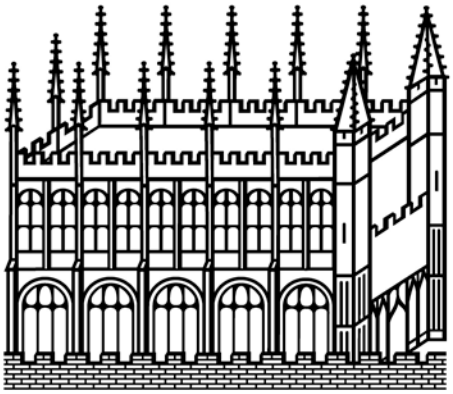

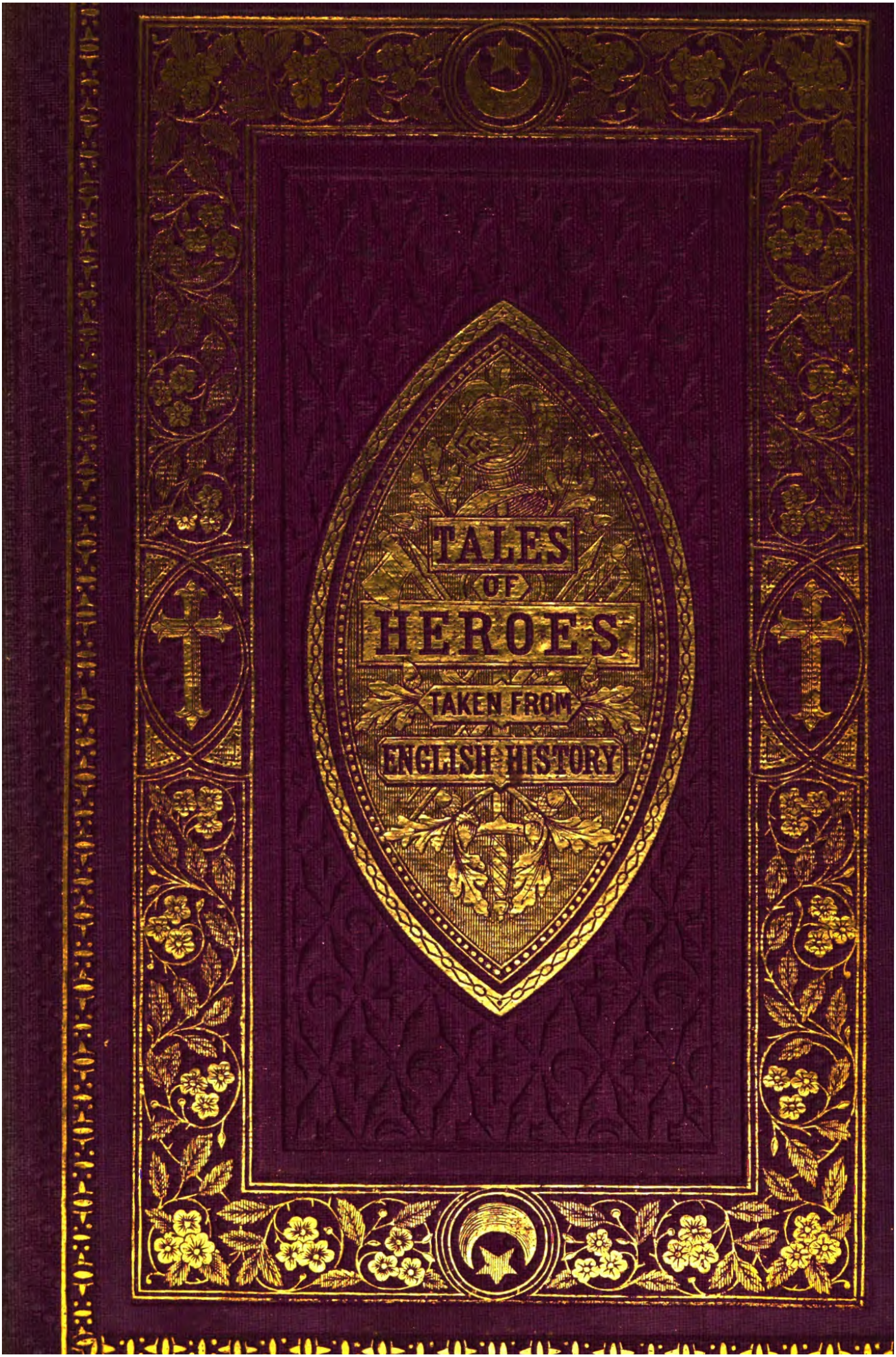
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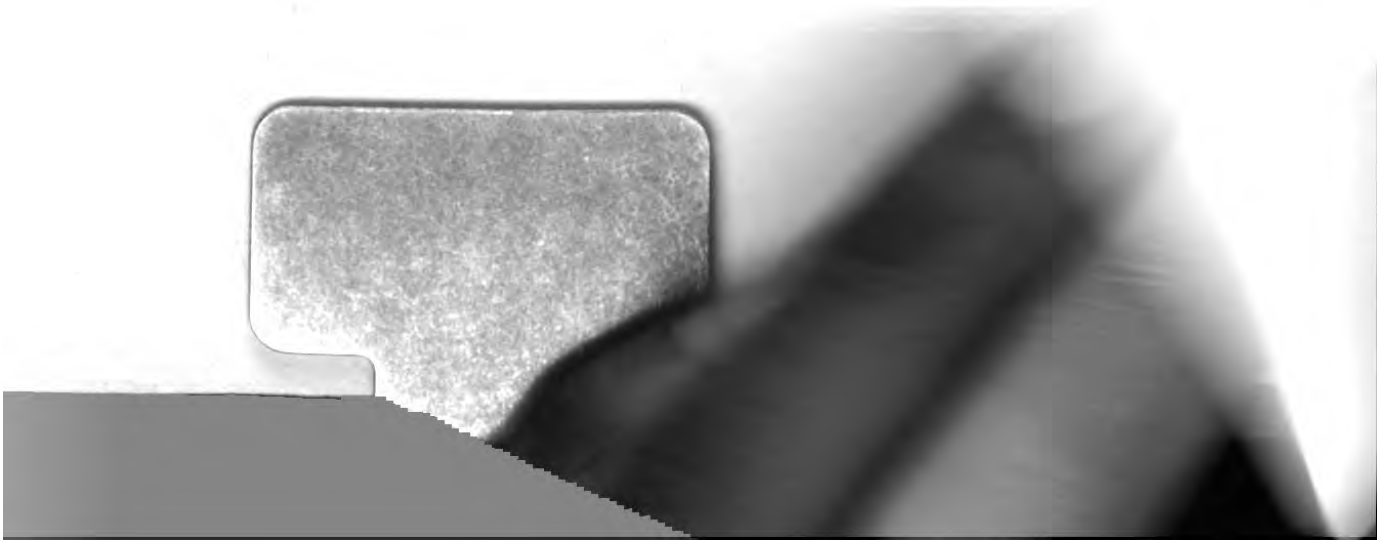

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TALES OF HEROES:

Taken from English History.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE JUVENILE SUNDAY LIBRARY,"

"VERY LITTLE TALES," ETC. ETC.

"History may be used either as a tale to amuse children, or as a lesson to instruct philosophers; and, according as the subjects are treated, may either serve as an agreeable fiction to dissipate the weariness of an idle hour, or as a profound theme for useful meditation."

Compressed from the "Quarterly Review.

LONDON:
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PRINCE EDWARD, SON OF KING HENRY III.

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ALFRED THE GREAT.

CHAPTER I.

AN INTRODUCTION.

"My child, my child,—I cannot speak the rest;
Ye only who have children know my fondness;
Ye who have lost them, or who fear to lose,
Can only know my pangs—none else can guess them:
A mother's sorrow cannot be conceived, but by a mother."

H. More.

TO give the little English reader some idea of the misery which is suffered by the inhabitants of those countries that are subject to incursions of pirates, and to make him more thankful that he is free from such a lot, we introduce the first story of this work by relating the following anecdote:—

A widow lady of large fortune was induced by the delicate health of her only child, a little girl of six years old, to resign, for a time, the various comforts of her native country, and seek a milder climate in the south of France.

The place chosen for her residence was a very lovely but secluded spot on the Mediterranean shore, where she was surrounded by all the beauties of nature, and provided with every requisite enjoyment of life.

Here, a delicious climate was so effectual in restoring the health of her child, the country was so desirable, and its inhabitants so kind and friendly, that she became reconciled to her temporary absence from home, and began to fancy herself shut out from all the cares and troubles of the world. She had, in short, in this delightful retreat but one cause of disquiet; and that arose from the state of constant alarm and anxiety in which both her own family and the surrounding peasantry were kept, by seeing a pirate ship frequently prowling about the shore, watching an opportunity for plunder.

Of this vessel, the lady's entire household, but more especially her little daughter, lived in such perpetual dread, as to interrupt every enjoyment of life; nor will the young reader be surprised at their apprehensions, when he hears that the sloop was manned by Algerine pirates, natives of Algiers, that lawless people with whose cruelty he has already been made acquainted, in the "Progressive Tales for Children."*

The crew of this swift-sailing vessel had, of late, entered several of the adjacent ports, plundering whatever lay before them, and either massacring, or carrying off as slaves, every creature who had the misfortune to fall into their hands.

They had not, however, as yet attempted to invade that part of the coast on which the residence

* See the story of the "Dey and the Knight."

of the English lady stood; and as it was well protected by strong watch towers, she believed the plunderers would never venture to come within their reach.

Discarding, in consequence of this belief, all uneasiness on the subject, and wishing to reassure her child, the lady, in despite of various expostulations from her servants and neighbours, used to spend great part of each day in a beautiful little sequestered bay, completely enclosed by lofty cliffs, which lay at no great distance from her dwelling. Here, whilst she was occupied with books or work, her little girl delighted to amuse herself in gathering the various shells with which the shore abounded.

On one occasion, after a storm which had thrown in many curious specimens of corals, lavas, and shells of various kinds, both mother and daughter, having repaired to their favourite haunt, cast themselves on the warm sand, intent on collecting the treasures which lay before them.

They had remained in this position for some time, the hoarse and sullen roaring of the still angry water preventing them from hearing any other sounds, when suddenly Mrs. B—— was roused by a scream from her child, and at the same instant a strong hand seized her by the shoulder, whilst harsh voices spoke around her, in language which resembled none that she had ever heard.

On raising her eyes, she saw herself surrounded

by a band of men, with dark and fierce countenances, whose bronze coloured skin was scarcely distinguishable from the coarse brown shirts, with sleeves tucked up to the shoulders, which were their only articles of clothing.

She looked towards the sea in terror, and perceived a vessel with strange sails lying close within the entrance of the bay; a boat stood on shore, held by a party of the same bronze coloured beings, who were, she did not doubt, the Algerine pirates, of whose cruel depredations the people were so much in dread.

Already she saw, in imagination, the slave chains fastened round her little girl, and thought she felt them on her own arm, as one of the men, still speaking in a loud voice, again grasped her shoulder, whilst at the same moment he stretched out the broad palm of a sinewy hand, demanding something from her. Unconscious of what she was about, the terrified lady emptied her whole collection of shells on the open palm before her, and immediately received them again into her lap, tossed back with a loud laugh of derision.

Meanwhile Petûna,* for so the peasants called her child, lay on the sand unable to move, covering her face with her little hands, whilst groans of terror and despair burst from her breast. The leader of the band spoke to her and to her mother

* Patois or Petitte, or, little girl.

again and again, and every time with greater haste and vehemence; but failing to obtain an answer, he at length snatched Petûna from the ground, and leaping with her into his boat, soon deposited his prize in the ship.

The miserable parent made one effort to rush forward to her rescue, but in the act fell senseless on the ground.

A length of time had elapsed, when the roaring of the tide on her ear brought back a consciousness of life; and with that consciousness instantly came a recollection of her misfortune. Her first feeling was the agonizing belief that nothing but death could relieve her from misery. She opened her eyes to cast them in despair around, and to her astonishment they rested on the smiling features of her little girl, who was leaning fondly over her with a countenance of perfect happiness. They closed again, however, before she could ascertain that their sight did not deceive her; but the sweet voice of her child, assuring her that no harm had happened, speedily revived her, and once more looking around, she perceived that the ship with its terrific crew had disappeared.

When quite recovered, Petûna displayed before her a collection of beautiful shells, which had been given to her, she said, by the man who carried her into the ship, who was not a pirate, but a very kind, good-natured sailor. He had immediately

brought her to a person in the frigate, who spoke to her in French, and who seemed very much displeased with his seamen for bringing her on board. This person explained to her, that they had done so with no evil design, but merely to let her see the inferiority of the shells she was gathering to those which they could sell to her out of their cargo. But observing the terror they had excited, the party now presented her with a gift from their collection, as a peace offering; and having set her safely on shore, immediately pursued their own course.

To what country they belonged, or why they had appeared and disappeared in that sudden manner Mrs. B—— had, then, no means of discovering. Some time after, however, happening to visit the famous shell shop of Monsieur Guâi at Toulon, she heard from him an account of the whole affair, as it had been related by the ship's master.

