst thou bury him?’ rejoined the knight.

‘Bury him! what meanest thou, my lord? I bury him!’

‘Yes; thou bury him,’ said the knight calmly.

‘Brothers, he is mad,’ exclaimed the lady, turning pale and trembling.

‘Woman,’ replied the knight, rising, and seizing the lady by the wrist, ‘woman, I am not mad. Hear ye all; this woman loved Maleficus; she called him here the day I sailed; she devised with him my death; but God struck him with that death he would have prepared for me, and now he lies buried in my chamber. Come, let us see this great wonder.’

The hiding-place of the body was opened, and the remains found where the knight had said; then did he declare before the judges and the people the great crimes of his wife; and the judges condemned her to death at the stake, and bade the executioner scatter her ashes to the four winds of heaven.

THE CLERK AND THE IMAGE.

IN the city of Rome stood an image : its posture was erect, with the right hand extended ; on the middle finger of the outstretched hand was written, ‘ STRIKE HERE.’ Years and years had the image stood there, and no one knew the secret of the inscription. Many wise men from every land came and looked at the statue, and many were the solutions of the mystery attempted by them ; each man was satisfied with his own conclusion, but no one else agreed with him.

Among the many that attempted to unravel the mystery of the figure was a certain priest. As he looked at the image, he noticed that when the sun shone on the figure, the shadow of the outstretched finger was discernible on the ground at some distance from the statue. He marked the spot, and waited until the night

was come ; at midnight, he began to dig where the shadow ceased : for three feet he found nothing but earth and stones ; he renewed his labour, and felt his spade strike against something hard ; he continued his work with greater zeal, and found a trap-door, which he soon cleared, and proceeded to raise.

Below the door, a flight of marble steps descended into the earth, and a bright light streamed upward from below. Casting down his spade, the priest descended ; at the foot of the stairs he entered a vast hall : a number of men habited in costly apparel, and sitting in solemn silence, occupied the centre ; around and on every side were riches innumerable : piles of gold and enamelled vases ; rich and glittering robes, and heaps of jewels of the brightest hue.

The hall was lighted by one jewel alone,—a carbuncle so bright, so dazzling, that the priest could hardly bear to gaze upon it, where it stood in a corner of the hall. At the opposite end of the hall stood an armed archer ; his bow was strung, and the arrow fitted to the string, and he seemed to take aim at the carbuncle ; his brow blazed with reflected light, and on it was

written, '*I am that I am; my shaft is inevitable: yon glittering jewel cannot escape its stroke.*'

Beyond the great hall appeared another chamber, into which the priest, amazed at what he saw, entered. It was fitted as a bed-chamber; couches of every kind ornamented it, and many beautiful women, arrayed in robes as costly as those worn in the great hall, occupied the chamber. Here too all was mute: the beautiful damsels sat in silence.

Still the priest went onward. There were rooms after rooms, stables filled with horses and asses, and granaries stored with abundant forage. He placed his hand on the horses; they were cold, lifeless stone. Servants stood round about, their lips were closed—all was silent as the grave; and yet what was there wanting—what but life?

'I have seen to-day, what no man will believe,' said the priest, as he re-entered the great hall; 'let me take something whereby to prove the credit of my story.'


As he thus spake to himself, he saw some vases and jewel-handled knives on a marble table beside him; he raised his hand, he clasped

them, he placed them in the bosom of his garment—all was dark.

The archer had shot with his arrow; the carbuncle was broken into a thousand pieces—a thick darkness covered the place; hour after hour he wandered about the halls and passages—all was dark—all was cold—all was desolate; the stairs seemed to have fled, he found no opening, and he laid him down and died a miserable death, amid those piles of gold and jewels, his only companions the lifeless images of stone. His secret died with him.



THE DEMON KNIGHT OF THE VANDAL CAMP.

N the borders of the diocese of Ely stands an old castle, now crumbling into ruins, below which is a place called by the people Wandlesbury, commemorating by this name the camp of the Vandals, which they pitched hard by this castle, after laying waste the country and cruelly slaughtering the inhabitants. The camp was on the summit of a hill, on a round plain : round about it ran a trench which

‘The Vandal race
———long since in blood did trace ;
The moor around was brown and bare,
The space within was green and fair ;
The spot the village children knew,
For there the wild flowers earliest grew ;
But woe betide the wandering’wight,
That treads its circle in the night !
The breadth across, a bowshot clear,
Gives ample space for full career :
Opposed to the four points of heaven,
By four deep gaps was entrance given.’

Woe indeed to the adventurous man who dared go armed into that camp, and call upon an adversary to meet him. Even as he called, another knight rode into the camp, armed at all points, and met the challenger in combat. The encounter was always fatal to one of the combatants.

The knight Albert sat in the hall of the castle of Wandlesbury, and shared the hospitality of the lord. At night, after supper, the household closed round the great fire, and each man in his turn told his tale of arms, love, or sorcery. The demon knight of the Vandal camp figured in many a tale, and Albert hastened to prove the truth of the legend. It was in vain that the lord of the castle endeavoured to dissuade his guest from seeking the phantom knight. Armed at all points, the English knight sallied from the castle gate; and his trusty squire, a youth of noble blood, rode by his master's side.

Some hours passed: the hall was sadly silent during the knight's absence, for they all feared the worst for him; anon, a horn was heard at the gate; the warder hastened to open the doors, and the knight rode into the

castle court ; his squire followed him close, and he led by the bridle a horse of perfect form and figure, of enormous size, and coal black.

The knight hastened to the hall ; all clustered round him to hear his tale ; but the good lord of the castle bade them first release him of his armour, and bring in refreshment. One by one the pieces of his armour were taken off, and neither wound nor bruise appeared ; at last they proceeded to take off one of his cuisses : it was filled with blood, and even then a few drops were seen to ooze from a slight wound in the thigh. His wound dressed, his fatigue refreshed with good wine and meat, the lord of the castle requested the knight's account of his meeting with the demon champion.

'My lord,' replied the English knight, 'you know how, despite your earnest remonstrances, I rode from your castle gate. The moon was bright and clear, and I soon reached the entrance of the Vandal camp : without a pause I rode in, and blew my bugle.

'Methought an answer met mine ear,—
Yet was the blast so low and drear,
So hollow and so faintly blown,
It might be echo of my own.'

I waited for a moment in doubt,

‘Then sudden in the ring I view,
In form distinct of shape and hue,
A mounted champion rise.’

Without a word, the demon prepared for the charge; I raised my shield, couched my lance, and rushed to the attaint: we both staggered with the charge; our lances broke in half, but the points glided harmlessly from our armour. I still pressed on, and my adversary's horse stumbled and fell: the demon was rolled on the ground. In a moment I was by his side, and seized his horse's rein; the demon seemed to revive; he saw my action, snatched a portion of his broken lance, and darted it at me as a javelin. It struck me on my thigh, but in my eagerness I felt it not. In a moment

‘He seem'd to vanish from my sight:
The moonbeam droop'd, and deepest night
Sank down upon the heath.’

Had I not that dark black horse as a witness of the combat, I should begin to doubt whether I had met the demon.’

‘Let us see the demon's steed,’ said the old lord, after he had thanked the knight for his relation of the adventure; ‘even now the dawn is about to break, and we must seek some little rest before day shines out.’

In the court-yard they found the black steed, his eye lustrous, his neck proudly arched, his coat of shining black, and a glittering war-saddle on his back. The first streaks of the dawn began to appear as they entered the castle yard ; the black steed grew restless, and tried to break from the hands of the groom ; he champed his bit, snorted as in pain and anger, and struck the ground with his feet, until the sparks flew. The cock crowed—the black steed had disappeared.

Every year, on the self-same night, at that self-same hour, did the wound of the English knight burst out afresh, and torment him with severe anguish ; to his dying day he bore this memorial of his encounter with the demon champion of the Vandal camp.



THE EVIL ONE IN DISGUISE.

IT often happens that the devils are permitted to transform themselves into angels of light, or to assume the human form, in order to foster in human hearts whatever is wicked. So did it happen in France, when Valentine was bishop of Arles.

On the very borders of his diocese stood a knight's castle, with lofty and strong battlements. The knight had travelled in many lands, and seen many nations, that none others had looked upon, or heard of. He was a good man, and a constant attendant on the services of the Church. His wife was very fair to look upon; her figure was light and tall; her face delicately white, and her eyes ever bright, and sparkling with almost unearthly brilliancy. Attracted by cries of distress, whilst on one of his distant pilgrimages, he had hastened into

a dark wood, where he discovered this fair lady, bound to a tree, and being beaten with rods by two men of fierce countenances and powerful frames.

His sword flashed in the air as the knight rode against the men; with one blow he struck down the nearest of the lady's torturers; with the second he pierced the breast of the other monster; whilst with a third stroke of his trenchant blade he cut in pieces the cords that bound the lady to the tree.

The lady's tale was simple; she was the daughter of a powerful prince of a far-off land; had been seized by those in whose hands the knight discovered her; carried for days and months over seas and lands, and at last bound to the tree, and scourged because she would not yield to the desires of her tormentors. She knew not where her father's kingdom lay, and its name was unknown even to the knight, though he had travelled far and often.

After a time, the knight married the lady of the wood; happy were they by their union, for he loved her dearly, and the lady seemed to return his love. One thing alone grieved the good knight. Every day that she came to the

service of the Church, she stayed no longer than the beginning of the consecration of the Elements of the Sacrament. Often and often had the good knight remonstrated with his wife on her conduct, and sought from her some reason for her action. There was ever some excuse, but it was always unsatisfactory.

One holiday the knight and the lady were at church. The priest was proceeding to the celebration of the Sacrament, and the lady rose as usual.

‘Nay,’ said the knight, forcibly arresting his wife’s departure ; ‘nay, not for this once.’

The lady struggled, her eyes gleamed with redoubled brilliancy, and her whole body seemed wrung with violent pain.

‘In the name of God, depart not,’ said the knight.

That holy name was all-powerful. The bodily form of the lady melted away, and was seen no more ; whilst with a cry of anguish and of terror, an evil spirit of monstrous form rose from the ground, clave the chapel roof asunder, and disappeared in the air.

THE THREE MAXIMS.

THERE was an emperor of Rome named Domitian, a good and a wise prince, who suffered no offenders to escape. There was a high feast in his hall, the tables glittered with gold and silver, and groaned with plenteous provision : his nobles feasted with him—

‘ And ’twas merry with all
In the king’s great hall,
When his nobles and kinsmen, great and small,
Were keeping their Christmas holiday.’

The porter in his lodge made his fire blaze brightly, and solaced himself with Christmas cheer ; every now and then grumbling at his office, that kept him from the gaieties of the retainers’ hall. The wind blew cold, the sleet fell quick, as the bell of the king’s gate sounded heavy and dull.

‘ Who comes now ? ’ grumbled the porter, ‘ a

pretty night to turn out from fire and food. Why, the very bell itself finds it too cold to clank loudly. Well, well—duty is duty : some say it's a pleasure—humph ! Hilloa, friend, who are you ? what do you want, man ?'

The traveller whom the porter thus addressed was a tall weather-beaten man, with long white hair that fluttered from beneath his cap of furs, and whose figure, naturally tall and robust, seemed taller and larger from the vast cloak of bearskins with which he was enveloped.

'I am a merchant from a far country,' said the man ; 'many wonderful things do I bring to your emperor, if he will purchase of my valuables.'

'Well, come in, come in, man,' said the porter ; 'the king keeps high Christmas feast, and on this night all men may seek his presence. Wilt take some refreshment, good sir ?'

'I am never hungry, nor thirsty, nor cold.'

'I'm all three ;—straight before you, good sir—the hall porter will usher you in—straight before,' muttered the old porter, as he returned to his fire and his supper. 'Never hungry, thirsty, nor cold—what a good poor man he would make ; humph ! he loses many a pleasure

though,' continued the porter, as he closed the door of the lodge.

The strange merchant presented himself to the hall porter, and was ushered by him into the presence of the emperor

'Whom have we here?' said Domitian, as the strange visitor made his obeisance. 'What seekest thou of me?'

'I bring many things from far countries. Wilt thou buy of my curiosities?'

'Let us see them,' rejoined Domitian.

'I have three maxims of especial wisdom and excellence, my lord.'

'Let us hear them.'

'Nay, my lord; if thou hearest them, and likest not, then I have lost both my maxims and my money.'

'And if I pay without hearing them, and they are useless, I lose my time and my money. What is the price?'

'A thousand florins, my lord.'

'A thousand florins for that of the which I know not what it is,' replied the emperor.

'My lord,' rejoined the merchant, 'if the maxims do not stand thee in good stead, I will return the money.'

‘Be it so then : let us hear thy maxims.’

‘The first, my lord, is on this wise ; NEVER BEGIN ANYTHING UNTIL THOU HAST CALCULATED WHAT THE END WILL BE.’

‘I like thy maxim much,’ said the king ; ‘let it be recorded in the chronicles of the kingdom, inscribed on the walls and over the doors of my palaces and halls of justice, and interwoven on the borders of the linen of my table and my chamber.’

‘The second, my lord, is, NEVER LEAVE A HIGHWAY FOR A BYE-WAY.’

‘I see not the value of this maxim : but to the third.’

‘NEVER SLEEP IN THE HOUSE WHERE THE MASTER IS AN OLD MAN AND THE WIFE A YOUNG WOMAN. These three maxims, if attended to, my lord, will stand thee in good stead.’

‘We shall see,’ said the king ; ‘a year and a day for the trial of each, at the end of this time we will settle accounts.’

‘Good master,’ said the king’s jester, ‘wilt sell thy chance of the thousand florins for my fool’s cap ?’

‘Wait and see what the end will be,’ rejoined the merchant ; ‘a year and a day hence I will

return to see how my first maxim has fared. Farewell, my lord.'

The year and a day were nearly elapsed, and yet the first maxim had not been clearly proved. Domitian remained severely just, and the ill-intentioned of his nobles plotted his destruction in the hopes of indulging their vices more freely under the rule of his successor. Many were the plots they concocted to put him to death, but all were foiled by his foresight and prudence.

'Every failure,' said the conspirators at a midnight meeting, 'brings danger nearer to ourselves.'

'Even so, brothers, but this time we will not fail,' said one of the number; 'do ye not mind that I am the king's barber? Every day he bares his throat to my razor, it is but one slash, and we are free; promise me the crown: in return for this, I will give you freedom by the king's death, and free license during my reign.'

'It is well spoken,' cried all the conspirators; 'the barber shall be our king.'

On the next morning, the barber entered the

chamber of Domitian, and prepared to shave the king. The razor was stropped, the lather spread upon the royal chin, and the towel fastened round the royal breast. On the edge of the napkin were these words in letters of gold, '*Never begin anything until thou hast calculated what the end will be.*'

The barber's eye fell on these words; they arrested his attention, he paused in his labours.

'What am I about to do?' thought he to himself, 'to kill the king, to gain his crown; am I sure of the crown? shall I not rather be slain miserably, and die amid unheard-of tortures and infamy? whilst those that plot with me will turn against me, and make me their scapegoat.'

'Art dreaming, Sir Barber?' exclaimed the king.

At the king's voice, the barber trembled exceedingly; he dropped the razor from his hand, and fell at his sovereign's feet.

'What means all this?'

'Oh, my good lord!' exclaimed the barber, as he knelt trembling at Domitian's feet, 'this day was I to have killed thee; but I saw the maxim written on the napkin: I thought of the

consequences, and now repent me of my wickedness. Mercy, my good lord, mercy!

‘Be faithful, and fear not,’ replied the king.

‘The merchant, my lord the king,’ said a servant of the chamber, who entered at that moment, followed by the old merchant.

‘Thou art come at a good time, Sir Merchant; the first maxim has been proved; it has saved my life: it was worthy of its price.’

‘Even as I expected, my lord; a year and a day hence expect me again.’

‘We will trust no more to a single hand,’ said one of the conspirators, when they met again after the barber’s repentance; ‘this time we will all share.’

‘I propose,’ said one of the rebel lords, ‘an ambush on the road to Naples. Every year, on the day after Christmas, the king journeys thither; the bye-path near to the city gates is the nearest road, peradventure he will go that way.’

When the Christmas night was over, the king prepared to journey to Naples; a great company of nobles, knights, and men-at-arms,

went with him. Not far from the city, he came to the place where the highway and bye-path diverged.

‘My lord,’ said an old noble, ‘the day is far spent, the sun sinks fast in the horizon; will not my lord turn by the bye-path, it is far shorter than the high road?’

‘Nay,’ said the king, ‘it’s a year and a day since the merchant’s first maxim saved my life; now will I test the second admonition, “*Never leave a highway for a bye-way,*” but go part of ye by that path, and prepare for me in the city; I and the rest will pursue the highway.’

Onward rode the knights and the soldiers by the bye-path, and hastened towards the city: as they neared the ambush, the traitors sprang upon them, for they thought the king was among them. Every man slew his opponent, and there remained not one of the king’s company, to bear the tidings to the king, but a youth, a little page whom the conspirators did not remark during the attack.

At the city gates, the king found the merchant who had sold him his maxims.

‘Halt, O king!’ said he, ‘the second maxim has been proved.’

‘How so?’ replied the king.

‘The company that rode by the bye-path are slain, every one of them save this little page, who is here to tell the sad tale.’

‘Is this so, good youth?’

‘Alas, my lord, it is too true : from behind the trees they rushed upon our company as we rode lightly and merrily, and no one, save your poor page, lives to tell the tale.’

‘For a second time is my life saved by thy maxim ; let it be inscribed in gold, “NEVER LEAVE A HIGHWAY FOR A BYE-WAY.”’

‘For a year and a day, O king, fare thee well.’

‘A murrain on the old fool’s maxims, grumbled the chief of the conspirators, when they discovered that the king had escaped their wicked design ; ‘we are beaten out of every plot, and had best submit to his dominion.’

‘Nay,’ exclaimed a young and licentious noble, ‘there is luck in odd numbers, let us have one more trial, a sink or a swim.’

‘I care not if we try once more,’ said the old rebel ; ‘but come, who suggests a scheme?’

‘I, and I, and I!’ exclaimed several at once; but their schemes were pronounced futile.

‘What say ye to this?’ said the young man who had spoken before: ‘every year the king goes to the small village town, where his old nurse lives; there is but one house in the village where he can be lodged, let us bribe the master of the house, that he slay our tyrant while he sleeps.’

The plan was approved by the rebel lords, the bribe offered and accepted by the old man to whose house the king always came. The king came as usual to the village town, and to his old lodgings. As he entered, the old man received him with humility and feigned delight, and a young damsel, not eighteen years of age, attended at the door-step. The king noticed the damsel; he arrested his steps, and called to the old man.