The vessel was a Portuguese merchantman, trading with Toulon. Having put on shore at the Pradon, some of the seamen, observing two figures in foreign costume lying on the sand, had approached to observe their dress and employment; but seeing the insignificant shells which they seemed to gather with such avidity, they had been tempted to the act which had occasioned so much alarm.

Thus concluded an adventure, which, in the end, gave rise to a great deal of satisfaction, as Mrs.

B—— now discovered that the Algerine pirate had been lately captured, and that measures had been adopted for protecting the coast against similar depredators.

The agony inflicted, though but for a moment, on this mother and daughter forcibly recalls the misery to which, during a long course of years, every inhabitant of Britain was subjected by pirates of a still more cruel and ferocious character than the Algerines; and in sending our memory back nine hundred years, reminds us of another parent and child (of six years old) whose trials, from a similar cause, will be found related in the following story.

CHAPTER II.

THE PIRATES.

"It is just that the English should for ever remain free as their own thoughts."
KING ALFRED'S WILL.*

"When Britain first at Heaven's command,
Arose out of the azure waves;
This was the charter of the land,
That Britons never should be slaves."

THE inhabitants of England, though always brave, were not, it appears, in former days so skilful in war, or so successful in preserving their liberty, as they have proved themselves to be in later times. We read in history, that nine centuries ago numerous bands of pirates, from the cold and barren countries of the north, used to invade the British kingdom, committing dreadful depredations, and inflicting the most inhuman tortures on the natives, who knew not at that period how to defend themselves against such bold and formidable enemies.

These invaders were borne over the boisterous ocean in large fleets of slight but swift-sailing vessels, in which they fearlessly braved every peril in quest of plunder. With these light vessels they were enabled to make their way into the smallest

* Asser, p. 2.

creeks or bays, and in the dead of night to steal up the rivers of the countries they designed to ravage, before the natives were aware of their approach.

Their practice was to land in some sequestered spot, draw their boats on shore, and cast up entrenchments round them; then leaving half of their troops to guard the fleet, the remainder scattered themselves over the adjacent country, seizing on everything that came in their way, and massacring in the most barbarous manner every person who attempted to offer them resistance.

Having pillaged all that their boats could contain, carrying off children from their parents, and parents from their children, they retired laden with booty, which they only waited to deposit safely in their own country, until they returned with increased rapacity for new spoils.

Their countrymen, instigated by their reports of the rich soil, fine climate, and abundant produce of Britain, followed them in multitudes, and made such successful inroads on the country, that they soon began to speculate on gaining dominion over the entire island.

At length these northern hordes landed in accumulated numbers on the Isle of Thanet; and having fortified themselves in that place, made incursions far and near, committing such acts of barbarity as might be too shocking to relate, were it not necessary to show the extent of wickedness at which our fallen

nature may arrive, if not renewed and changed by the Holy Spirit of God.

A common practice of these barbarians was, to cut open the side of those individuals amongst their enemies who had incurred their displeasure by personal bravery, or persevering resistance in defence of their country, and after filling the inside of the chest with *salt,* to leave their wretched victim to expire in torture.

This act the chiefs* were wont to perform with their own hands; and not satisfied with deeds of cruelty to individuals, they sacked and burned several fine cities, London and Canterbury amongst others, massacring the greater part of the inhabitants, and showing the wretched survivors that they were determined never to desist until they had overrun the whole kingdom.

But what, the young reader may inquire, were the princes and nobles of the country all this time about, that they did not arm their vassals, and drive these savage invaders back to their own barren shores?

To this we can only reply, that the inhabitants of Britain, besides being much less active and enter-

* The reader, whilst recoiling with horror from the description of such cruelty, will be taught to bless the benign Author of that most holy religion which has caused scenes of this kind to cease throughout the Christian world. Individuals may indeed still be found in various parts of Christendom who, uninfluenced by the spirit that surrounds them, would, and alas! do commit acts of almost equal barbarity; but in no part of the earth where Christianity has been received, are such deeds gloried in by those in power, or tolerated and approved by an entire people, as was the case in these instances of pagan cruelty.

prising than their enemies, were almost equally uncivilized; and that, being then ignorant of the proper methods of warfare, they were incapable of defending themselves against such countless and persevering foes.

Ethelwolf, who was the reigning king at the time this history commences, was a person of mild, indolent, and superstitious character; possessing none of the talents which could fit him for the difficult task of wielding a sceptre in such dangerous times. He was the father of a numerous family, having four sons grown up to manhood, who might have enabled him to defend his kingdom; but none of them seemed capable of affording him any comfort, or of assisting him to repel the encroachments of the enemy.

It was, perhaps, on this account that he appears to have centred his affection chiefly on Alfred, his youngest son, whose intelligence, even in childhood, gave promise of future greatness. He was born at Wantage,* in Berkshire, in the year 849; and from having lost his mother in infancy, naturally became an object of deeper interest with his surviving parent. If it be true, as certain authors insinuate, that the extreme beauty of the child had some effect in producing his father's partiality, the feeling must have been augmented by the amiable and engaging dispositions, which all unprejudiced writers ascribe to him, and which, even at the age of four years old,

* See Aikin's Biographical Dictionary, art. Alfred.

seem to have won the affection of strangers, as well as to have formed the chief enjoyment of his father's life.

Dreading that some evil might befall his favourite from the Danish invaders, Ethelwolf sent him into Italy, attended by a large retinue; committing him to the care of Leo III., then pope, to whom he is said to have intimated a hope that this his younger son might eventually succeed him in the kingdom.

Wearied and depressed by the various toils, anxieties, and dangers of royalty, the king in the following year resigned his affairs into the hands of his two eldest sons, Athelstan and Ethelbald, and retiring into Italy, took up his residence along with Alfred at Rome, hoping to enjoy an interval of peace and safety.

But after one year's absence, the undutiful and rebellious conduct of his sons, who wanted to usurp the crown from him, and from each other, obliged him to return. In passing through France, he was received in a friendly manner by the king of that country, surnamed Charles the Bald, whose daughter Judith, then only twelve years of age, he imprudently married and brought home to England.

To ensure the safety of Alfred, but without the least anxiety to forward his education, Ethelwolf, with whom he daily became a greater favourite, once more prevailed on himself to part with the boy for a season, and confided him as before to the care of

the Roman pontiff, under whose protection he remained in Italy for two years, receiving from him, during that time, constant proofs of kindness and affection.

Being remarked by all who saw him, as a child of extraordinary capacity; of brave but gentle dispositions, as well as of very prepossessing appearance, he was noticed by persons of every rank,—admired by the good, flattered by the ambitious, and caressed daily more and more by the pontiff, who presented him to his courtiers as heir apparent of the British dominions.

Shortly after his arrival at Rome, a false report arising that Ethelwolf was slain by the Danes, Leo had the child immediately proclaimed King of England; but Alfred, young as he was (having now attained his ninth year), must have known that he was not justly entitled to wear his father's crown, since his elder brothers were acknowledged heirs to the kingdom before him: neither was he of a disposition to envy them their dangerous inheritance; seeming rather to rejoice that he was left at liberty to enjoy, without interruption, the pursuits and pleasures of his boyish days.

The flattering courtiers, however, by whom he was surrounded, continually predicted that he would one day be seated on a throne; and wiser persons felt that the Danes might possibly bring round a fulfilment of the prophecy.

Meantime, those invaders continued daily to obtain greater advantages over Ethelwolf and his sons, not one of whom possessed that superiority of mind, or vigour of character which might have empowered them to expel their enemies. It was, no doubt, from fancying they perceived in Alfred the seeds of such superiority as was required, that so many of those who were acquainted with his promising talents, believed him to have been raised up by Providence for the express purpose of rescuing his native land from its present state of misery.

But how seldom do we find the promise of early youth fulfilled in after life. Let us see if it was so in the case before us.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST ENGLISH TIME-PIECE.

"The bell tolls one! we take no note of time
But by its loss.—To give it then a tongue,
Is wise in man."

NOT long after his return to England, Alfred had the misfortune to lose his fond parent; and we leave it to every affectionate child to imagine how deeply he must have deplored the loss. On his brother Ethelbald's mounting the throne, instead of being put under a course of proper education, he was left to console himself as he best might for the loss of his royal father, and permitted to indulge in any species of amusement which his taste, his rank, and the pleasures of a court could furnish. Up to the age of twelve he probably felt, as most other boys in his situation and at his time of life might have done, that his hawks, hounds, and horses, with all the sports and pleasures which were at his command, formed sources of enjoyment quite sufficient for his wishes; and until this period he seems to have desired nothing more. He was even at that age unable to read or write, and had evinced no ambition that we can learn, to acquire those

attainments, with the value of which, in all probability, he had never been made acquainted.

But his was not a mind capable of remaining long satisfied with ignorance, or with the irrational mode of life which he was now leading. A harp, the skilful use of which he had been taught by the bards of his native country, had lately engrossed much of his time from more active pleasures. In addition to this, the legendary verses which he was accustomed to make these bards recite, began to inspire him with an ardent love for poetry, which soon led him forward to a desire for more useful knowledge.

Happening one day to hear the queen, his stepmother, read aloud a beautiful Saxon poem, he was seized with an eager anxiety to acquire the art of reading, and to know the rules of poetic composition, accomplishments which were not in those days considered necessary parts of education, even for princes.

With the assistance of his youthful relative, and with the most docile and diligent spirit, he now at length *began to learn his letters*, and, having accomplished that necessary object, improved so rapidly, that he soon outstripped his royal teacher, and many others by whom she was succeeded; nor did he ever relax his efforts until he had obtained in after life a knowledge, not only of his own language, but of the Greek and Latin tongues.

From this period, books became his chief occupation and greatest delight; and, content in the pur-

suit of these pleasures, which accorded so well with the natural bent of his dispositions, he overlooked, we are told, for a season the claims of those whose tastes were less refined than his own, and forgot perhaps that life had been given to him for higher duties and nobler purposes, than any to which he had yet turned his mind; nor does it appear that the enjoyments which literature afforded were at all diminished by his having, in the course of a few years, become attached to a young person of the name of Ethelswitha, the daughter of a Mercian nobleman, whom at the early age of nineteen he married, hoping perhaps that he should be suffered to indulge uninterruptedly his desire for domestic happiness and quiet life. But a better spirit than his own prepared for him a lesson on the instability of all things here below which seems to have taught him that he was sinful in giving up so large a portion of his life to the pursuit of any selfish gratification, however innocent in its nature that gratification might be.

Before the long succession of festivities attendant on his marriage was concluded, he was one day suddenly attacked with some internal pain, of such an uncommon and excruciating nature that no medical skill of that period could either discover its cause or alleviate its violence; so great was the anguish it inflicted, that even the intervals of ease could scarcely be enjoyed from dread of its certain and speedy return, to which he was ever after liable.

During the many serious thoughts which this disease no doubt engendered, the still small voice of conscience frequently whispered, that all his attainments and knowledge were of no real value, if they did not teach him to make a better use of his uncertain existence, and induce him to render it subservient to the happiness of his fellow-creatures.

Under this impression, he resolved to abridge the hours which he had hitherto resigned to self, and from this time forth began to devote a much greater portion of each day to the acquirements of such knowledge as might enable him to benefit mankind.

Notwithstanding all his prudent determinations, he still found that music, poetry, and other frivolous pursuits, daily usurp too large a share of that time which ought to have been devoted to more useful purposes. Having himself become a poet of no mean character, Alfred, whilst lamenting, as he frequently did, his error in this respect, might have exclaimed like one of our modern bards :—

"Forgive the crime.
Unheeded fly the hours;
For noiseless falls the foot of time,
That only treads on flowers:
And who with strict account remarks
The ebbing of his glass,
When all its sands are diamond sparks,
That dazzle as they pass."

The error he, however, felt must be avoided. How to prevent its recurrence in future was alone the question; for when engaged in his favourite occupa-

tions, time must still pass noiselessly with him, since he possessed neither clock* or watch of any description to tell him how the moments flew.

Being greatly perplexed in what manner to rectify this deficiency, he at length devised a plan which proved so efficacious, and was at once so simple and ingenious, as to make it well worthy of the observation it receives from all historians.