‘Good father,’ asked he, ‘is yonder damsel thy daughter, or thy niece?’

‘Neither, my lord,’ replied the old man, ‘she is my newly married wife.’

‘Away, away,’ said the king to his chamberlain, ‘prepare me a bed in another house, for I will not sleep here to-night.’

‘Even as my lord wishes,’ rejoined the chamberlain; ‘but my lord knows there is no house in this place fit for a king’s residence save this one; here everything is prepared, everything commodious.’

‘I have spoken,’ replied the king; ‘remain thou here; I will sleep elsewhere.’

In the night, the old man and his wife arose, stole on tiptoe to the chamber which was prepared for the king, and where the chamberlain now slept in the royal bed; all was dark as they approached the bed, and plunged a dagger into the breast of the sleeping noble.

‘It is done,’ said they; ‘to bed, to bed.’

Early the next morning, the king’s page knocked at the door of the humble abode where the king had passed the night.

‘Why so early, good page?’ asked the king.

‘My lord, the old merchant waits thy rising; and even now strange news is come from the village.’

‘Let the merchant and the messenger come in.’

The merchant seemed greatly elated, his eye glistened with joy, and his figure appeared dilated beyond its ordinary height. The

messenger was pale and trembling, and staring aghast with fear.

‘My lord, my good lord,’ exclaimed the pallid messenger, ‘a horrible murder has been committed on your chamberlain; he lies dead in the royal bed.’

‘The third maxim is tried and proved,’ said the merchant.

‘Give God the praise,’ said the king; ‘thy reward is earned; a robe of honour, and thrice thy bargained price; to the old man and his wife, immediate death.’





THE TRIALS OF EUSTACE.

WHEN Trajan was emperor of Rome, Sir Placidus, a knight of great prowess, and a most skilful commander, was chief of the armies of the empire. Like his imperial master, he was merciful, just and charitable, but a worshipper of idols, a despiser of the Christian faith. His wife was worthy of his virtues, and was with one accord with him in his religion. Two sons had he, educated in all the magnificence that befitted their father's station ; but, as was to be expected, the faith of the parents was the faith of their children : they were idolaters.

It was a fair soft day, the southerly wind blew lightly over the meadows, and the fleecy clouds, ever and anon obscuring the sun, proclaimed the hunter's day. Sir Placidus rode to the chase. His friends and his retainers

were with him, and right gallant company were they. A herd of deer was soon found, the dogs loosed from their leashes, the bugles sounded, and the whole of the company in full and eager pursuit. One stag of lofty stature, and many-branching antlered head, separated itself from the rest of the herd, and made for the depths of the neighbouring forest. The company followed the herd, but Sir Placidus gave his attention to the noble animal, and tracked it through the mazes of the wood.

Swift and long was the chase. Sir Placidus rode after the stag, ever gaining just near enough to the noble animal to inspire him with a hope of its ultimate capture, yet never so near as to strike it with his hunting spear. On, on they went with untiring speed. The wood and its thickets were passed, a lofty hill rose to the view. He pressed the stag up its sides, and gained rapidly on the chase. In a moment the stag turned and faced the knight; he prepared to strike, but his hand was stayed as he saw between the horns of the creature a cross encircled with a ring of glorious light. Whilst he mused on the wonder, a voice addressed him. The stag seemed to speak thus to the knight:—

‘Why persecutest thou me, Placidus? for thy sake have I assumed this shape; I am the God whom thou ignorantly worshippes; I am Christ. Thine alms and thy prayers have gone up before me, and therefore am I now come. As thou dost hunt this stag, even so will I hunt thee.’

Placidus swooned at these words, and fell from his horse. How long he lay on the ground he knew not. When his senses returned he cried in anguish,

‘Tell me Thy will, O Lord, that I may believe in Thee, and perform it.’

Then replied the voice, ‘I am Christ, the Son of the living God. I created heaven and earth, caused the light to arise, and divided it from the darkness. I appointed days, and seasons, and years. I formed man out of the dust of the earth, and for his sake took upon me his form. Crucified, and buried, on the third day I arose again.’

‘All this I believe, Lord,’ replied Placidus; ‘yea, and that Thou art He who bringest back the wandering sinner.’

Then said the voice, ‘If thou believest, go into the city and be baptized.’

‘ Shall I reveal this unto my wife and children, Lord, that they also may believe ?’

‘ Yea,’ replied the voice ; ‘ return here on the morrow’s dawn, that thou mayest know of thy future life.’

Placidus returned to his wife, and told her all that had happened unto him ; then did they believe, and were baptized, and their children with them. The knight was called Eustace, his wife Theosbyta, whilst to his two sons the names of Theosbytus and Agapetus were given in their baptism. On the morrow, the knight returned to the place where he had seen the vision.

‘ I implore thee, O Lord, to manifest thyself according to thy word,’ prayed the knight.

Then the voice was heard, saying, ‘ Blessed art thou, Eustace, in that thou hast been washed with the laver of my grace, and thereby overcome the devil. Now hast thou trodden him to dust, who beguiled thee. Now will thy fidelity be shown ; for he whom thou hast forsaken will rage continually against thee. Many things must thou undergo for my sake. Thou must become another Job ; fear not ; persevere ; my grace is sufficient for thee. In the end

thou shalt conquer ; choose then, whether thou wilt experience thy trials in thine old age, or forthwith.'

' Even as Thou willest, O Lord ; yet, if it may be so, try me now, and help me in my trial.'

' Be bold, Eustace, my grace can support thee.' With these words the voice died away, and was no more heard ; and Eustace, after prayer and praise to God, rose from his knees, and returned to his own house.

But a few days had elapsed, ere the trials of Job came upon Eustace and his family ; pestilence carried off his flocks and his herds, and his servants fled away, or died with their charges. Robbers plundered his palace, driving away the knight, his wife, and his sons, in poverty and nakedness. It was in vain that the emperor sought everywhere for the knight, for not the slightest trace of him could be found.

At length the unhappy fugitives, covered with such rags as they could obtain, reached the sea-shore, and besought a passage across the waters. The captain of the vessel was captivated with the beauty of Theosbyta, and consented to carry them over. No sooner were

they on the further side, than he demanded of them money for their voyage.

‘Good master,’ said Eustace, ‘I am poor and destitute, and have no money.’

‘Very well,’ replied the captain; ‘thy wife will do as well; I take her as my slave, she will sell for the passage money.’

‘With my life only will I part with her,’ exclaimed the knight, as his wife clung to him in her distress.

‘As thou pleasest, master; ho, men, seize the woman, and take her to my cabin; as for the man and his brats, heave them overboard.’

‘Leave me, leave me, Eustace,’ murmured Theosbyta; ‘save thyself and our children, I can die but once.’

With many a hard struggle, Eustace consented, he clasped his two boys by their hands, and led them from the ship.

‘Ah, my poor children!’ he cried, ‘your poor mother is lost; in a strange land and in the power of a strange lord, must she lament her fate.’

A few hours’ travelling brought Eustace and his children to the bank of a broad and rapid river, the water of which ran so deep, that he

feared to cross its stream with both his boys at one time; placing one therefore on the bank, under the shade of a bush, he clasped the eldest in his arms, and plunged into the river. The stream ran swiftly, and the bottom was treacherous; but at length he reached the further side, and placed Theosbytus on the bank. Again he plunged into the river. The middle of the stream was but fairly gained, when he saw a wolf creep from the wood close to which his younger son was placed, and approach the child. It was all in vain that he shouted, and strove to reach the shore; the wolf seized the child and bore it off, before its father's eyes. At that moment a loud roar from the other bank startled the bereaved father; he turned, and saw a lion carrying away his eldest son.

'Alas, alas!' exclaimed Eustace, as soon as he had reached the further bank of the river. 'Once was I flourishing like a luxuriant tree, but now I am altogether blighted. Military ensigns were around me, and bands of armed men. Now I am alone in the world. My wife, my children, are taken from me; the one to slavery, the others to death. O Lord, thou didst warn me that I must endure the perils of Job; are

not these worse than that holy man's? In his greatest misery he had a couch whereon to rest his wearied limbs, and friends to compassionate him in his misfortunes. His wife, too, remained to him—mine is gone from me : place a bridle on my lips, lest I utter foolishness, and stand up against Thee, O my God.'

His heart relieved by these passionate expressions, the knight continued his travel ; after many days of want and fatigue, he reached a far-off village, where he abode with one of the villagers, as his hired servant. For fifteen years he served his master faithfully, and at his death he succeeded to his cottage and his land.

Trajan still lived, but his fortunes did not prosper : his enemies became daily stronger and stronger, for Placidus no longer directed the movements of the imperial army, or urged on the soldiers, by his example, to deeds of valour against the enemy. Often and often did the emperor think of his lost commander, and ceaseless were his endeavours to discover the place of his concealment.

Eustace was working in his fields about this time, little thinking of Trajan, or of Rome, when two men drew near, and after observing

him for some time, and communing with each other, accosted the knight.

‘Friend,’ said one of the men, ‘dost know in these parts a knight named Placidus and his two sons?’

The heart of Eustace was sore tried when he saw the emissaries of Trajan. The sight of them recalled his previous honours in the world, and he still felt a lingering wish to retrace his steps. ‘Nay,’ he thought, ‘were I not alone, it were well to return; but for a solitary, this place is the best.’ Then said he to the two men :

‘There is no one about here, good sirs, of the name you ask after.’