By repeated experiments he discovered the exact quantity of wax which, when made into a candle, would remain burning from sunrise to sunrise; and caused tapers of that weight to be made for his use. These he stained with different colours, marking them into three equal divisions; any one of which, the ready reckoner will perceive, would last eight hours. He then marked each part into eight divisions, which smaller sections it is unnecessary to add would each burn for one hour. By keeping one

* Clocks were not known in England until many years after this period. We are informed by various writers that watches were invented in the 15th century, and that they were first introduced into England, from the continent, not long after that time. Queen Elizabeth is known to have been presented with one by the Earl of Leicester, in the year 1572. We transcribe from an old history the following laconic description of this piece of mechanism, which was, in those days, esteemed a wonderful production of art. "*It was a rounde clocke, fullfe garnished with diamonds; and an appendant of diamonds hanging thereat!*" We, however, find from historic records that the invention must have been of earlier date; for our revered monarch, George III., with whom the young reader has probably become familiar, in "Progressive Tales for Children," was possessed of one which had belonged to Robert Bruce, that brave king of whom Sir Walter Scott has given such an interesting account in his "Tales of a Grandfather." Now Bruce died in 1328, which proves that the invention must have been of much longer standing than is generally supposed. The watches of those periods, though probably less beautiful in appearance, were certainly of more durable workmanship than the elegant baubles of the present day, as there is one now in possession of a family in the county of Northumberland which had belonged to James II., and which was of such singular excellence that it was in perfect preservation a short time since, and kept time with remarkable accuracy.

of these candles constantly burning, in a lantern of transparent horn which he constructed for the purpose of securing its safety, he was enabled to measure exactly how time passed; so that he could with ease ascertain how many hours, or rather inches of his candle, he had spent on any occupation. It was not until many years had passed over his head, that experience taught him the full value of this invention, the use of which he never afterwards laid aside.

One division of his time, consisting of eight hours, he, in after life, allowed for the refreshments of food and sleep; a second proportion of the same length, for study and business; and the remainder, for devotion, acts of charity, exercise, and recreation.

Whilst Alfred was thus employed, in quiet and domestic pursuits, the Danes continued to harass Britain, with greater barbarity than ever, nor shall we torment the reader with particulars of the numerous battles that were lost and won. Suffice it to say, that after the death of Ethelwolf, and whilst the contest was yet raging, his two elder sons died within a few years of each other, leaving the invaders to wrestle for mastery over the kingdom, with Ethered, the only surviving brother of our hero.

Alfred might now, if ever, have supposed that the predictions of his Italian friends were likely to be verified. But he appears never to have recollected them, having been fully aware that they had no reasonable foundation.

Ethered, who had a large family, mounted the throne in the vigour of health, whilst Alfred, as yet but a stripling, and now liable to attacks of such intense suffering as baffled all medical skill, appeared to be, both in mind and body, a creature of such refined and delicate conformation, as is generally thought to indicate a life of short duration.

His form, though slight, was vigorous and active; and, being cast in the most perfect mould of manly beauty, exhibited no outward signs of weakness; indeed the ruddy hue which painted his fine features, united to a countenance sparkling with intelligence, together with his bland and cheerful manner, seemed to deny that any disease existed. His family and friends were, however, anxious for his safety; and daily urged him to give up the studious and sedentary mode of life, in which he too constantly indulged, and which they dreaded might increase his malady.

The king, who now, that Alfred had lost every other protector, should have been his kindest friend and best adviser, was the only person who seemed to feel no solicitude on his account. Instead of using his power and authority to promote his brother's welfare, he fraudulently possessed himself of the property which had been bequeathed by Ethelwolf to his youngest child; leaving him to struggle with his fate, and to support himself and an increasing family by whatever means he could devise.

The youth had now nothing left to console him under the loss of health, of fortune, and of an over-indulgent parent, beyond the comforts of religion, the quiet pursuits of his domestic circle, and the happy dispositions of his own mind.

But content with his lot, he felt thankful that Providence had removed him so far from all the temptations of royalty, which few, he perceived, were able to withstand. Though it has been asserted that his character was at this period marked by a contempt of his fellow-creatures, and carelessness for their distress,* we must doubt the truth of the statement, since such seems contradicted by every part of his after conduct. No thought of anger, much less of envy or revenge, appears to have rankled in his bosom, against the brother whose unkindness had been so great towards him; on the contrary, when Ethered was menaced with danger from the common enemy, Alfred was ever ready to quit his beloved home, and encounter every peril, by flying to his relief.†

On such occasions the Danes were usually put to flight, and felt equally enraged and amazed to find themselves conquered by the skill and valour of a stripling, whose youth and inexperience they despised; nor was Ethered ashamed, on every such emergency, to demand aid from the generous and forgiving brother, whom he had so deeply wronged.

* See Turner's History. † Russell's Modern Europe, p. 95.

CHAPTER IV.

A CONTRAST.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.
Prayer is the Christian's vital breath;
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gate of death,
He enters heaven by prayer."

MONTGOMERY.

A CRISIS now approached when the king stood in the utmost need of assistance from our hero.

Several distinct hordes of pirates, each led on by one of those petty chiefs whom they styled princes, and all commanded by a leader called Inguar, who was known by the title of *The Sea King*,* had sur-

* We find, from history, that amongst the barbarous nations inhabiting the shores of the Baltic Sea, piracy was, at this period, and for nearly a century before, resorted to by all classes of people, not only as affording ample means of wealth, but also as offering opportunities of fame and glory. Persons, who in those countries were considered men of rank and consequence, if possessed of sufficient means, fitted out pirate vessels for themselves or their children, with which they roamed over the ocean in search of conquest and plunder. Even the sovereigns of those petty states made it their amusement, during the summer season, to join in these desperate enterprises, and felt only disgraced when they failed to bring back their ships laden with captive slaves, cattle, household furniture, wearing apparel, and provisions of every description, with which to increase the comforts of their winter home.

At the age of ten or twelve, the younger sons of almost every family were trained to these piratical excursions, the children of the chiefs being regularly placed under tuition of the most renowned leaders, and taught to earn, what they called *an honourable livelihood*, in this manner. No sooner was a chief or petty king deceased, than his eldest son, on stepping into his father's territory, saw all his brothers depart to seek their fortunes on the ocean, in vessels bequeathed to them for that pur-

rounded the city of York, and either slaughtered or despoiled every inhabitant of the town and neighbourhood.

Despair at length roused some of the peasants to resistance; and led to the ramparts by two brothers, called Osbert and Ælla, they attacked their enemies, and had nearly recaptured the city, when the Danes, growing furious from disappointment, turned on their assailants, and having slain Osbert, killed or put to flight the whole party, excepting Ælla, who unhappily became their prisoner.

Without this piece of good fortune, the sea king, who might have been more properly termed the sea monster, would have thought his victory incomplete. Reserving to himself the honour of sacrificing the victim, he put Ælla to the torture, in the cruel manner already described,* taking, it is said, delight in tearing out with his own hands the lungs from the breast of the unfortunate sufferer.

pose; in which, styling themselves *Sea Kings*, their ships their kingdom, and the crew their subjects, they roved over the boisterous waves, from shore to shore, spreading death and devastation wherever they could force an entrance. No sex or age was spared by these ferocious savages, who seemed to delight in the sight of human suffering, and to revel in the wildest excesses of cruelty.

Their common practice was to tear helpless infants from their mothers' arms, and toss them on their lances, from one savage to another, until life became extinct.

The reader, though young, will, if possessed of intelligence, see, in this dark picture of pagan wickedness, a shadow of the sad effects produced by the first admission of evil into our human nature at the fall of man. Contrasting such depravity with Christian tempers and Christian conduct, he will perceive the beauty and loveliness of that benignant religion, which Jesus has taught his followers; and as his understanding ripens, will feel the value of that blessed atonement, which, through faith in Christ's mysterious sacrifice, produces an utter change of heart, and grants to our fallen nature a release, not only from the curse and punishment of sin, but from its power and influence in the soul.

* See page 18.

Terrified by such inhuman deeds, the Saxons again lay passive under their sufferings. Edmund, prince of Mercia, dreading to subject his adherents to similar outrages, was about to retire with some of his followers from their native land, when he was seized by a party of the Danes, and led in chains, like the meanest criminal, into the tent of Inguar, who commanded him instantly to acknowledge his authority over the kingdom.

To this Edmund fearlessly answered, that both his religion and his honour forbade him to obey.

Exasperated by this undaunted reply, the malignant chief had him bound naked to a tree and whipped with strong cords, until his flesh was lacerated in the most shocking manner; but under all the tortures thus inflicted he remained firm. The pirates were then ordered to practise their skill in shooting arrows through his legs and arms, so as to prolong his sufferings; but finding him still inflexible, and feeling his pride lowered by the unconquerable spirit of his victim, the unrelenting monster at length commanded his head to be struck off.

It was not surprising that Ethered should have felt alarmed, as he found this host of ferocious savages approaching nearer to his own domain. They now seized on the town of Reading, and assembled around it in such multitudes as threatened to overwhelm the entire country. The King, in despair, endeavoured to collect a sufficient force with which to resist

them; but his subjects, being averse to his authority, and perfectly hopeless of success, refused to follow him, unless Alfred was summoned to their assistance.

It was but to make their wishes known, and the youth was at his brother's side. A very small force was quickly collected; and with these, as a last resource, they were obliged to march against their enemies.

The pirate chiefs had by this time strengthened all their fortifications around Reading, and had begun to open a trench from the river Kennet to the Thames, which would, they knew, insure their safety on all sides. Confident in their numbers and in the strength of their position, they frequently marauded, in a careless manner, to distant places beyond the outposts of the town.

The brothers, at the head of their little army, and ever on the watch, pursued these bands and easily put them to flight.

On regaining their intrenchments, the fugitives so greatly alarmed their companions by the report of Alfred's prowess, that the main body of their army, commanded also by two brothers, called Bacseg and Halfdene, retired to a distance from Reading, meaning for the present to avoid any attack, but intending to fall unawares on the Saxons at some future time, and, if possible, to get the young hero into their hands.

Ethered, knowing that his crown was now at

stake, followed the retiring army, and after a long march came, on the evening of the fourth day, within sight of their camp, near Ashton.

Here each party surveyed the other with apprehension; and the night was spent by both in preparations for a bloody combat on the following day.

The dawn of morning discovered the Danes posted in two distinct divisions; one at either end of an extensive eminence, which they had selected as their vantage ground.

An opposite hill afforded Ethered and Alfred an opportunity of stationing their troops in a similar manner. They, however, stood before their enemies, to use a Scripture phrase, "like two little flocks of kids," while the Danes seemed to cover the entire hill.

And now was seen in strong contrast the different characters of the two English brothers; while Alfred ordered and arranged his left divison of the army, Ethered, having given some directions to the right, retired into his tent to hear mass!

Meanwhile the pirates, thus standing opposite, surveyed the Saxons, like so many bloodhounds at bay; both sides were eager for and yet fearful of the attack. Each felt desirous to strike the first blow, knowing it was that which often decided the victory; yet each seemed careful not to strike incautiously.

Alfred, who knew the value of boldness and promptitude in the onset, watched with impatience to see his brother put the right division of his army into motion; but observing that all remained quiet, he sent to urge the necessity of a speedy and decisive commencement of the combat.

His messengers brought back only the intelligence, that *mass was going to be celebrated in the king's tent!* The moment was certainly not such as Alfred would have chosen for the purpose. The hours just past of darkness and inaction would, he thought, have suited much better, and he is said to have let fall words betraying his disapprobation of such ill-timed piety. But though some persons, who appear anxious to find out faults in Alfred's character, have blamed him severely for those hasty expressions, we cannot, we confess, join in the censure.

His impatience was no doubt augmented by seeing the pirates put themselves in motion on the opposite height, and by observing that they were preparing to rush down like a torrent on his troops.

Unable longer to restrain his ardour, and thinking all might be lost by delay, he spurred his war horse, and ordered his men to follow him fearlessly up the hill; commanding them, at the same time, to cover their heads, by holding their shields above them as he did. In this manner, he led them to the top of the acclivity, and rushed forward to attack the opposite division.

The example of his bravery imparted such spirit to his troops, that the pirates, surprised and dismayed, were thrown into immediate confusion and cut down in great numbers. Bacseg, their chief, was slain; and the rout was becoming general, when the right division of the English below perceived that Halfdene, the brother of the fallen chief, was leading his troops to the assistance of their companions, and that Alfred would in consequence be surrounded before he was aware of his danger. Nor were they mistaken. In a few minutes our hero, and his whole band were completely encompassed by their enraged enemies; but still they maintained their ground.

Meantime, the troops under the command of Ethered, in consequence of his absence, were constrained to remain inactive spectators of this unequal fight. Knowing that the highest ambition of their enemies was to get Alfred into their power, and believing that all the tortures inflicted on Ælla and Edmund would be heaped on the youth's devoted head, should he be taken alive, they rushed with ardour to the king's tent, announcing his danger. In vain did they describe the hero's situation, and petition for leave to hasten to his assistance. Mass was not yet over, and until it was Ethered could not be persuaded to stir.

When at length the ceremony was ended, the king led his men to the heights, where they found

Alfred still bravely defending himself against treble numbers; and such havoc had he dealt around, that the Danes, on finding his party reinforced, immediately took to flight.

Seeing them retreat, the presumptuous monarch assumed to himself all the glory of the achievement, protesting that it was entirely through the efficacy of his supplications the victory had been obtained.

But such, we must affirm, is not the spirit of those prayers which are wafted by redeeming love to the ears of our Almighty Father. Ethered, it was evident, had never been taught to rely on that promise of Scripture, which leads us to believe that the humble suppliant, who in the moment of active duty can call to his Saviour in sincerity and truth, will be heard with greater favour than he who waits for needless ceremonies. "Before ye ask," that promise says, yes, even "before ye ask, I will answer; and whilst you are yet speaking I will hear." The monarch was unhappily ignorant that the fervent desire of his soul would have been received, through the intercession of Christ, and if good for him would have been granted, even though it were expressed but by—

> "A sigh,
> The falling of a tear,
> Or upward glancing of an eye
> When none but God was near."