‘It is but a fool’s errand we are on, master, I fear,’ said the man; ‘we have travelled far and near after our old general, but no one knows aught of him.’

‘It is years since he left Rome, friends, is it not?’ rejoined Eustace.

‘Fifteen years and more; but come, comrade, we must go onwards.’

‘Nay, sirs, come to my poor abode; what I have is at your service.’

The emissaries of Trajan gladly acceded to

Eustace's request. The homely repast was soon placed on the board, and the men sat down to refresh themselves, whilst Eustace waited upon them. Again, the thoughts of his old home came quickly upon him; and he could not restrain his tears. He left the room where his guests were, bathed his face with water, and returned to wait on the two men.

'I have a strange presentiment,' remarked one of the men during Eustace's absence, 'that our good host is even he whom we search after. Marked you not how he hesitated when we first addressed him?'

'Ay, and even now he has left us with his eyes red with suppressed tears.'

'Let us try the last test, the sabre mark on his head which he received in the passage of the Danube, when he struck down the northern champion.'

As soon as Eustace returned, the soldiers examined his head, and finding the wished-for mark, embraced their old general; the neighbours, too, came in, and the exploits of Eustace were soon in the mouths of the villagers.

For fifteen days they journeyed towards Rome, Eustace and his two guides; as they

neared the imperial capital, the emperor came out to meet his old commander. Eustace would have fallen at his master's feet, but Trajan forbade him ; and side by side, amid the congratulations and applause of the people, the emperor and his long-lost servant entered Rome.

The return of Eustace inspired the people with confidence ; thousands hurried from every village to volunteer as soldiers, and his only difficulty was to select who should be rejected. One contingent from a far-off village arrested his attention ; it was headed by two youths of wonderful likeness the one to the other, and apparently within a year of the same age. They were tall in stature, of commanding features, and their selection, as leaders, by their comrades, did justice to their attainments, and the superiority of their manners. Pleased with the youths, Eustace placed them in the van of his army, and began his march against the invaders, who had reached within a few miles of the coast whereon he disembarked from the ship of the barbarous captain.

Pitching his camp within sight of that of the enemy, the commander billeted the best of his troops in a small village that formed the rear of

his position. A widow lady, of but few years, but sorely worn with grief, received the two youths into her house. About the mid-day meal, the youths conversed the one with the other of their early life.

‘Of what I was when a child,’ said the elder, ‘I know only this, that my father carried me over a broad river, and laid me under a bush whilst he returned to fetch my brother; but whilst he was gone, a lion came, seized me by the clothes, and bore me into a wood hard by. My mother we lost on our journey nigh to a great sea, where she remained with a cruel captain who had seized her for his slave. As I was carried away by the lion, methought a wolf seized on my brother, whom my father had left on the other bank. The lion soon dropped me, for men with loud cries and stones pursued him and drove him from me. Then did they take me to the village where we have lived together so long.’

‘My brother, O my brother!’ exclaimed the other youth, hardly able to restrain his emotions during the recital, ‘I am he whom the wolf carried off, saved from his jaws by the shepherds, as thou wast from the jaws of the lion.’

The widow had listened to the wonderful story of the two young men. Much she marvelled at their preservation ; on the morrow she sought the commander of the imperial forces ; she found him in his tent, his officers were around him, and the two young men stood within the circle. The widow craved permission to return to her own country.

‘Sir,’ she said, ‘I am a stranger in these parts : fifteen years have passed since I left Rome with my husband, once high in power, and rich, but then poor and in misery ; we reached yonder sea, our two sons were with us, we crossed in a shipman’s boat, but when we arrived on this side, he demanded money of my husband, and when he had it not to give him, he seized on me and carried me into slavery. Years lived I beneath his roof in sorrow and in pain ; but it was in vain that he sought to do me evil, for God preserved me from his devices. At length my master died, and I became free ; since then I have laboured honestly, and would now return to Rome, if, perchance, I may find my husband and my children.’

‘Theosbyta !’ said the general in a low voice, raising his helmet as he spoke.

‘Eustace! my husband!’

The general raised his fainting wife, and kissed her gently on her forehead. ‘Our sons, Theosbyta, we shall see no more; a lion and a wolf carried them off before mine eyes, as we crossed the river not many leagues from hence.’

‘Father! our father!’ said the two youths, as they knelt before the general.

‘Nay, doubt not, Eustace,’ said his wife; ‘last night I overheard the tale of their adventures; this is he whom the lion took; this one did the shepherds rescue from the jaws of the wolf.’

The tale was soon retold, and Eustace convinced that he had recovered in one day his wife and his sons. Then loud blew the trumpets through the camp, and cheer upon cheer rang from the good soldiers, when their general came from his tent, leading his long-lost wife, and supported on either side by his sons. The enthusiasm aided them in obtaining the victory over the enemy. Every one loved their general, and rejoiced in his joy; and that day they fought for their home, their emperor, and their commander.

Trajan lived not to welcome home his hon-

oured general ; his successor, however, spared not to receive Eustace with the honours his achievements deserved. The banquet hall was gorgeous with ornaments ; and the banquet replete with delicacies and curiosities. On the emperor's right hand sat Eustace, and his sons occupied no mean place in the banquet hall.

‘To-morrow,’ said the emperor, ‘we will sacrifice to the great gods of war, and offer our thanks for this thy victory.’

‘As my lord pleases,’ said Eustace ; ‘one thing I pray, that my lord will not regard my absence from the temple as an intentional slight on his royal person.’

‘Absence, sir !’ exclaimed the emperor ; ‘I command thy attendance ; see that thou and thine are before the altar of Mars at noon to-morrow ; thou shalt offer there with thine own hands.’

‘I will cut off the hand that so offends,’ replied Eustace.

‘Ah ! a Christian—be it so—sacrifice or die !’

‘Death then, my lord ; I worship Christ, not idols.’

‘Let him save thee from the lions’ mouths,’ exclaimed the impious emperor: ‘Ho, guards! this Christian and his sons to the beasts’ den; come, my guests, to the arena.’

‘And me to my lord,’ said Theosbyta, advancing from the lower part of the hall.

‘As thou wilt: come, sirs; our lions will be well fed.’

The party reached the amphitheatre; it was crowded with spectators. Rumour had soon carried abroad the tidings that the triumphant general was to die by the lion’s mouth, for his Christianity. Some pitied him for what they called his folly; ‘What, die for a little incense thrown on the fire!’ Others gloried in his expected death, for they hated the new faith. A few in secret prayed to God, to give their brother strength to undergo his fearful martyrdom, for they were Christians.

Eustace stood in the arena; his wife knelt by his side, his sons stood before him to meet the lion’s first bound. The crowd grew impatient—a sudden silence; a sound as of revolving hinges, and then a sullen roar, as with a bound the lion sprang into the centre of the amphitheatre. One look he cast on the youths; and

then he bowed his head, crept to their feet and licked them; another, and another, was let loose; but the old lion kept guard over the family, and fought with the other lions, and drove them back to their dens.

‘It is enough,’ said the emperor, ‘he has a charm against the teeth of beasts; we will test his powers against the heat of fire: prepare the brazen ox.’

A fire was lighted beneath the animal, a vast hollow frame that represented an ox, and into the belly of it the victims were introduced through a door in the right side. As soon as it was heated to its utmost heat, the executioners hastened to throw their victims in. Eustace forbade them, and then clasping his wife in his arms, and followed by his sons, he moved slowly up the ladder that led to the horrid cell, and entered the belly of the brazen ox calmly and without fear.

For three days the fire was kept burning beneath the creature. On the third evening the beast was opened; within, lay Eustace, his wife, and his sons, as it were in a deep and placid sleep. Not a hair of their heads was burnt, nor was the smell of fire upon their persons.

So died they all : the father, the wife, and the children. The people buried them with honour, and remembered with sorrow the martyrdom of the Christian general.





THE QUEEN SEMIRAMIS.

OF all my wives,' said king Ninus to Semiramis, 'it is you I love the best. None have charms and graces like you, and for you I would willingly resign them all.'

'Let the king consider well what he says,' replied Semiramis. 'What if I were to take him at his word?'

'Do so,' returned the monarch; 'whilst beloved by you, I am indifferent to all others.'

'So, then, if I asked it,' said Semiramis, 'you would banish all your other wives, and love me alone? I should be alone your consort, the partaker of your power, and queen of Assyria?'

'Queen of Assyria! Are you not so already,' said Ninus, 'since you reign, by your beauty, over its king?'

‘No—no,’ answered his lovely mistress; ‘I am at present only a slave whom you love. I reign not; I merely charm. When I give an order, you are consulted before I am obeyed.’

‘And to reign, then, you think so great a pleasure?’

‘Yes, to one who has never experienced it.’

‘And do you wish, then, to experience it? Would you like to reign a few days in my place?’

‘Take care, O king! do not offer too much.’

‘No, I repeat it,’ said the captivated monarch. ‘Would you like, for one whole day, to be sovereign mistress of Assyria? If you would, I consent to it.’

‘And all which I command, then, shall be executed?’

‘Yes, I will resign to you, for one entire day, my power and my golden sceptre.’

‘And when shall this be?’

‘To-morrow, if you like.’