This was the description of prayer, which it would certainly have been most natural for Ethered to have

offered at the moment just described. At all events, his supplications had not, it appears, the effect of prolonging his own life. In a short time after this engagement, the Danes sallied out from their intrenchments at Reading, and in a slight skirmish wounded the king, who died in a few days after the battle.

CHAPTER V.

A ROYAL FUGITIVE.

"Months rolled away. The royal fugitive,
Amidst the peasant circle passed his days;
And still the hospitable board enjoyed,
As fruit of his own labour. Lonely now
His joyless hours appeared; for now no more
His Ella, or his children's presence, cheered
The social ring that nightly met around him."

Old Monthly Magazine.

NO sooner was the death of Ethered announced, than the Saxons crowded around our hero, beseeching him to be their protector against the Danes, and representing that, as none of the children of the late king were old enough to govern the country, he should not hesitate to step forward and guard it against its numerous foes.*

Finding unexpectedly that his father had provided for the present emergency, by naming him in his will next heir to the crown in case of Ethered's death, Alfred, of course, resigned the peaceful habits of his former life, and complied with the wishes of the nation; but it was with regret† that he entered on the cares of royalty. Having, however, once undertaken the charge, he resolved to rouse himself to its fulfilment with whatever ability he possessed,

* See Hume, vol. i., p. 80. † See Asser.

and to devote himself to its numerous duties with all the energy which the unhappy circumstances of his country so much required.

No sooner had he placed himself at the head of his subjects, than they ignorantly believed themselves secure of victory; and the nation appeared universally to imagine that the enemy, as if by magic and without any increased effort on their part, would be directly subdued. But Alfred had wisdom enough to understand that it was not by a single victory, however glorious, or by years perhaps of the most determined resistance, that the Danes could be expelled from Britain.

They had now, for nearly a century, considered themselves as its decided masters; and having, as we have seen, established themselves in various large and separate bodies throughout the land, they stood ready to support each other on every emergency, and if one party was cut off, to rush forward with fresh numbers, and regain their lost position.

It was therefore, he saw, not only valour, but wisdom, skill, and patience, which were required for their expulsion; and these qualities the Danes themselves fully expected to encounter in their youthful antagonist. Though despising the Saxon race in general, they stood so much in awe of Alfred, that they forthwith collected their troops into one body, and, before he had completed the funeral rites due to his deceased brother, marched against his

unprepared army, hoping by a sudden and decisive blow at once to destroy his forces.

Having constrained him to take the field with an army so few in number, and so miserably disciplined as to make the Danes imagine he could offer only slight resistance, they were equally surprised and enraged to find that, with even this trifling force, Alfred contrived to obtain such advantages as compelled them to retreat, and for a length of time prevented their making any fresh attack. Dreading a more decided defeat when time should enable him to assemble a larger body of troops, they at last, towards the commencement of a new winter, sent to offer terms of submission, and promised to quit the kingdom never to return, provided he would permit them to wait until the tempestuous season of the year was at an end.

Finding it impossible to collect or discipline a sufficient number of soldiers to subdue them in the field, and yielding too probably to his natural desire for quiet life, Alfred determined to accept their offer. He therefore unwisely consented to a truce, in which it was stipulated that both parties should remain at peace until the spring should enable the pirates to depart in safety. But he suffered severely for his credulity. The engagement, though ratified on both sides, was of no avail; spring no sooner approached than a swarm of boats, containing fresh shoals of barbarians, came to the assistance of their country-

men. The new invaders uniting their forces with the old, extended themselves over all parts of the island, taking possession of the richest portions of the kingdom, and laying the remainder waste with fire and sword.

Alfred, now too late lamenting his imprudence, endeavoured to rouse in the breasts of his people a feeling of manly courage and determined resistance to their foes, but found the effort vain.*

This overwhelming increase to the strength of the enemies, together with the new proof of their perfidious character, so completely broke the spirit of the Saxons, that, losing their confidence in their king, and believing themselves abandoned by Heaven, they refused to make any further struggle, and in despair avowed a determination to resign themselves to slavery as their inevitable lot. Those who had the means fled to other countries; but the bulk of the people, hoping by servile obedience to purchase at least personal safety, in spite of every remonstrance from Alfred, submitted to the conquerors.

He now found himself forsaken by his subjects, deserted by those very persons who, in calling him to the throne, had thrown themselves on his protection with implicit confidence; but fickle and inconstant as they proved, they were still his people, and he resolved never to desert them. Nay, he determined to discard every selfish consideration, and

* See Hume and Russel.

sacrifice fortune, life, everything, in struggling to restore their freedom.

How to achieve this object, was alone the question. With his single arm he could do nothing, and so strong was the infatuation of the people, that he could not find an individual who would be persuaded to make another effort for freedom. Even his private domestics, aware that the Danes were resolved, either by force or fraud, to seize upon his person, deserted him one by one; and he perceived that he must let the present moment of panic and despair pass away before he attempted further exertion. He therefore determined to wait patiently until the conduct of their Danish masters should goad his subjects on to some more manly spirit.

To remain in Britain, and preserve his life from the treachery and violence which everywhere threatened him, seemed now impossible. He could easily have escaped to Italy, in which country he had, it is imagined, at this time secured an asylum for his wife and children. Here the favour of his former friends could readily have procured him all that he required for comfort and happiness, whilst those pursuits and pleasures which had hitherto formed the chief enjoyment of his life, would have been constantly at his command; but how, then, could his duty to his country be fulfilled? Come what might, he resolved never to desert his native land, but to stand his ground, and hold himself in readiness to seize any

favourable opportunity that might arise for liberating his people from the grasp of their oppressors.

Having come to this firm resolve, he contrived to provide himself with the dress of one of his soldiers,* in which he made his escape from court. After a little time he appears to have exchanged this military garb for the costume of a common peasant, in which he so thoroughly disguised himself that he did not hesitate to enter the dwelling of one of his own shepherds, with whom, knowing him perhaps by character as a person worthy of confidence,† he desired to become a lodger. He was fortunately admitted, and remained for a considerable time in the cottage unsuspected by any of the family; whilst rumours went abroad, and were believed both by Danes and Saxons, that he had perished, or else escaped into some foreign land, whence he was not likely to return.

In consequence of this belief, the search after him gradually ceased; and though he still found it necessary to keep the strictest guard on all his words and actions, yet in time he ventured to move about the country, and to occupy himself, like others amongst the common people, without much appresion of being discovered.

In this situation he supported himself by the

* Turner.

† We learn from Asser, that Alfred, discovering his host to be a man of excellent capacity, advised him to study, and fit himself for the priesthood; and that the king afterwards evinced his gratitude for the kindness he had received in the peasant's house, by making him Bishop of Winchester.—*Turner*, p. 132.

occupations of fishing and hunting, like most of those around him; and, even under these trying circumstances, his persevering industry, activity, and courage, were not more conspicuous than the uniform gentleness and kindness of his manners.

It seemed, indeed, as if every rational and proper feeling which ought to have belonged to the Saxon people had been concentrated in the breast of their king; for whilst all his countrymen yielded to despondency and terror, though dangers and difficulties daily thickened around him, he still courageously hoped to conquer them all.

CHAPTER VI.

A LONELY ISLE.

"Our home must be this marshy isle,
Our canopy the forest's dripping boughs;
Our meal the berries, roots, and all things strange,
That famine wrings from step-dame earth;
Our swords must be our safety, wealth, and hope;
Our life be battle, fight, and stratagem,
Till brighter days arrive."

Cataline.

AS want of occupation had been always disagreeable to Alfred, he contrived, even under his present untoward circumstances, to provide himself with constant employment.

Those hours which he passed within the shepherd's house, where books could not be procured, were often spent in stringing bows and preparing arrows, which he designed for active service on some future day. When busied in this manner, his thoughts were frequently so much engrossed with the warlike enterprises which he had in contemplation, that the abstraction of his mind became evident to those around him, and at length began to excite suspicion.

About this time another influx of pirates, led by three princes, called Guthrum, Oscitel, and Amund, made a fresh irruption into the island, expecting to rival the successful exploits of their predecessors.

This event would have crushed all hope in any breast less sanguine than that of Alfred; but he foresaw, in the cruelties which the invaders already began to inflict upon their victims, a probability that his subjects might be forced to rise in their own defence. He therefore became hourly more desirous to make some preparations for affording them assistance, but was still at a loss in what manner to effect his purpose.

The Danes, as we have already said, were dispersed over the whole face of the country; generally in large bodies, occupying strong positions, but frequently in small detached parties and in retired situations, where they subsisted entirely by plunder, often seizing from each other the booty which had been pillaged from the natives.

The miserable Saxons being reduced by their continued depredations to the most deplorable state of poverty and wretchedness, and being now themselves unrestrained by laws, either from one party or the other, betook themselves to the same predatory course of life, and scrupled not to relieve their necessities by pillaging even their own friends, wherever they could do so with impunity.

In his present abode, and under such unfavourable circumstances, Alfred found that his time, so far as concerned the great objects he had in view, was spent to no purpose, since he could not in that situation take any measures for assembling even a

small body of adherents without exciting suspicions which might lead to his being discovered.

After revolving in his mind a thousand plans for secretly collecting a few followers around him, he could devise only one that seemed to offer the slightest chance of success. This was indeed a bold project, being no other than to follow the example and habits of the people whom he designed to subdue, by becoming for a time a freebooter like themselves. He therefore resolved to establish a settlement similar to their own, in some inaccessible part of the country, where he might be able to defend himself, and by degrees draw to his standard as many of the Saxon people as should be inclined to enter into his service.

Pleased with this scheme, he stood one day trimming his arrows by the shepherd's fire, and meditating on the most probable means of putting it in execution. The mistress of the house, seeing him, as she conceived, so uselessly employed, called on him to watch the toasting of some cakes which she was preparing for the family repast, and desired him in rather a peremptory manner to keep them from burning, whilst she attended to other household concerns.

Alfred, who in this cottage must have learned many valuable lessons of humility, readily promised compliance, and no doubt meant to perform the promise; but his mind was so much occupied with matters of greater moment, that the injunction was

soon forgotten, and the cakes left to their fate. Unconscious of his neglect, he was, in a few moments, brought to a recollection of its effects by receiving a sound box on the ear, accompanied by a loud exclamation from the dame "that her bread was burnt to a cinder, and that he was a worthless vagabond, always ready to eat heartily of her viands, though too lazy to take the trouble of keeping them from destruction."

The monarch not only bore her reproof with good humour, but cheerfully applied himself to the task of repairing the mischief he had occasioned. Having, however, in consequence of this negligence, become more liable to the notice and censure of his hostess, it was fortunate for him that, just at this time, he discovered a place in the neighbouring county of Somerset, which he thought exactly adapted for the plan he had in view.

Crossing an extensive bog, surrounded on all sides by forests, and intersected in different directions by brushwoods and marshy ground, he observed in the centre a few acres of firm land formed by the stagnant waters of the Thone and the Parret into an island, affording just sufficient space to contain the settlement he required.

The spot was the more desirable as it was nearly covered by a wood of alders, well stocked with wild goats and deer; besides which, it could only be approached by means of small boats, or by wading

ALFRED IN THE NEATHERD'S COTTAGE.

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breast high through one particular part of the morass.

Having taken up his abode on this island, and having erected a hovel in the wood to shelter him from the inclemency of the weather, he made known the place of his retreat to a few confidential nobles, who had been, like himself, driven to extremity by the depredations of the Danes. To these persons he disclosed his project for maintaining himself for the present in this situation, by retaliating on the pirates, and offered to all who should enter into his designs, or wish to share his fortune, such safety and protection as the strength of his position might afford.

The proposal was joyfully accepted, and with the assistance of a few menial adherents, all ranks, putting their shoulders to the task, and each stealing through the swamps in dusk or darkness to their work, a habitation was constructed which afforded them some means of defence, and as much accommodation as they desired.

Having succeeded thus far, Alfred gave to his new settlement the name of Athelingey, or the isle of nobles. No sooner was his little castle, with a few rude embankments, finished, than the inhabitants sallied forth in the dead of night against one of the Danish forts, which they knew to be well stored with provisions.

Having surprised the pirates, and seized on all that they had pillaged from others, the Saxons

hastened back with their booty to plan new exploits and indulge fresh hopes of success.

Stealing from their island by that path in the morass, where no foe knew how to follow them, they continued with equal success to attack many of the neighbouring forts, whilst the Danes being assailed in darkness, and at unexpected moments, could never tell from whence their enemies approached or where they retired.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ENCHANTED STANDARD.

"They woke to hear the sentries shriek,
'To arms!—they come—the Greek!—the Greek!'—
They woke to die midst flame, and smoke,
And shout, and groan, and sabre stroke,
And death shots falling thick and fast
Like lightnings from the tempest cloud,
And heard with voice as thunder loud
The hero cheer his band:
'Strike till the last armed foe expires;
Strike for your altars and your fires;
Strike for the green graves of your sires,
And for your native land.'"

HALLECK.

WHILST Alfred and the nobles who had joined his party were so far well satisfied with the success of his plan, the peasants, equally pleased by the booty which it procured and the revenge which it afforded them, spread far and near amongst their friends the renown of their leader, daily attracting fresh recruits to his standard by the fame of his valorous achievements.

By degrees the rumour of the exploits performed by this invisible and apparently invincible hand, roused among the Saxons a desire to emulate his valour; and Alfred, as he listened to various proofs of returning spirit in his subjects, trusted that he should ere long be able to declare his real character; and cherished a hope that, notwithstanding their

present trials and sufferings, his children and his people might yet live to enjoy the blessings of liberty and peace.

But what, the reader may inquire, has become of Ethelswitha all this time? Did Alfred grow careless of her fate, as some historians believe him to have been concerning the miseries of his subjects? We can only in reply confess that we do not discover any signs of his having betrayed indifference in either case. He had now added to the security of his present asylum by constructing a bridge, which stretched over the shallow part of the marsh, from the little isle to the mainland, where a fort was erected to guard the entrance, effectually preventing any chance of surprise from the enemy in that quarter.

It was perhaps only when this fortification was completed that the king felt himself at liberty to recall his wife and children to his side, where we have now the pleasure of finding them once more stationed.

Here, amidst the tumult, privation, and danger attendant on their warlike mode of life, it may have been that his son Edward imbibed those martial talents which rendered him in after life the worthy successor of such a parent; and that his eldest daughter, the little Ethelfleda, acquired that heroic spirit for which she became renowned, as well as that reflecting cast of character so much resembling

her father, which caused her, when grown to womanhood, to be called *the wisest lady in the realm.* Here, too, with equal probability, was formed that strong attachment between the brother and sister which seems to have united them throughout their lives,* and the sight of which must have occasioned real enjoyment to their parents. Alfred, we are glad to find, is stated to have been happy in the dispositions of all his children,† and his tender affection for them was evinced by the pains he took to form their minds, while young, to piety and virtue, and to have them instructed in every kind of knowledge which could be obtained for them in those days.

His search after improvement, both for them and for himself, was indeed unceasing. Even in his present situation, unfavourable as it seems to have been for study, he still adhered to his usual practice of devoting a portion of each day to the employments of literature. Sitting one morning alone, and absorbed in his favourite occupation of reading,‡ his adherents having dispersed themselves through the

* In all the exertions of Edward the elder to repel the piratical attacks of the Danes and to establish the security of his dominions, he was, we are informed by Henry, vol. ii. p. 67, assisted by his heroic sister Ethelfleda, who had been married to Ethelred, Earl of Mercia, and who governed that province with great wisdom and prudence for eight years after her husband's death. She commanded armies, gained victories, built cities, and performed actions which might have done honour to the greatest princes. Turner also mentions, in p. 327, &c., that she was extolled throughout the nation as *the wisest lady in England.*

† Turner, pp. 327–329.

‡ It was the constant practice of Alfred, amongst all his other avocations, and in the midst of all his afflictions, whether public or private, or of mind or body, either to read himself or to have other persons reading to him, so that no portion of his time should be unemployed.—*Turner*, p. 264.

forest in search of the game which formed a principal means of their subsistence, he was disturbed by a knocking at his gate, and, as the situation rendered it needful to be always on the alert, he laid down his book and hastened to inquire the cause. The intruder was, he discovered, a wandering mendicant, who had contrived to make his way through the marshes, and now in feeble accents supplicated relief. In cases of the kind we have heard of warriors putting such unfortunate visitors to death, lest they might betray the secrets of the place they had invaded; but Alfred, with more Christian spirit, thought only of the sufferer's distress, and cheerfully granted him the shelter he required. Applying to Ethelswitha, he begged of her to bring whatever provisions could be procured for the stranger ; but, on searching their present store, one solitary loaf of bread was all that could be found. This, however, the royal pair instantly divided with the hungry traveller, giving him one half, and reserving the other for their children and those who might equally require it in their own mansion.

Neither literary or domestic habits were now suffered to abstract the king from the active duties of life. Every measure of a wise and skilful general for procuring intelligence respecting the movements both of his friends and enemies, was resorted to by him, and every method adopted that he thought likely to instil hope or confidence into the Saxon

people. But this he still found a task of difficult attainment: the slight knowledge of Christianity, lately introduced amongst the people, had made but little impression either on their hearts or understanding. They, therefore, no less than their conquerors, were given up to a ready belief in every kind of gross and silly superstition which might reach their ears. Amongst other absurdities, they gave credit to a story which had been propagated by the pirates, that Hubba, one of their leaders, possessed an enchanted standard called the Reafen, containing within its magic folds a raven, which, by the flapping of its wings, foretold the good or evil destiny of all their undertakings.

This standard, the Danes declared, had hitherto protected them from every misfortune, and the Saxons beheld it with dismay carried round their country from one end to the other, as a signal for the slaughter and destruction which invariably followed wherever it appeared; nor was there any chance that it would cease to produce the same effect, since no one ventured to resist the hands by which it was borne.

Amongst a few who despised this delusion, and whose spirit was roused against the cruelties of their Danish rulers, was Odun, Earl of Devon. This nobleman, feeling that death would be preferable to the state of bondage and terror in which he and his countrymen had long been held, at length shut himself up, with a few followers, in his castle of Kenwith,

ALFRED AND THE BEGGAR.

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determined, if attacked, to sell his life in defending this last hold which remained to him.

Scarcely had he entered the walls when Hubba, wearied with conquest and carnage elsewhere, planted his Reafen before the gates, rudely demanding admission. The demand was heard in silent dismay by most of the inmates, but with determined resolution by the earl. Hope, however, scarcely dared to mingle with his determination, for the place was unprepared for resistance, and totally without provisions; and what was worse, the Reafen hovered with portentous wings between the gate and the little river Tau, on which the castle stood, and from whence the inhabitants could alone procure a supply of water to preserve their existence.

But which of them could now be found with sufficient courage to pass the standard and fetch it? Death, Odun knew, might stare them in the face from that most torturing of all diseases, thirst; and though tantalized by seeing the water sparkling within their reach, not one would hazard an attempt to procure it. To hold out a siege under these circumstances was therefore impossible; and to sally forth on the besiegers, in the present spirit of the garrison, was equally hopeless.

The Danes, well aware that the Saxons would not venture to attack them, stretched themselves, as night approached, in their usual careless manner on the ground for repose, closely gathered around their

Reafen, waiting only for the morning's light to complete their work of destruction.

The unhappy earl spent the first few hours of that trying night in making preparations for defence; but finding all such efforts vain, he at length endeavoured to convince his people that the present moment offered them the only possible opportunity they should ever have for preserving their lives and avenging their past wrongs.

Death or slavery unavoidably awaited them within a very few hours, he said, if they tamely remained where they were; but courage and promptitude might yet enable them to steal from the castle, seize the Reafen, and then, by falling on the slumbering foe when thus despoiled, to obtain a glorious victory. Other persons in the country, he reminded them, had already worked out their own deliverance by such deeds, and why should not they.

The earl perceived, with inward satisfaction, that this idea seemed to inspire some degree of hope and courage; yet it was without daring to utter their consent, and with cheeks blanched by terror, that many of his people arose to follow him, whilst others hastily snatched their arms and besought him to lead them from the castle.

It were in vain to describe how the bosoms of the faint-hearted beat with terror as they descended the hill, and drew nearer and nearer to the slumbering host! or how the souls of the courageous rose at

every step as they approached the formidable standard. Slowly and warily Odun, and a few others, stole into the very centre of the Danish lines. A false step, a heavy footfall, might awake even one amongst the enemy, and all would then be lost; but the steps of hope and courage are generally light and true. Whilst the timid lagged behind, the earl and the bravest of his followers moved onward through the sleeping ranks, and had nearly seized the Reafen, when the rest, believing it already taken, rushed upon the nearest of their foes, who awoke only to hear the shout of war and answer it by a groan of death.

Hubba and those around him, immediately roused by the uproar, started to secure their sacred banner; and, supposing themselves attacked by numbers, grasped the ensign, and fled with the utmost precipitation. On seeing the pirates betake themselves to flight, hope lent wings, not only to Odun, but to the most faint-hearted of his adherents, and, although the dawn of morning might now have betrayed the thinness of their ranks, they resolutely pursued the fugitives for several miles, slaughtering them in great numbers. Amongst the slain was Hubba himself; and Odun, having seized the Reafen from the standard-bearer, returned in triumph to plant it on the turret of his rescued castle.

CHAPTER VIII.

A JOYFUL DISCOVERY.

"*1st Peasant.*—Let us all see him!
2nd Peasant.—Yes, and hear him too
3d Peasant.—Let us be sure 'tis he, himself our king!
4th Peasant.—And we will fight while weapons can be found,
Or hands to wield them."

BROOK.

THIS decided success was a proof of public spirit sufficient to make Alfred quit his retreat, and show the victors that there were others at hand ready to assist them in the struggle they had commenced. Entrusting his fortress and the care of his family to the most confidential of the nobles, he proceeded to Kenwith, determined from thence to try the courage, and ascertain the real dispositions of his people.

The joy and exultation of the Earl of Devon at beholding his long lost sovereign, could only be equalled by that of his followers on their being permitted to place themselves foremost amongst the troops now about to be enrolled under the royal standard; both they and their king, however, knew that although the Reafen was taken and Hubba slain, yet chiefs possessing equal skill, and commanding greater numbers, were watching for a favourable

ALFRED IN THE KING'S TENT.

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moment to avenge his overthrow. It was, therefore, necessary, in the still depressed state of the public mind, to proceed with the utmost caution, since any miscarriage or disappointment, however trifling, might prove fatal to the national safety.

Influenced by these considerations, Alfred thought it prudent, before he should openly avow himself, to ascertain the numbers of those who were ready to join his standard, and also, if possible, to discover accurately the force and probable resources of the enemy, with whom he should immediately have to contend.

The strength of his own party could, he believed, be easily calculated through the exertions of those friends who had already ranged themselves on his side; but to number the Danish ranks, being a task of greater difficulty and danger, he generously resolved to take entirely upon himself.

The most formidable and warlike of all the Danish princes, who had hitherto invaded Britain, was Guthrum, one of the last who had landed on the island, and who had now established a vast encampment at Eddington, and drawn around him the greater number of his countrymen. Into this camp, and amongst this host of barbarians, it was necessary for some Saxon to enter, that an accurate idea might be formed, not only of their numbers, but of their mode of warfare and means of defence. But where was the person to be found with either courage or

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intelligence sufficient for the hazardous undertaking. Individuals, it is true, might have been met with hardihood enough for the enterprise; but, on this occasion, Alfred chose to risk no life, or trust to no person's observation but his own.

And now we shall find that his taste for music, and the innocent pursuits and habits of his boyish days proved of no small advantage to him. He had once more recourse to disguise, and having equipped himself in the dress of an old Saxon bard, with a harp slung over his shoulder, he placed himself at the outskirts of the Danish emcampment. Here he endeavoured, by his most lively airs and utmost skill, to attract the notice of the pirates, but they appeared insensible to his art, and he found it for a long time impossible to arrest the slightest attention. At length some young persons, attracted by his melodies, introduced him into one of the tents, where he contrived so thoroughly to amuse the inmates, that from thence he was taken into others, and in each met with a more welcome reception. The fame of his musical powers, merry songs, and entertaining stories, at length reached the ear of Prince Guthrum, who, having his curiosity excited by hearing every person descant upon the talents of the strolling musician, had him brought into the royal tent, and, being delighted by his skill, invited him to remain during several days.

Here, whilst affording entertainment to all around

him, he found opportunities for taking an accurate survey of the camp, inspecting it at different intervals in every quarter. Passing from tent to tent, he conversed familiarly with the troops, and made himself acquainted with their habits and plans of warfare.

Turn where he would, he heard them speak with contempt and derision of the Saxon people, whom they appeared to consider as an abject and conquered race. He observed their proud security, the supine but haughty character of Guthrum, and the negligence and want of discipline into which he had suffered the whole camp to fall. Lastly, he marked the quarter of their intrenchments, which might be most easily assailed, and having completed these observations, took leave, well satisfied with the success of his enterprise, promising the pirates that he would, before long, pay them another visit.

On returning to his friends, he recounted to them the particulars of his adventure; assuring them that a spirited attack on the Danish camp would soon put their enemies to flight; and predicting that prudent measures, with patient and persevering valour, must ultimately succeed in either driving them from the country, or converting them into useful and subjugated vassals.

He now sent confidential messengers to all persons of consideration in the kingdom, requiring them to assemble, with their adherents, at a general

meeting on the skirts of Selwood forest, where the most warlike and experienced among them should be called on to advise with him, and assist in concerting proper measures for the expulsion of the Danes.