‘I do,’ said Semiramis; and let her head fall upon the shoulder of the king, like a beautiful woman asking pardon for some caprice which has been yielded to.

The next morning, Semiramis called her

women, and commanded them to dress her magnificently. On her head she wore a crown of precious stones, and appeared thus before Ninus. Ninus, enchanted with her beauty, ordered the officers of the palace to assemble in the state chamber, and his golden sceptre to be brought from the treasury. He then entered the chamber, leading Semiramis by the hand. All prostrated themselves before the aspect of the king, who conducted Semiramis to the throne, and seated her upon it. Then ordering the whole assembly to rise, he announced to the court that they were to obey, during the whole day, Semiramis as himself. So saying, he took up the golden sceptre, and placing it in the hands of Semiramis—‘Queen,’ said he, ‘I commit to you the emblem of sovereign power; take it, and command with sovereign authority. All here are your slaves, and I myself am nothing more than your servant for the whole of this day. Whoever shall be remiss in executing your orders, let him be punished as if he had disobeyed the commands of the king.’

Having thus spoken, the king knelt down before Semiramis, who gave him, with a smile,

her hand to kiss. The courtiers then passed in succession, each making oath to execute blindly the orders of Semiramis. When the ceremony was finished, the king made her his compliments, and asked her how she had managed to go through it with so grave and majestic an air.

‘Whilst they were promising to obey me,’ said Semiramis, ‘I was thinking what I should command each of them to do. I have but one day of power, and I will employ it well.’

The king laughed at this reply. Semiramis appeared more *piquante* and amiable than ever. ‘Let us see,’ said he, ‘how you will continue your part. By what orders will you begin?’

‘Let the secretary of the king approach my throne,’ said Semiramis, with a loud voice.

The secretary approached—two slaves placed a little table before him.

‘Write,’ said Semiramis: “Under penalty of death, the governor of the citadel of Babylon is ordered to yield up the command of the citadel to him who shall bear to him this order.” Fold this order, seal it with the king’s seal, and give it to me. Write now: “Under penalty of death, the governor of the slaves of the palace

is ordered to resign the command of the slaves into the hands of the person who shall present to him this order." Fold, seal it with the king's seal, and deliver to me this decree. Write again : " Under penalty of death, the general of the army encamped under the walls of Babylon is ordered to resign the command of the army to him who shall be the bearer of this order." Fold, seal, and deliver to me this decree.'

She took the three orders, thus dictated, and put them in her bosom. The whole court was struck with consternation; the king himself was surprised.

'Listen,' said Semiramis. 'In two hours hence let all the officers of the state come and offer me presents, as is the custom on the accession of new princes, and let a festival be prepared for this evening. Now, let all depart. Let my faithful servant Ninus alone remain. I have to consult him upon affairs of state.'

When all the rest had gone out—'You see,' said Semiramis, 'that I know how to play the queen.'

Ninus laughed.

'My beautiful queen,' said he, 'you play your part to my astonishment. But, if your servant

may dare question you, what would you do with the orders you have dictated ?’

‘ I should be no longer queen were I obliged to give an account of my actions. Nevertheless, this was my motive : I have a vengeance to execute against the three officers whom these orders menace.’

‘ Vengeance—and wherefore ?’

‘ The first, the governor of the citadel, is one-eyed, and frightens me every time I meet him ; the second, the chief of the slaves, I hate, because he threatens me with rivals ; the third, the general of the army, deprives me too often of your company,—you are constantly in the camp.’

This reply, in which caprice and flattery were mingled, enchanted Ninus. ‘ Good,’ said he, laughing. ‘ Here are the three first officers of the empire dismissed for very sufficient reasons.’

The gentlemen of the court now came to present their gifts to the queen. Some gave precious stones ; others, of a lower rank, flowers and fruits ; and the slaves, having nothing to give, gave nothing but homage. Among these last, there were three young brothers, who had

come from the Caucasus with Semiramis, and had rescued the caravan in which the women were from an enormous tiger. When they passed before the throne—

‘And you,’ said she to the three brothers, ‘have you no present to make to your queen?’

‘No other,’ replied the first, Zopire, ‘than my life to defend her.’

‘None other,’ replied the second, Artaban, ‘than my sabre against her enemies.’

‘None other,’ replied the third, Assar, ‘than the respect and admiration which her presence inspires.’

‘Slaves,’ said Semiramis, ‘it is you who have made me the most valuable present of the whole court, and I will not be ungrateful. You who have offered me your sword against my enemies, take this order, carry it to the general of the army encamped under the walls of Babylon, give it to him, and see what he will do for you. You who have offered me your life for my defence, take this order to the governor of the citadel, and see what he will do for you; and you who offer me the respect and admiration which my presence inspires, take this order, give it to the commandant of

the slaves of the palace, and see what will be the result.'

Never had Semiramis displayed so much gaiety, so much folly, and so much grace, and never was Ninus so captivated. Nor were her charms lessened in his eyes, when a slave not having executed promptly an insignificant order, she commanded his head to be struck off, which was immediately done.

Without bestowing a thought on this trivial matter, Ninus continued to converse with Semiramis till the evening and the *fête* arrived. When she entered the saloon which had been prepared for the occasion, a slave brought her a plate, in which was the head of the decapitated eunuch. 'Tis well,' said she, after having examined it. 'Place it on a stake in the court of the palace, that all may see it, and be you there on the spot to proclaim to every one, that the man to whom this head belonged lived three hours ago, but that having disobeyed my will, his head was separated from his body.'

The *fête* was magnificent; a sumptuous banquet was prepared in the gardens, and Semiramis received the homage of all with a

grace and majesty perfectly regal; she continually turned to and conversed with Ninus, rendering him the most distinguished honour. 'You are,' said she, 'a foreign king, come to visit me in my palace. I must make your visit agreeable to you.'

Shortly after the banquet was served, Semiramis confounded and reversed all ranks. Ninus was placed at the bottom of the table. He was the first to laugh at this caprice; and the court, following his example, allowed themselves to be placed, without murmuring, according to the will of the queen. She seated near herself the three brothers from the Caucasus.

'Are my orders executed?' she demanded of them.

'Yes,' replied they.

The *fête* was very gay. A slave having, by the force of habit, served the king first, Semiramis had him beaten with rods. His cries mingled with the laughter of the guests. Every one was inclined to merriment. It was a comedy, in which each played his part. Towards the end of the repast, when wine had added to the general gaiety, Semiramis rose from her elevated seat, and said—'My lords, the treasurer of the

empire has read me a list of those who this morning have brought me their gifts of congratulation on my joyful accession to the throne. One grandee alone of the court has failed to bring his gift.'

'Who is it?' cried Ninus. 'He must be punished severely.'

'It is yourself, my lord—you who speak; what have you given to the queen this morning?'

Ninus rose, and came with a smiling countenance to whisper something into the ear of the queen. 'The queen is insulted by her servant,' exclaimed Semiramis.

'I embrace your knees to obtain my pardon, beautiful queen,' said he; 'pardon me, pardon me;' and he added in a lower tone, 'I wish this *fête* were finished.'

'You wish, then, that I should abdicate?' said Semiramis. 'But no—I have still two hours to reign;' and at the same time she withdrew her hand, which the king was covering with kisses. 'I pardon not,' said she with a loud voice, 'such an insult on the part of a slave. Slave, prepare thyself to die.'

'Silly child that thou art,' said Ninus, still

on his knees, 'yet will I give way to thy folly ; but patience, thy reign will soon be over.'

'You will not, then, be angry,' said she in a whisper, 'at something I am going to order at this moment.'

'No,' said he.

'Slaves!' said she aloud, 'seize this man—seize this Ninus!'

Ninus, smiling, put himself into the hands of the slaves.

'Take him out of the saloon, lead him into the court of the seraglio, prepare everything for his death, and wait my orders.'

The slaves obeyed, and Ninus followed them, laughing, into the court of the seraglio. They passed by the head of the disobeying eunuch. Then Semiramis placed herself on a balcony. Ninus had suffered his hands to be tied.

'Hasten,' said the queen, 'hasten, Zopire, to the fortress ; you to the camp, Artaban ; Assar, do you secure all the gates of the palace.'

The orders were given in a whisper, and executed immediately.

'Beautiful queen,' said Ninus, laughing, 'this comedy wants but its conclusion ; pray, let it be a prompt one.'


‘I will,’ said Semiramis. ‘Slaves, recollect the eunuch. Strike!’

They struck; Ninus had hardly time to utter a cry: when his head fell upon the pavement, the smile was still upon his lips.

‘Now, I am queen of Assyria!’ exclaimed Semiramis; ‘and perish every one, like the eunuch and Ninus, who dare disobey my orders.’



CELESTINUS AND THE MILLER'S HORSE.

LEXANDER had an only son, named Celestinus, who was very dear to him. Desirous of having him well instructed, he sent for a certain sage, and proffered his son to him for a pupil, promising a bountiful remuneration for his labour. The sage agreed, and took the boy home with him. Celestinus was a diligent scholar, and made great and satisfactory progress under the tuition of the philosopher.

One day, as the tutor and pupil were walking together through a meadow, their attention was directed to a horse grievously afflicted with the mange; he lay on the ground in the middle of the field, and on either side of him two sheep were feeding, tied together by a rope which chanced to hang over the horse's back; irritated by the rubbing of the cord, the poor horse rose,

and naturally drew with him the two sheep. The weight of the sheep made the rope press more and more upon his poor back, and galled him dreadfully. Unable to endure the pain, the horse ran towards his master's home; the faster he ran, the more the sheep knocked against his flanks, and by their weight ground the cord into the sores on his back; with every struggle of the horse and his living burdens, the cord sank deeper into the wound.

On went the horse, maddened with pain; at last he reached the hut of his master, the miller, and dashed in with his burdens through the open door. No one was within, but a fire of logs burned brightly on the hearth; plunging and striking with his hoofs, the horse scattered the burning logs about the house; the flames caught the building, and soon surrounded the poor animal. Unable to move from the terror of the flames, there died the poor horse and the unlucky sheep, amid the ruins of the miller's hut.

'My son,' said the tutor, when from afar he saw the end of the accident, 'you have seen the beginning, the middle, and the end of this incident; when you return to your study, make me some verses upon it, and show me where-

fore the house was burned. If you fail, beware of the punishment.'

It was all in vain that Celestinus tried to coin a verse or two on such a curious subject. He felt more than usually unpoetical; and as for assigning a cause for the fire, he so puzzled himself with his own arguments, as at last to begin to doubt whether there was any cause at all. At length he left his room, and tried what a walk would do towards making him able to poetise.

'My son,' said a venerable-looking man that met him on his solitary ramble, 'what makes you so sorrowful?'

'Pray do not trouble yourself,' replied the youth; 'it is quite useless to tell you of my trouble: you cannot help me.'

'Nay, but my son—how can we decide until we hear the cause?'

'Well, then, good father, I have got to make some verses on a mangy horse and two sheep, and I do not know how.'

'And to decide wherefore the hut, the horse, and the sheep were burnt.'

'Why, father, how do you know that?' exclaimed Celestinus.

'Though human to look at, I am not of this world,' replied the old man; 'come, make a contract with me, henceforth to serve me, and care not for your master; and I will make you such a copy of verses as never were yet seen. Come, choose; you know the alternative—the philosopher flogs sharply.'

Celestinus hesitated a long time, but at last, through fear, he agreed to the old one's proposal.

'Now then, my son,' said the old one, 'write what I tell you; are you ready to begin?'

'A mangy horse lay in a field,
 A sheep on either side;
 Across his back the rope was hung,
 To which the sheep were tied.
 Teased by the rope, up rose the horse,
 With him the sheep up swung,
 On either flank, thus weighted well,
 The rope his withers wrung.
 Clogg'd by his living load, he seeks
 Yon miller's hut to gain;
 The rope wears deeper, and his pace
 Is quicken'd with the pain.
 He minds not bolts, nor bars, nor logs
 That on the hearthstone burn;
 Nor fears with ready, scattering hoof,
 The flaming pile to spurn.
 Wide flies the fire, above, around,
 The rafters catch the flame;
 Poor Dobbin and his fleecy load,
 Are roasted in the same.

Had but that miller deigned at home
His careful watch to keep,
He had not burnt his house, or horse,
Nor roasted both his sheep.'

Delighted with the verses, Celestinus hastened to his master on his return home. The philosopher read them with astonishment.

'Boy,' said he, 'whence did you steal these verses?'

'I did not steal them, sir.'

'Come, come, boy—they are clearly not your own; tell me who made them for you.'

'I dare not, master,' replied the boy.

'Dare not, why dare not? Come, boy, tell me the truth, or abide a worse punishment than would have awaited you had you not brought me any verses.'

Terrified at his master's threats, Celestinus revealed his interview with the old one in a human form, and his contract of service with him. Deeply grieved at the occurrence, the preceptor ceased not to talk with his pupil, until he had persuaded him, humbly and heartily, on his knees, to confess to God his grievous sin in his compact with Satan. His confederacy with the evil one thus renounced, Celestinus became a good and holy man, and, after a well-spent life, resigned his soul to God.

THE EMPEROR CONRAD AND THE COUNT'S SON.

DURING the reign of the emperor Conrad there lived a certain count of the name of Leopold, who had risen to high commands by his bravery and his knowledge. Every one regarded the count with favour, and loved him for his kindness to suitors, and his prowess against the enemies of the emperor. Conrad alone looked on his servant with an evil eye ; for he envied his reputation, and would have taken to himself the glories he had acquired, and ascribed to himself those victories which Leopold had won.

The count, unable to endure the evil looks and hard words of the emperor, and fearful that in time his present anger would be turned into bitter hatred, suddenly left the court of Rome, and fled with his wife into the forest of the Apennines. There he toiled all day, and

laboured diligently to support himself and his spouse. There he knew not what the fear of impending evil was; he had no one to envy him, no one to covet his position or his property.

It was a bright sunny day, and the meridian sun glared with unwonted fierceness, even through the thick trees of the forest, and rendered the air close and heavy from lack of a breeze to move even the highest leaves of the loftiest pines. The emperor pursued the chase with ardour; urged on by the exhilarating cry of the hounds, he thought not of the denseness of the forest, or the tangled nature of its winding ways, until at last, tired and thirsty, he checked his horse in a dark, close glade, and looked around for some hut where he might obtain rest and refreshment.

Many were the paths which the emperor and his attendants followed before they reached the cottage where Leopold lived in solitude; the count recognised his sovereign, but Conrad knew not his old servant, nor was he recognised by any of the hunting train; refreshments, such as the homely store could furnish, were soon placed before the emperor. It was now nigh to evening: already the glades of the forest

were growing dark, and the devious paths more and more difficult to track out, even to the experienced eye of a woodman. It was useless to attempt to escape from the forest before the next morning. The attendants soon formed for themselves silvan beds on the soft grass and beneath the broad-spreading trees, their cloaks for coverlids, and the green mossy grass for their beds. The emperor fared better. One low trussel bed Leopold had in the lower room of his hut; this he resigned to the emperor.

Fatigued with his hard day's riding, Conrad soon fell asleep: how long he slept he knew not; but when all was dark and still, both within and without the hut, a voice broke upon his ear.

'Take—take—take,' said the voice.

Conrad rose and listened. 'What,' said he to himself, as he thought on the words, 'what am I to take? Take—take—take: what can the voice mean?'

As he reflected on the singularity of the words, the emperor again fell asleep; again a voice awoke him from his slumbers.

'Restore—restore—restore,' said the mysterious voice.

‘What means all this mystery?’ exclaimed the emperor. ‘First I was to take, take, take, and there is nothing for me to take : and now I am to restore. What can I restore, when I have taken nothing?’

Again the emperor slept, and again the voice seemed to speak to him.

‘Fly—fly—fly,’ said the voice this time, ‘for a child is now born who shall become thy son-in-law.’

It was early dawn when Conrad heard the voice the third time. He immediately arose, and inquired of his squires if they had heard a noise, and what had happened in the night.

‘Naught,’ replied they, ‘my lord, but that a son was born to the poor woodman whilst you slept.’

‘Hah!’ exclaimed Conrad, ‘a son—to mount—to horse—we will away.’

The emperor and his train had hardly found their way out of the wood, when Conrad called two of his knights to him.

‘Go,’ said he, ‘to the woodman’s hut, take away the new-born child, kill it, and bring its heart to me, that I may know that you have performed my commands.’

With sorrowful hearts the two knights returned towards the woodman's cottage. The babe was nestled in its mother's breast, and smiled on them as they seized it. Vain was the resistance of its mother, for she was alone; Leopold had gone into the wood to his daily labour.

'I cannot strike the poor babe,' said one knight to the other, as they left the hut in the forest, 'do you play the butcher.'