The nation at length, sensible that war, with all its miseries, fatigues, and dangers, would be preferable to the rapine and cruelty of their oppressors, joyfully obeyed the summons, though ignorant from whom it proceeded; and multitudes of every rank eagerly hastened to the appointed rendezvous.

But when Alfred, whom they had so long imagined in his grave, appeared before them; when he addressed them in terms of regard and confidence; promising them a restoration of peace and happiness if they would only put themselves under his guidance, and submit to be led by his experience; they received him with shouts of such unfeigned ecstasy as made the woods around re-echo to their acclamations.

When these demonstrations subsided, the king, with looks and voice indicative of his ability to insure success, and with words expressive of his reliance on their courage and fidelity, besought their permission to lead them in person instantly against the encampment of their enemies.

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT.

"The coward multitude before
His dauntless valour fled;
And death and conquest once again
Pursued where Alfred led."

LITTLE did Prince Guthrum or his myrmidons imagine that their favourite bard was about to visit them in such a different character, when a short time after they descried a body of Saxon troops advancing towards the camp. Having believed the whole nation subdued, the chief could scarcely credit his own senses as he watched these troops marching boldly forward to the front of his intrenchments. At length, rousing himself to a recollection that it would be expedient to disperse or destroy the *contemptible band,* he leisurely arose, and selected such numbers as he deemed sufficient for the purpose; but while preparing to meet the insurgents, as he styled them, his followers directed his attention to the sounds of warfare in the rear, and it was quickly discovered that one quarter of their intrenchments had been already assailed and taken with great slaughter.

To increase their dismay the Danes now heard the

name of Alfred! King Alfred! resounding from voice to voice, in all directions; and the promptitude, skill, and vigour of the attack plainly told that it was no other than this royal person, who now led his awakened countrymen to victory.

No sooner were they convinced of this fact than, without waiting to offer any further resistance, they forsook their camp and fled; whilst Alfred, pursuing closely after them, slew the greater part of their numbers, and kept possession of their camp.

But, although the Danes were thus far conquered, a sufficient number still remained to deprive the victory of all its advantages, if not instantly followed up by vigorous measures. Without suffering his troops to waste an unnecessary moment, either in triumph or repose, he watched and followed the still retiring foe, until he found that they had collected all their remaining force, and shut themselves up within a strongly fortified place, already possessed by their countrymen; hoping yet to make a stand on the island.

Here Alfred allowed them to remain unmolested; resolved, if possible, not to sacrifice any more lives in overcoming them. He, therefore, satisfied himself with stationing troops at a distance, around their position, and watching them so closely that neither provisions or reinforcements of any kind could reach them.

In the course of fourteen days the haughty spirit

of Prince Guthrum was so completely humbled by famine and despair, that he sent ambassadors to the king, offering to submit to any terms he should think proper to impose.

A council was immediately called, and many of the Saxon nobles advised that the whole garrison should be put to the sword, alleging that their past treachery and cruelty merited no other fate. Nor did the Danes themselves expect a milder sentence, but Alfred turned with horror from such an idea.

"We have conquered them as enemies," said he. "Let us now endeavour to convert them into friends." He then directed that Guthrum and his attendant chiefs should be brought into his presence. They entered, no doubt expecting an order for instant execution, and that, perhaps, with the same tortures which they were themselves in the habit of inflicting on their enemies. Great, therefore, must have been their astonishment when Alfred approached them with a courteous and friendly manner. In a tone at once amicable and authoritative, he offered Prince Guthrum not only life but liberty, and consequence within his dominions, provided he would submit to the terms now about to be proposed to him.

The kingdom of Northumberland was at this period totally desolate, having been laid waste by the pirates, and long since deserted by its inhabitants. If, therefore, Guthrum chose to settle within that boundary, engaging to cultivate the soil, obey the

laws, and assist in defending the kingdom at large against future incursions of his countrymen, he might withdraw his present adherents into that district, and remain there as prince over his own people, being protected by the same laws, and regarded with equal favour as if they had been native subjects; but the first breach of faith, on the part of the Danes, was to be followed by their utter extirpation.

Guthrum, struck by the generosity of this proposal, gratefully consented to ratify the terms, offering to insure his fidelity by whatever pledge the king should require. Again, the greatness of Alfred's character was displayed by the wisdom and magnanimity of his reply.

"Give me a proof," said he, "that you are really inclined to live on friendly terms with the English, by making yourself acquainted with their religion, and consenting to hold the same faith with them, and I shall require no other guarantee."

With this proposal Guthrum cheerfully promised compliance, reflecting, in all probability, that the religion which had formed such a character as that of Alfred, must have its foundation in truth. Not many weeks after, the chief, together with thirty of the principal persons in his army, assembled at the Isle of Nobles, a spot then dear to every British heart, where they were all solemnly received into the Christian Church. The king in person stood

sponsor to the Danish prince, to whom he gave at baptism the Christian name of Athelstan, and promised that, as far as lay within his power, the new converts should, along with all his other subjects, have full opportunity of learning and obeying the duties of the religion they had embraced.

CHAPTER X.

FRESH WARS.

"These are thy arts, to bid contention cease,
Chain up stern war, and give the nations peace;
O'er subject lands extend thy gentle sway,
And teach, with iron rod, the haughty to obey."

Spectator.

AFTER the ceremony mentioned in the preceding chapter, Athelstan, now Earl of Northumberland, remained at the Saxon court for eight days, enjoying all the rites of hospitality common in those times.* Then, bidding his royal godfather adieu, he proceeded, accompanied by

* During these times the Anglo-Saxons (as the Saxon inhabitants of England were called) were said to have been remarked above most other nations for their unbounded hospitality, a quality which they considered, not only as affording one of their greatest pleasures, but also as constituting one of their highest duties. They entertained all visitors, we are informed, without regard to rank or station, in the best manner their means would afford; and at their feasts, vied with each other in heaping marks of respect and attention on their guests.

The banquets of the upper ranks in those days consisted of venison, dried sausages, wild apples, raw onions, salted butter, and curds and cream. Their drink was principally a kind of beer, made from wheat; or, with the richer classes, wine decocted from honey, mulberry juice, and spices. This beverage they considered so excellent that their entertainments frequently terminated in riot and intoxication, until Alfred, on coming to the throne, discountenanced, both by precept and example, all such intemperance.

At his table, besides the productions of his own country, were found various articles of comfort and luxury before unknown in Britain, which, for the promotion of commerce, and to excite the emulation of his people, he had imported from distant lands. Even some of the elegancies of life are said to have been brought to him from India and the Mediterranean, to which portions of the globe he had now extended his navigation,—a seventh part of his revenue having been yearly set aside for the reward and encouragement of naval arts, mechanical inventions, and useful discoveries of every description.

a numerous train of followers, to take possession of his ceded territory, in which he continued, to the last days of his life, a grateful and faithful subject, resisting various solicitations from his ancient countrymen to let them attempt another inroad against Britain.

We need scarcely state that the engagements of his conqueror were no less faithfully fulfilled, being adhered to in every particular, not only with regard to Athelstan, but also towards the meanest of his new subjects.

It might now be expected that the British king would have had leisure to enjoy the fruits of his various efforts to establish tranquillity in his dominions, but the moment for either leisure or repose had not yet arrived.

The Earl of Northumberland did not long survive his accession to that title; and after his demise an enormous influx of pirates, headed by a chief called Hastings (long notorious in other countries as the most warlike and dangerous of all the northern invaders), made a fresh incursion into Britain. Three hundred and thirty ships, in separate squadrons, anchored at the same moment on different parts of the coast, committing their usual devastations, and inviting the Northumbrian settlers to assist them in endeavouring to wrest the entire island from the Saxons; to which proposal, being no longer restrained by Athelstan, many of them basely assented.

Our hero was therefore plunged once more into all the horrors and difficulties of war, a state to which every disposition of his mind was averse, and in which he never engaged but when compelled by imperative necessity. He was now, however, from long-continued practice even better qualified than formerly to meet the evil; and he would have been still better prepared but for the unconquerable dislike of his Saxon people to submit to military discipline, or to remain in arms for any prolonged time.

To obviate the difficulty this dislike occasioned, Alfred, as speedily as possible, raised such an army as he deemed necessary for the safety of the state; and when he had in some degree trained his soldiers, he divided them into two separate bodies, one of which he required to remain alternately with him in the field, while the other returned to pursue the necessary avocations of their domestic life.*

By this means he prevented his troops from being dissatisfied, and secured the constant command of a fresh and effective force with which to oppose the enemy. After many sanguinary contests, and long and indefatigable resistance, he at last succeeded in driving the Danes towards the sea, forcing them into

* To counteract the evils arising from this disposition, Alfred formed a regular militia for the defence of his kingdom. He took care that all his subjects should be armed and registered, and assigned them their regular rounds of duty. He distributed one part into castles and fortresses, which he erected at proper distances; appointed another portion to take the field on any sudden alarm, leaving a sufficient number at home, who should afterwards take their turn in military service. The whole kingdom, Russel informs us, was like one great garrison; and the Danes no sooner appeared in any quarter than a sufficient force was ready to oppose them without leaving other parts naked or defenceless.

a position where he was enabled completely to surround them on the land side.

Here he hoped to compel them, by want of provisions, to fly to their ships and quit the country—a mode of warfare which, however tedious, he preferred to the slaughter of his people, which must ensue from more immediate conflict.

He had twice made captive the wife and sons of the inhuman Hastings, but anxious to show that he waged no war against women or children, he each time sent them back to the enemy's camp, loaded with presents. But this conduct, although it is said to have astonished, in no degree softened the daring chieftain, who, in despite of all Alfred's exertions, maintained his ground during three entire years in the country.

Finding lenient measures of no avail, the king, wearied by this long protracted struggle, the particulars of which it would be tedious to detail, resolved on trying to give the enemy a decisive blow. As he had by this time possessed himself of a naval armament superior to any then known in Europe,* he determined to engage his enemies at once by land and sea. Ordering his fleet to attack a large squadron of the Danish ships, he at the same time assailed

* Alfred may be deemed the creator of the English navy. Sensible that ships form the most natural bulwark of an island, he provided himself with a naval force, which enabled him to meet the Danes on their own element. A hundred and twenty armed vessels were stationed on the coast, and being provided with warlike engines, and expert seamen, both Frisians and English, gave birth to that claim, which England still supports to the sovereignty of the ocean.—*Russel's Mod. Eur.*, p. 99.

their main force on shore, and in both assaults obtained a glorious victory, securing a vast number of prisoners.

Though averse as ever to sanguinary measures, he now considered it necessary for the future safety of his people to adopt more rigorous proceedings. He therefore had all the Danish leaders whom he had made captive tried according to the laws of his own country, and after they had been publicly condemned to death, had them directly executed as the common enemies of mankind.

This necessary severity at length intimidated the remaining invaders, all of whom betook themselves to their vessels, hoping to escape the Saxon fleet, and to remain secure at sea until they could find opportunity for a more successful invasion. But Alfred, putting the entire of his naval force under weigh, chased every pirate ship across the ocean, whence they never again, during his lifetime, returned to disturb the tranquillity of his dominions.

All the Danish colonies established in Northumberland and elsewhere over the kingdom now returned to their allegiance, and having made the most humble submission to the king, they were received to pardon, and once more quietly settled down to their former occupations.

Now, then, at length Alfred had time to pursue without interruption those plans of national improvement in which he had been already so successful,

and with which his mind had been so long occupied. He immediately followed up with vigour his various projects for rescuing his subjects from the degraded state of ignorance and barbarism into which they had been plunged by the long-continued devastations of the Danes.

The monasteries, which were the only seats of learning in those days, had been long since destroyed, and all the libraries burned, so that every description of literature was forgotten. Alfred, at his accession to the throne, had been heard to deplore the fact that not even one person could be found throughout his dominions who was capable of explaining to his people the meaning of the Lord's Prayer.

In this respect his Danish and Saxon subjects stood on equal footing. Both were ignorant of the religion they professed, and the king determined that, as far as lay in his power, they should enjoy the same advantages.

The best thing which could be done for them in the commencement was, he conceived, to encourage education by every reward and inducement that could be offered.

He therefore invited to his country the best scholars from all parts of Europe, and by his munificent kindness, induced many of them to make it their future place of abode.

He established schools in every direction, for the education both of poor and rich, assisting and inciting

all to send the young into them, and obliging by law every person possessed of a certain proportion of land to keep his children at some of those seminaries until they should be properly instructed.

He granted suitable preferments and rewards to all classes of people who made any proficiency in knowledge, and whose lives and conduct proved that that they were making a proper use of the advantages afforded them.

The rich were not suffered to oppress the poor, nor dared the poor to fail in their respect towards those whom their Creator had placed over them as superiors. If persons in office usurped too great authority, it was not only the high and powerful, but the lowly and defenceless, that might fearlessly appeal to the equity of their monarch, who now never failed to listen to their grievances, or to redress their wrongs.

By these and various other just and equitable regulations, the national character assumed a new and happy aspect. Iniquity of every kind was observed to decrease; rapine and robbery were no longer heard of; and so greatly was this wise and upright monarch beloved and honoured, so strictly were his laws respected, and his commands obeyed, that, it is said, a purse of gold, if dropped on the public road, might remain there in perfect safety until taken in charge by those who could restore it to the proper owner.