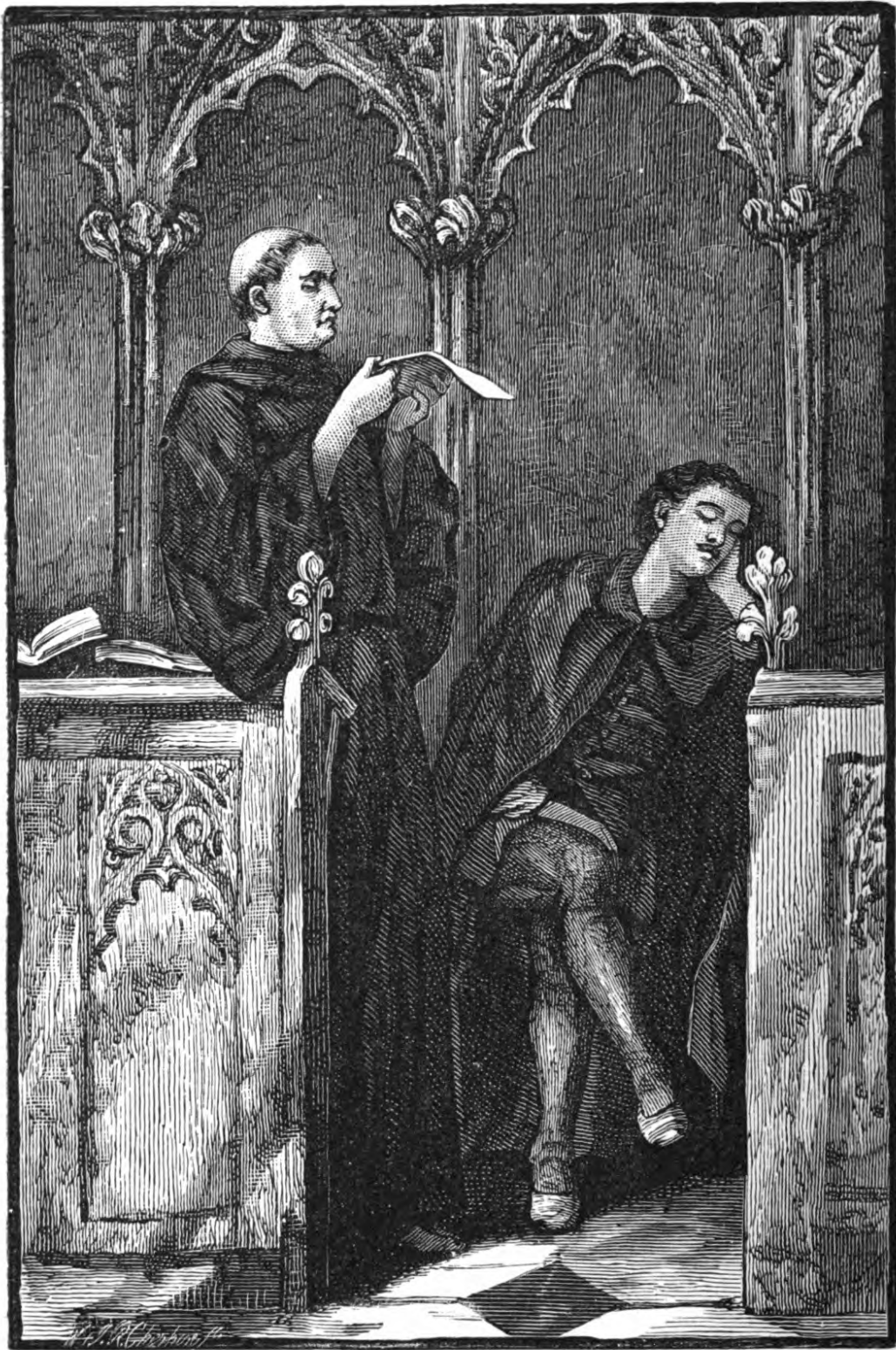
'Not I,' replied the other; 'I can strike down my adversary in fair fight, but not this poor babe.'

At this moment a hare sprang across the path so close to the foremost of the knights, that he raised his hunting pole and struck it down.

'Comrade,' said the other knight, 'I perceive how we may make the emperor believe that we have obeyed his commands, and yet not take this poor babe's life—open the hare, take out its heart. As for the babe, we will place it on yonder high branch, where the wild beasts cannot get at it, until we have done our message to the emperor, then will I return and take this poor babe to my home, for I am childless.'

Leaving the babe, the two knights went on their message to the emperor ; but before they could return, a good duke rode by the tree where the babe was, and took compassion on it, and carried the child to his own house, where it was nurtured as his own son. As for the child, he grew up a man of fine form, the joy of his adopted parents, eloquent in speech, and a general favourite at the emperor's court. For a time, Conrad was as pleased with the attainments of the young Henry as he had been with those of his poor father ; but time brought with it envy, and he soon hated the youth, as he had before the unfortunate count. A dreadful suspicion haunted Conrad's mind that he had been deceived by his knights, and that the youthful favourite of the people was the woodman's child, against whom he had been warned by the secret voice. The most cruel thoughts entered his mind, and he determined, this time, not to be deceived by his agents.

' Henry,' said he to the young count, ' I have a letter of the utmost importance that I wish to be delivered to my wife ; to you I commit it, for you I can trust ; haste, then, prepare for your journey, whilst I write the letter.'



Seeing the young man asleep, the crafty priest extracted the letter, opened its folds, and read.—See p. 199.

Henry retired to his apartments to prepare for his ride; he chose his best riding suit, and his strongest horse, desirous in every way to do honour to the emperor's mission. Conrad went to his private room to prepare the letter.

'As soon as this letter reaches you,' he wrote, 'I command you to cause the bearer thereof to be put to death. See that this be done, as you value my love.'

Henry received the letter, and prepared to commence his journey. As it happened, his horse cast one of its shoes, and he was compelled to wait until another could be forged. Unwilling that the emperor should know of the delay, the young man wandered into the royal chapel, and seating himself in one of the royal stalls, fell asleep.

There was a prying, crafty priest in the chapel, who had heard the message given to the young count, and wished very much to discover the secret of the message. Seeing the young man asleep, he silently approached the youth, and extracting the letter from the little silken bag in which it was enclosed, opened its folds, and read, with astonishment, the proposed wickedness.

‘Poor youth,’ murmured the priest, ‘thou little thinkest on what errand thou art riding. But, come, I will deceive this cruel emperor,’ continued he, as he erased the passage in which Henry’s death was commanded, and inserted these words: ‘Give him our daughter in marriage.’

The letter altered and replaced, his horse re-shod, Henry set out on his journey, and soon arrived at the city where the queen dwelt. Presenting his letter to the queen, he was greatly surprised when she hailed him as her son-in-law, by virtue of the royal commands, and bade the priests and nobles of her court to assist in rendering the celebration of the nuptials as gorgeous as befitted the occasion.

It was in vain that Conrad raged against the deceit thus practised on him; one by one the wonderful facts of the young man’s deliverance were revealed to him, and he could not but recognise in them all the hand of a protecting Providence. Deeply penitent for his many offences against God and man, he confirmed the marriage of his daughter, recalled the old count from his forest hut, and proclaimed the young Henry heir to his empire.



THE KNIGHT AND THE THREE QUESTIONS.

A CERTAIN emperor had a very beautiful, but wilful, daughter, and he much desired her marriage, for she was his heir ; but to all his wishes she was deaf. At last she agreed to marry that person who should answer succinctly these three questions. The first question was, ‘What is the length, breadth, and depth of the four elements?’ The second required a means of changing the north wind ; and the third demanded by what means fire might be carried in the bosom without injury to the person.

Many and many were the nobles, knights, and princes that endeavoured to answer the princess’s questions. It was all in vain : some answered one, some another, but no one resolved all three, and each reserved his secret from his competitor, in the hopes of another

and more successful trial. The emperor began to grow angry with his daughter, but she still persisted in her intentions, and her father did not like to compel her. At length, after many years, came a soldier from a foreign land, and when he heard of the questions of the princess, he volunteered for the trial. On the appointed day, the soldier entered the court of the palace accompanied by one attendant, who led an extremely fiery horse by the bridle. The king descended to the gate of the inner court-yard, and demanded the soldier's wishes.

'I come, my lord, to win thy daughter, by rightly answering her three questions; I pray thee propose them to me.'

'Right willingly,' rejoined the emperor. 'If thou succeedest, my daughter, and the succession to my throne, is thine; but mark me, if thou failest, a sound whipping awaits thee as an impudent adventurer. Shall I propose the questions?'

'Even so, my lord—I am ready: a crown and a wife, or the whipping-post.'

'Tell me, then, succinctly, how many feet there are in the length, breadth, and depth of the elements.'

‘Launcelot,’ said the soldier to his servant, ‘give the horse to a groom, and lie down on the ground.’

The servant obeyed his master’s orders, and the soldier carefully measured his length, his breadth, and the thickness of his body.

‘My lord,’ said the soldier, as soon as the measuring was complete, ‘the length of the elements is scarcely seven feet, the breadth is nearly three, and the depth does not exceed one.’

‘How mean you, sir? what has this to do with the elements?’

‘My lord,’ rejoined the soldier, ‘man is made of the four elements: I have given you the measure of man, and therefore of those parts of which he is composed.’

‘You have answered well, Sir Soldier: now resolve this difficulty—How can the north wind be changed?’

‘Launcelot, bring up Niger.’

The servant brought up the horse at his master’s command, and the soldier placed it with its head to the north; after a few minutes he administered to it a potion, and at the same moment turned its head to the east; the horse

that before had breathed fiercely now became quiet, and its breathing was soft and quiet.

‘See, my lord, the wind is changed.’

‘How, Sir Soldier?’ asked the emperor, ‘what has this to do with the wind?’

‘My lord,’ rejoined the soldier, ‘who knows not that the life of every animal is in its breath, and that breath is air? When my horse looked northward, he breathed fiercely and snorted excessively. Lo, I gave him a potion and turned his head to the east, and now the same breath comes softly and quietly, for the wind is changed.’

‘Well done—well done, soldier! for these two answers thou shalt escape the whipping-post. Now resolve me this difficulty—How can fire be carried in the bosom without injury to the person?’

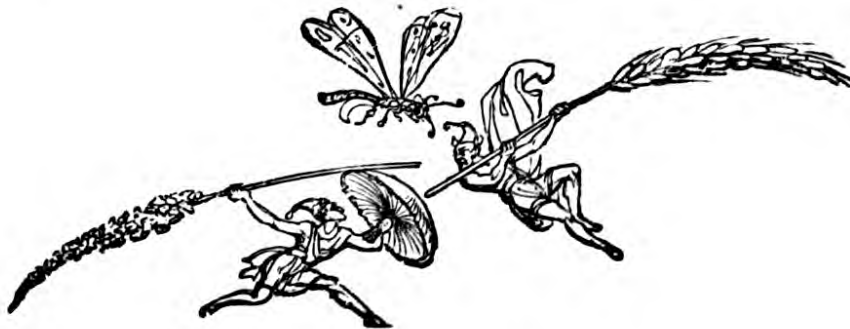
‘Look and see, my lord.’

With these words, the soldier stooped towards a fire that burned in the court-yard, and hastily seizing some of the burning wood, placed it in his bosom. Every one expected to see him injured, but after the fire had burned out the soldier threw the wood from his breast and there was neither scar nor burn on his flesh.

‘Well hast thou performed thy task, O soldier,’ said the king. ‘My daughter is thine according to promise—the inheritance of my kingdom is also thine and hers; now tell me the secret whereby thou didst prevent the fire from burning thee.’

‘This stone is the talisman,’ replied the soldier, showing a small bright stone that he carried in his right hand. ‘Whosoever bears this about him shall be able to resist the hottest fire that man can light.’

Loaded with riches and honours, the soldier married the princess, and they succeeded to the throne and the wealth of her father.





JONATHAN AND THE THREE TALISMANS.

DARIUS was a wise and prudent king ; he had three sons whom he loved much, and amongst them he divided his possessions. To the eldest he gave his kingdom ; to the second, his personal wealth ; to the third, a ring, a necklace, and a valuable carpet. These three gifts were charmed. The ring rendered any one who wore it beloved, and obtained for him whatsoever he desired. The necklace, if worn on the breast, enabled the wearer to realise every wish ; whilst the carpet had such virtue, that whosoever sat upon it, and thought where he would be carried, found himself there almost before his thought was expressed. These three precious gifts the king conferred upon Jonathan, his youngest son, to aid him in his studies ; but his mother retained them during the earlier years of his youth ;

after a time his mother delivered to him the ring.

‘Jonathan,’ she said, ‘take the first of your father’s bequests—this ring; guard it as a treasure. So long as you wear it, every one shall love you, and whatsoever you wish shall be obtained by you; of one thing beware—an artful woman.’

Jonathan with many thanks and protestations took the ring. Its magic effects were soon evident. Every one sought his society, and every one loved him. Though he had neither silver nor gold, house nor fields, he had but to wish for them, and lo, one gave him fields, and another houses, a third gold, a fourth merchandise. Walking one day in the streets of Rome, he met a lady so beautiful to look at, that he could not restrain himself from following her, and eventually he had no happiness but in her society. She loved Jonathan, and Jonathan loved her.

‘Dearest,’ said the lady one day, as Jonathan was enjoying her society, ‘how comes it that you immediately obtain everything you but wish for, and yet the good king did not leave thee his wealth or his power?’

‘It is a secret, Subtilia; a secret that I may not reveal, lest it lose its value.’

‘And do you profess to love me, Jonathan, and yet keep from me the secret of your power, your wealth, and your life?’

‘Ask me not, dearest, for it may not be.’

‘Farewell then, Jonathan; you love me not—never more will I love you again.’

‘Nay, Subtilia, but you cannot prevent yourself loving me as long as I wear this ring.’

‘Ah, Jonathan, the secret, the secret,—you wear a magic ring.’

‘Fool that I was!’ exclaimed Jonathan, ‘in my haste I forgot my discretion; well, you know my secret—be honest and keep it yourself.’

‘You have not told me all the properties of the ring; I must know all if you would have it kept a secret.’

Subtilia at length elicited the secret from her lover. The source of his power once known to her, the next object of her plans was to obtain that power for herself.

‘You are very wrong, Jonathan,’ said she, looking up into his face, with her dark black eyes; ‘surely you are wrong to wear so precious a jewel on your finger; some day, in the hurry

of your occupation, you will lose the ring, and then your power is gone.'

'There is some sense in what you say, Subtilia,' replied Jonathan; 'yet where shall I place it in security?'

'Let me be its guardian, dearest,' said Subtilia, with a look of deep affection. 'No one will seek such a treasure of me; and whensoever you wish for it, it will be ready to your hand; among the rest of my jewels it will be perfectly secure.'

Jonathan acceded to her request, and placed the ring in her possession. For a time all went well; the ring was safe, and ready to his use, and the lady's love did not decrease. One day when he came to visit her as usual, he found Subtilia sitting on a couch, bathed in tears.

'Oh, my dear, dear lord,' exclaimed she, casting herself at his feet; 'how can I dare to approach my lord?'

'Why this anxiety, this sorrow, Subtilia?' said Jonathan, as he raised her from the ground, and strove to kiss away her tears.

'Oh, my lord! pardon me—the ring,' ejaculated Subtilia.

properties of the river, Jonathan placed a small quantity of it in a glass vessel, and proceeded, with great pain, on his journey.

Hunger soon succeeded to thirst, and the solitary wanderer wist not how to assuage his bitter craving. As he wandered on, limping with pain, he suddenly cast his eyes on a fair and tempting tree, abounding in fruit of a rich and golden hue. Without one thought of thanks to God, Jonathan limped to the tree, and plucked eagerly of the fruit. The fair meal had hardly concluded ere he was a leper from head to foot, the foul disease broke out over his body. Weeping and mourning for his misfortunes, he gathered of the hurtful fruit, and renewed his miserable wanderings.

Another hour of painful travel brought Jonathan to the bank of a troubled, turbid stream, whose depth appeared unfathomable, and whose waters were repugnant even to the thirsty man. Careless of his life, with one prayer to God the wanderer stepped into the river, unconscious of its depth. It was shallow, and offered little resistance to his passage, though its stream seemed to roll onward with headlong violence. His burnt flesh, too, came

again in all its original purity. Jonathan reached the bank, and on his bended knees gave thanks to God for His great kindness in relieving him from his pains. Of this stream, also, he took a small vase full, as a treasured medicine.

Still the wanderer continued his journey, hungry, and a leper. No tree on either side of him gave any promise of sustenance, and he despaired of sustaining his fast fleeting strength. Anon he came to a low, crooked, cankerous-looking bush, with two or three withered, and apparently rotten apples, on one of its branches; desperate with hunger, he seized one of the wretched fruits, and ate it. His hunger was assuaged; his leprosy was departed from him. Strength, health, and a free spirit seemed renewed in him, and plucking another of the withered fruits, he went on his way rejoicing.

By the virtue of that food he wandered on without feeling hunger; by the virtue of that water his flesh suffered not from his journey, and he knew not what fatigue was. After many days, he neared the gates of a walled city, and made as though he would have entered.

‘Ho! Sir Traveller,’ said the gatekeeper,

‘whence comest thou—what art thou—and whither goest thou?’

‘From Rome, good porter—a physician—’

‘Stay,’ interrupted the porter; ‘a physician—thou art in good fortune—canst cure a leprosy?’

‘I can but try my skill.’

‘If thou succeed with this case thy fortune is made, friend; our king is ill of a leprosy. Whosoever shall cure him, will receive great rewards; but death if he fails.’

‘I will undertake the cure,’ replied Jonathan; ‘lead me to the king.’

Jonathan entered the palace, and was led to the chamber of the king, where he lay on his couch, wasted with disease, and covered from head to foot with a leprosy of the most virulent kind.

‘A physician, my lord the king,’ said the attendant, ‘who would try to cure your disease.’

‘What, another victim?’ rejoined the royal leper; ‘does he know the alternative?’

‘My lord,’ said Jonathan, ‘I am aware of the terms, and accept them freely; by God’s help I will cure my lord, or perish in the attempt. I pray my lord the king to eat of this fruit.’

‘What, this withered, rotten apple?’ exclaimed the king.

‘Even this, my lord.’

The king took the fruit of the second tree, and ate it as Jonathan advised. In a moment his leprosy began to disappear, and the pimples to sink and become hardly visible.

‘Thou art, indeed, a physician,’ exclaimed the king; ‘the promised reward is thine.’

‘Stay, my lord,’ said Jonathan, ‘we must restore the flesh to its original state.’

With these words, he touched every mark on the king’s body with the water of the second river, and the flesh returned fair and white as before the leprosy.

‘Blessed physician, thy reward is doubled; stay, I pray thee, in our country.’

‘Nay, my lord, I may not. I must seek my own land, and all I ask is, that my lord will divide the half of my reward amongst the poor of this city.’

Soon after this Jonathan sailed from this city for Rome: arrived there he circulated a report that a great physician had arrived. Now it happened that Subtilia, in despite of all the talismans, lay grievously sick, and nigh unto

death. The report of the arrival of the great physician comforted her, and she sent for Jonathan. He knew her again, but she knew him not, for he was greatly altered and disguised.

‘Great master,’ said she in a faint voice, ‘I die.’

‘Death, lady, comes ever to those who confess not their sins against God and man, and defraud their friends; if thou hast done this my help is vain, without confession and restoration.’

Then did Subtilia confess all her treachery against Jonathan, and how she had deprived him by her subtlety of the three talismans, and left him to die in a desert place.

‘Woman,’ said Jonathan, ‘thy ill-used lover yet lives, and is prosperous; the talismans must be restored to him—where be they?’

‘In yonder chest; here, take the keys, restore them to Jonathan, and give me of your medicine.’

‘Take this fruit—drink of this water.’

‘Mercy, mercy!’ exclaimed Subtilia, ‘I am a leper—the flesh is burning away from my bones. I die! I die!’

‘Subtilia, thou hast met with thy reward :
thou diest—and Jonathan is thy physician.’

With one fearful look at Jonathan, and one agonised scream, the wretched woman fell back a corpse ; her diseased flesh already mouldering to destruction.

Jonathan regained his father’s bequests, and returned to his mother. The whole kingdom rejoiced at his return. Until his life’s end he remembered the lessons he had learnt in his prosperity and his poverty, and he lived and died in peace with God and with man.

THE END.