To make this astonishing change in the national character more conspicuous, and wishing no doubt to excite an honourable feeling of emulation in his subjects, Alfred is said to have caused a pair of valuable bracelets to be hung up for a long time on the wayside for the purpose of showing that they would remain there in safety. How great must have been his satisfaction in being able to prove by this means that the honest would not, and that the dishonest dared not, remove them.*

Here the reader will perhaps peruse with satisfaction the testimony offered by a virtuous and learned writer† to the wisdom and success of Alfred's method of governing his people—

> "A single jail, in Alfred's golden reign,
> Could half the nation's criminals contain!
> Fair justice, then, without constraint, adored,
> Held high the steady scale, but sheathed the sword."

This excellent monarch had now the happiness of seeing his country firmly established in peace and prosperity; his people not only redeemed from bondage, but moving rapidly on towards the path of virtue.

Nor shall we wonder at this remarkable and speedy alteration in the face of affairs if we consider that, in addition to every other means used for the improvement of the state, the king, by his own life

* The rejection of this anecdote by some historians on the supposition of its being a temptation thrown in the way of his subjects, and therefore inconsistent with Alfred's character, appears to the writer without any just foundation.

† Dr. Johnson.

and conduct, set an example which must have produced the most powerful effect on the minds of his people.

Amongst all his estimable qualities, there was perhaps none which appeared to them so attractive as his spirit of humble and sincere piety. Asser, one of the learned men whom he induced to settle in England, and who became his most intimate friend and companion, asserts, in a history which he wrote of his patron's life, that it was the constant practice of the king, wherever he might be, to get out of bed before sunrise and repair in private to the nearest place of worship, where, in earnest prayer, he besought the Great Being from whom all just and virtuous desires proceed, to strengthen every right intention, and frustrate every evil desire, of his heart.

The glorious achievement on which his wishes had been so long centred was now completely accomplished; his fame was at its height; his family flourishing around him. His life was but in its zenith, and every circumstance promised only an increase of prosperity, when He who doeth all things in wisdom, thought fit to strike him with a recurrence of that disease which was to remove him from an earthly to a heavenly crown.

Being, from the intensity of his sufferings, fully aware of his approaching end, he called his eldest surviving son to his bed-side, and in the most affecting and affectionate terms apprised him that he was

now to quit this earthly scene of existence for another and a better world. As he was about to leave all his earthly possessions in his hands, he besought him as his *dear child* to be, not only a king, but a father to his people, adding in words which Edward appears never to have forgotten, "Comfort the poor, my son, shelter the weak; and with all thy might right that which is wrong. Be thou the children's protector, and the widow's friend; but, oh! my child, study beyond every other thing to govern thyself. Then shall the Lord thy God love thee, and the Almighty shall be thy everlasting reward. Call thou upon Him to advise thee in all times of need, so shall He help thee, and enable thee to compass all the good that thou wouldst do."

This was his last advice, and shortly after it was delivered he breathed his last in the midst of his sorrowing family.

Before one inward faculty had failed, or one external grace had faded; before any failure had appeared which could tarnish the lustre of his memory, or render his example less attractive, he was called from an admiring world, leaving behind him a character superior to any which has hitherto adorned the annals of our English history, and inferior to few that can be found among the records of any other nation.


PRINCE EDWARD, SON OF KING HENRY III.

CHAPTER I.

A FOOLISH KING.

"He would say untruths; and be cast double
Both in his words and meaning;
His promises were mighty; but his performance nothing."
SHAKESPEARE.

IT has been frequently asserted, that a *silly sire never had a sensible son;* and if the word *never* were changed into *seldom,* we should be inclined to grant that there is much truth in the adage. To prove, however, that a foolish parent may sometimes have a wise and virtuous child, I shall relate another story from the history of England which will show the little boy, to whom this book is addressed, how happy he ought to consider himself in having sensible and worthy parents, to whom he can, at all times, look up for example and direction; and for whose sake he may, even in childhood, hope to be respected and beloved. Yet had his lot been different, it would still have been his duty to love, honour, and obey, his father and mother, and to treat them with undeviating respect, to the last hour of their lives.

To commence our history.

John, King of England, the first and only one of that name, was equally odious to his subjects, and to the world at large, from the meanness, treachery, and cruelty of his character. He died, as he had lived, a despised being, in consequence of his own misconduct, and left behind him two boys and three girls; the eldest of whom, a child of nine years old, was to wear his father's crown, under the title of Henry III.

This boy, as might have been expected, inherited many of his father's evil propensities, though not all his vices. He was, as a child, at times kind-hearted and affectionate; though generally selfish and inconsiderate. But he had, when grown to manhood, one dreadful fault, which those children who have been pleased with the stories of George III. will not tolerate. Whilst that excellent monarch was never known to break a promise, Henry III. was never known to keep one.

Let pity, however, check our contempt for his character; for whilst he was at such an early age seated on a throne, and laden with a sceptre, the weight of which he had not strength to wield, or sense to dread, he had no kind monitor to teach him that truth and virtue were the only means by which his burden could be lightened, or his crown secured.

His natural understanding was so defective as to make him unconscious of his own ignorance, and, on

the subject of religion, more especially, he felt perfectly satisfied with his attainments. In this opinion he was confirmed by the adulation offered to him, in consequence of his strict observance of all the external forms of the superstitious faith which then prevailed in his country. That faith unhappily induced him to enter into engagements which he was taught to believe he might obtain permission to break. He therefore, in consequence of this belief, frequently disavowed those engagements, directly after having entered into them, being fully persuaded that he could easily receive pardon, and purchase absolution for any breach of compact he chose to commit.

Some of his more conscientious statesmen having once ventured to remonstrate against such unworthy conduct, he replied, "that all the nobility, and even the clergy, with the Pontiff at their head, followed the same practice."

"Ah! sire!" returned these honest advisers, "you ought to set us all a better example."

But Henry was perfectly indifferent as to what example he set to others; and so that he were only suffered to remain in ease and indolence himself, he thought little of the welfare or happiness of those around him.

One of his foolish and injudicious propensities was an excessive admiration for the manners, customs, and habits of other countries, and an exclusive attachment to foreigners, whom he always preferred to

his native subjects. Contrary to the laws of his realm, and in opposition to the wishes of the whole nation, he gave his younger sister in marriage to a French nobleman, named Simon de Montford, on whom he conferred the rich estates and earldom of Leicester. In the course of a few years after this imprudent step, he himself espoused a daughter of the court of Provence, named Eleanor; to her he became devotedly attached, and permitted her to bring in her train to England a number of her countrymen, on whom he lavished those favours and honours which would have been more justly bestowed amongst his own people.

In the course of a few years four children were born to Henry, for all of whom, especially the eldest, whose name was Edward, he manifested the most unbounded affection. Nor can we blame his partiality, for this young prince, the heir of his crown, proved himself, even from childhood, a character that might have done honour to more judicious parents and to more enlightened times.

When quite a youth he was, by circumstances which it would be tedious to enumerate, compelled to join his father in making a very disadvantageous compact with a rebellious faction in the kingdom, which compact was to cut him off from his hereditary claim to the throne. A short time afterwards the fickle monarch required his son to deny this engagement; and on the prince's refusal to break his word Henry immediately

sent an ambassador to Rome to purchase leave from the Pope for the infringement of the treaty. This permission, he imagined, would satisfy his son's mind as easily as it would have done his own; but Edward still mildly, but manfully, refused to break his word.

"Although the treaty is abused by our enemies," said he, "and although I was compelled by violence to enter into it, yet since I have made the engagement I hold myself bound to abide by it."

He was reminded that the persons who had forced his father to the measure had themselves broken many parts of the compact. "Let them," he replied, "take good care that they faithfully fulfil all their engagements with the king, my father, else I shall hold myself absolved from mine, and will then show them that I am ready to shed the last drop of my blood in maintaining his rights, and in promoting the interest of my country."

Even the most faithless persons respect those who love truth; and this instance of Edward's regard for that virtue, gained him the confidence of all parties concerned in the transaction. But though the example of the father thus operated as a *warning* to the son, that of the youthful prince produced no good effect upon his parent.

It would be tedious to recount the numberless breaches of faith of which this bigoted monarch was guilty, or the various injuries which he inflicted on

his country, by disregarding the engagements into which he had entered, especially with respect to the protection of his people against the power of the Pope, who then pretended that he had a superior right of control over British subjects.

CHAPTER II.

A GOOD SON.

"The king who delegates
His power to other hands, but ill deserves
The crown he wears."

EARL OF WARWICK.

HENRY III. had long indulged an ambitious desire to see his son Edward possessed of a kingdom. In hopes of inducing the Pope to place the crown of Sicily on his head, he suffered that potentate to assume authority over his subjects, and to tax and oppress them according to his will. At length this conduct exciting the indignation of the people, many wicked persons, instigated by his brother-in-law, the perfidious Simon de Montford, plotted how they might dethrone the king, and usurp his power.

It was at this crisis that the full value of Prince Edward's character began to be displayed. A number of the discontented barons, both in England and Wales, assembled in battle array and threatened to overwhelm their monarch and overturn the government. But the young prince put himself at the head of his father's army, and hastening into Wales, soon drove the rebels for safety into the mountains and

fastnesses of that country, where he expected shortly to make them surrender. The intelligence, however, of a dreadful insurrection having broken out in London, in which the lives of the royal family were endangered, obliged him to return without delay; and leaving part of his army in Wales, he hastened, with all the speed in his power to Windsor, in hopes of protecting his parents.

Leicester, on the moment of Edward's departure on this expedition had collected all his forces, and commenced an open rebellion; alluring thousands to his side, by the hope of plunder, and by a promise of permission to pillage and destroy all who would not join his standard. The royal demesnes were ravaged with fury, and the populace of London surrounded the king and queen in the tower,* where they had to

* When William the Conqueror had, by the memorable battle of Hastings, made himself master of England, he, with his accustomed prudence, immediately commenced the erection of a fort in the centre of his metropolis, where he might, if necessary, take refuge with his followers, and be enabled to resist any sudden attack. The site was chosen close to the river Thames, from which it was separated by a strong embankment and foss, over which was a drawbridge, with an ample wharf for the conveyance of provisions and military stores. The building was a square tower, consisting of three lofty storeys, the walls of which were of immense thickness, having four watchtowers on the top. Between these turrets, on the flat roof, lay a capacious cistern for supplying the garrison with water. To this edifice, which was completed before the death of the Conqueror, and which is still known by the appellation of the White Tower, William Rufus added various buildings for other useful purposes, and enclosed the whole by a strong wall and broad foss, which rendered it a secure asylum for those who like Henry III. chose to fly to it for protection. Since that time the fortress has undergone innumerable alterations and improvements, and its buildings appropriated to a variety of useful purposes over and above the original design. It has long been used as a secure receptacle for all that is esteemed most rare and valuable belonging to the monarchs of England, and is supposed to enclose within its walls many of the greatest wonders of the modern world. The reader who has not yet had an opportunity of visiting the Tower of London would be much pleased by an account of the various varieties it contains, which may be found in a work long since published for his use, entitled "Curiosities of London and Westminister."

take refuge, and where they both remained in momentary expectation of being put to death. In this position Henry was incapable of making any exertion, or offering any resistance to the rebels.

The queen, terrified for the safety of her children, then unprotected at Windsor, got into a boat and endeavoured to reach that place where she hoped her brave son would shortly come to her assistance. Being, unfortunately, discovered making her escape from the tower, the mob attacked her barge, and crying out, "Down with the witch; drown her in the Thames!" they hurled stones and all sorts of missiles at her, and prepared to sink her little vessel, when it should attempt to pass under the bridge of London.

Eleanor's boatmen were now obliged to put back; and being stout rowers, they soon regained the tower stairs, where they happily succeeded in landing the queen, before the mob were able to surround her. Here, then, she was obliged to remain, having now no hope of escape, save from her son's arrival.

Leicester, however, had taken care to frustrate every chance of that event. Knowing that the prince had been recalled by his parents, and that he was hastening to Windsor to protect them, the earl cunningly sent to demand a parley with him, and, on Edward's consenting, went himself, with every peaceable appearance, to hold the conference at that place. But no sooner had he joined the prince, and commenced a conversation with him, than he made a sign to his

guards, by whom Edward was instantly surrounded and made prisoner.

It would be vain to attempt describing the mingled wrath and misery of Prince Edward, at this perfidious act, which showed him what his parents, his country, and he himself had to dread from the treachery of De Montford, whose marriage with a princess of the blood royal would, he feared, serve the rebel as a pretence for usurping the crown.

Whilst Edward lay in prison writhing under the most cruel apprehensions for his beloved parents, and for his unhappy country, Leicester, knowing that the life and strength of the royal party was now in his possession, sent to King Henry, offering him such terms of peace as he thought proper to dictate. The imbecile monarch, giving himself up to fruitless sorrow for the capture of his son, readily listened to his proposals, although they were too unjust to be heard with patience by any other persons.

The earl required that before the liberation of Prince Edward, the kingdom should be delivered up into the hands of twenty-four barons, who were to regulate the laws as they pleased, not only during the lifetime of Henry, but also during that of his son. Thoughtless of every future consequence, or, perhaps, as usual, ready to make any promise from feeling careless as to its fulfilment, Henry joyfully consented to the proposal, which seemed to offer present safety to himself, and immediate liberation to his child.

Edward, who had no share in the agreement, was no sooner set at liberty than he employed all his talents and activity in trying to defeat the schemes of the earl, and to recover the rights of his family. His first care was to send his mother and sisters, for safety, to France, and then to seek for friends and allies at home. His cause was so just, and his character so highly esteemed, that every friend of truth and honour enrolled themselves under his banner. But the friends of truth and honour are not always the strongest party. Knowing, however, that his father had given too much cause for discontent, he endeavoured to conciliate the factious barons who wished to govern the nation. But finding his efforts vain, he at length assembled the adherents of the crown, and prepared to abide by the issue of a general battle.

CHAPTER III.

TRUE BRAVERY.

"Oh, sadly fell the morning rays
Upon a conquered king;
The breeze that with his banner plays
Plays with an abject thing:
Banner and king no more will know
Their rightful place midst friend and foe."

SIMON DE MONTFORD, being now master of London, summoned his partisans from every quarter, and determined to fix the field of battle near that place, from whence, if defeated, he thought he might easily escape into France, since the mob, who are always found on the side of rebellion, would, he knew, assist his flight.

To give some appearance of justice to his cause, he sent, in false but cunning and submissive terms, to offer the king's party conditions of peace. But, though his words were fair, his demands were so iniquitous and exorbitant, that the young prince sent him an indignant answer of defiance; commanding his messenger, as the greatest insult he could offer, to *give him the lie in his teeth*,—a mode of expression then used for taxing persons with gross falsehood. The earl, in return, sent back a message renouncing

fealty to the crown, and immediately marched his followers from London to attack the king.

His army was divided into two separate bodies; the first commanded by two of his sons, the last by himself. As they proceeded to battle, the Bishop of Chester stood on an eminence and gave a general absolution to the whole army for all their past sins; assuring the soldiers that should any of them fall in the conflict, they would instantly be received into bliss, as the reward of their having died in so good a cause.

Such was the religion of England in those days. But could heaven be a place of peace and rest, of love and joy, if such unholy beings, unchanged in heart and temper, and fresh from the slaughter of their fellow-creatures, were to find admittance there?

Far different was the faith of a young German officer,* now recalled to the memory of the author, who, a few hours before he marched into a battle, where he was slain, composed the following beautiful prayer:—

"Father, I call on thee!
When the loud cannons roar dreadful around me,
When the red lightnings of battle have found me,
Father of armies, I call on thee,—
Father, O hear thou me!

Father, I trust in thee!
Thine is my being,—thou best can shield it;
Thou hast bestowed it, and freely I yield it:
Living or dying, I trust in thee!
Father, O guide thou me!"

* Körner.

The writer of these lines marched to combat courageously, but not thoughtlessly or cruelly. He trusted in his God for salvation, and was therefore, we may hope, the moment he fell received to pardon, and welcomed into bliss by the whole host of angels.

I wish we could be certain that the young warrior, to whose history we must now return, went forth to meet his enemy prepared for life or death by the same spirit.

Edward had by this time encamped at a place called Lewes, in Sussex, and did not expect that Leicester would be so very prompt in marching to attack him; but in this he had greatly mistaken the character of his opponent. The earl had decided talents for war, and had treble the experience of the prince. He conducted his troops with such skill and secresy, that they stole close to the royal encampment, and nearly surprised it, before the prince was aware of their approach.

The promptitude and cleverness of Edward, however, soon atoned for his past negligence. He immediately formed his father's army into three bodies, and marshalled them for battle in the most skilful and judicious order. The king was placed at the head of the rear division, surrounded by all the principal nobility and gentry. The centre, or main body, was conducted by his uncle Richard, then King of the Romans; to be led on by Prince Henry, his youthful but gallant son. Of the advanced body our hero

himself took charge; but, humble as he was brave, he joined with him in the command William de Valence, his mother's half-brother, to act as a guide to his inexperience, and to be a check on his impetuosity, should that be needful.

Alas! the precaution was vain; the check, though much required, was not given, and the Prince soon learned from experience the truth of the assertion, that "prudence is the better part of valour."

The London mob, which was headed by the two sons of the Earl of Leicester, insisted on being placed in what they considered the post of honour, as vanguard to the rebel army; and the wily De Montford, for his own purposes, readily granted their desire. Edward, on seeing them advance, incensed at their insolence, despising their rabble force, and exasperated by a recollection of the treatment which his royal mother had received from them, rushed with fury to disperse the mob, and quickly succeeded in driving them from their position.

Transported by his martial ardour, the youthful commander pursued the flying crowd for the length of four miles, without reflecting on the fate which might await the rest of his army.

Leicester, finding the prince engaged in this headlong pursuit, led on his regular troops in close array against the royal brothers. The main body, notwithstanding all the exertions of its commanders, Richard and Henry, his son, was soon overpowered;

and the earl, then turning his whole strength against the rear division, compelled the king, with his nobles and attendants, to retire into the town of Lewes, where he had made them prisoners of war before Edward's return from his fruitless pursuit of the London mob.

On regaining the field, what were the prince's feelings of astonishment and despair to find the battle over, the ground covered with the bodies of his dead or dying friends, and his cousin, Henry D'Allmaine, with a small number of followers, alone remaining to acquaint him with the particulars of the defeat. His father, uncle, and all the nobles of their party, he found were captives, in the power of their most implacable enemy; and all this had happened, the young prince felt, through his own rash imprudence. William de Valence, struck with shame at feeling himself a sharer in the misconduct which had occasioned so much misery, increased his fault by leaving his unhappy nephew to his fate, and instantly taking flight to France.

CHAPTER IV.

A CAPTIVE PRINCE.

"Oh, I could burst the strings of life
To break those chains. Off, off, ye stains of royalty!
Off, slavery! Oh, sad that I alone
Can beat and flutter in my cage, when I
Would soar to victory!"

CONGREVE.

INTREPID amidst the heaviest calamities, and seeing that bold measures could alone repair the error of which he had been guilty, Edward roused himself from his stupor of grief and shame, and exhorted his own victorious band, small as it was in number, to go with him immediately to Lewes, and endeavour to obtain a glorious victory by falling on the rebels in the dead of night, when he hoped they might redeem the king, with all the other prisoners, and seize the Earl of Leicester, who would probably be thrown off his guard by past success. But Edward's followers, now less confident in his prudence than they had been before his rash pursuit, and completely dismayed by the disastrous turn the day had taken, could not be persuaded to make the attempt; and next morning, whilst hesitating what course to pursue, the little party found them-

selves surrounded by the troops of the enemy, who commanded them immediately to surrender.

To fight or to fly were alike impossible; and the prince, almost broken-hearted, was obliged to submit to whatever terms the rebels thought proper to impose. These were, indeed, as short as they were severe; for Leicester dreaded delay, lest fresh troops should come to the assistance of the royalists. He therefore offered to restore the king and all the prisoners to liberty, if the prince would consent to remain a captive in the room of his father. Edward did not hesitate a moment to comply. The present misfortune had, he knew, been caused by his own misconduct; and to repair the evil, and set his father, uncle, cousin, and his other friends at liberty, he would willingly have resigned, not only freedom, but life.

He, therefore, instantly gave up his sword, expecting to solace himself, during his imprisoment, by the knowledge that his parent was at liberty; but, contrary to his expectation, he was hurried off under a strong guard to Dover Castle; whilst the king was still retained in custody.

Leicester, now having the entire royal family in his power, openly broke every article of the treaty he had offered; and immediately began to act as master of the kingdom.

To keep the military on his side, he gave high pay, and rich rewards to the soldiers; and, instead

of liberating any of the prisoners taken at Lewes, he threw many more into confinement, disarmed the loyalists in every quarter, and carried the captive king from place to place, persuading the people that all his acts were sanctioned by the royal command. In short, he and his sons together seized on the wealth and power of the crown; took possession of the estates, castles, and properties, belonging to the nobles; garrisoned the strong towns, with their own mob of hireling soldiers, and became themselves the lawless tyrants of the nation.

But this state of things could not long exist amongst a free and generous people. The lower classes began to inquire, what advantage they had gained by following the rebel army; their weak monarch had, it was true, been faulty towards them; but had the usurper improved their state in any respect? The whole nation loudly lamented the fate of their brave prince, who had been now confined in prison for upwards of a year; and even the rebellious barons, who were friends to Leicester, disapproved of his detention.

The queen had made a great struggle to gain allies, and assembled a party abroad; she had purchased a fleet, and hired an army, with which she was coming herself to try if she could dispossess the usurper, and restore her husband to his throne, and her son to liberty.

The earl, on being apprized of her preparations,

had immediate recourse to the king, and artfully persuaded him to take an oath, that he would, on condition his son were set free, resign his authority into the hands of the barons. Prince Edward, who did not know the proposed terms of his deliverance, felt his heart beat with reviving hope, when he understood that any treaty had been set on foot for that purpose; and he resolved cheerfully to sacrifice everything but truth and honour to regain the blessing of freedom.

His ardent and intrepid spirit had long been weary of confinement, and he languished under the natural desire to taste once more the joys of active life, its sports and pleasures, its employments and its usefulness. It seemed to him that he had already been for years immured within the walls of his dungeon; but when the report of his projected release was mentioned, when doubt, hope, and suspense, were all at once awakened in his mind, moments seemed to him converted into days, nights into years, and he felt in its full force the truth of the Scripture assertion, that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

At length the treaty was concluded. The queen returned to England, after all her exertions, with so small a force, that Leicester, losing his fears of foreign resistance, thought only of keeping the English barons on his side, by pretending to liberate Edward. The 11th of March, 1265, was at length appointed

for his release; and he was publicly brought into Westminster Hall, and pronounced free, by the voice of the assembly, and to the joy of the whole nation. But who could paint his own delight, at flying to his parents, and believing himself once more at liberty!

His joy was, however, of short duration. It soon appeared that the whole ceremony of his liberation was a fraud. The king was still a captive, carried about by his enemies, compelled to speak and act as they pleased; and Edward perceived that he himself was to be held in the same thraldom. Wherever he turned, he was guarded by the emissaries of Leicester, and whilst that usurper reaped the benefit of his apparent liberation, care was taken that Edward should derive no possible advantage from it. The prince, therefore, found himself in a state even more galling and irksome than when he had been actually confined in prison.

CHAPTER V.

A HAPPY ADVENTURE.

"No foot the prince in stirrup staid,
No grasp upon the saddle laid;
But wreathed his left hand in the mane,
And lightly vaulted from the plain.
Bounded the fiery steed in air,
The rider sat erect and fair;
Then like a bolt from steel cross-bow,
Forth launched along the plain they go."

SCOTT.

THE Earl of Gloucester, one of the first and firmest allies of De Montford, having been of late disgusted by the violence and injustice of his conduct, had about this period left the rebel party, and retired to his own estate on the borders of Wales.

Leicester, resolute to display the full extent of his power, pursued the earl with a large army, imperiously commanding him to return and submit to his authority. Cautious, however, of giving dissatisfaction to the other barons, by taking upon himself the sole command, he obliged the king and the prince to accompany his army, publicly asserting that he had their sanction for compelling Gloucester to rejoin his party, and menacing him with banish-

ment for life, and forfeiture of rank and property, in case he should refuse compliance.

But Gloucester was aware that his near relative, the king, whose easy disposition inclined him to be over lenient to all offenders, would never, of his own accord, resort to such severe measures. In this opinion he was confirmed by a message which Robert, his eldest son, received from Prince Edward, who, being now on the confines of his own hereditary estates, found means by one of his vassals to send his early companion, young Robert of Gloucester, true information as to the state of thraldom in which his father and he were held.

It so happened that the gallant Roger Mortimer, another companion of the youthful prince, who had been deprived of his entire property by De Montford, and unjustly banished into France, had at this juncture privately returned to his native country, and taken refuge with the Earl of Gloucester. He now, in conjunction with the earl, and his son Robert, concerted a scheme for the liberation of Prince Edward; and though no achievement could at the moment wear a more unpromising aspect, the two friends resolved to accomplish their design or perish in the attempt.

Leicester, fully estimating the value of the prize which he possessed in Edward, kept him guarded with the utmost vigilance, and never permitted him to stir abroad, unless surrounded by a retinue of

barons, and attendants, who were bound by the forfeiture of their own lives to retain him in safe keeping.

The indignant prince could, therefore, never move without finding himself encompassed by treacherous spies, in the disguise of anxious friends and obsequious attendants.

Whilst De Montford was still carrying on his negotiations with the Earl of Gloucester, Robert contrived to be the bearer of all messages passing between the parties; and feigning himself to be a neutral agent in the transaction, found means frequently of mingling with the nobles by whom Prince Edward was surrounded. Joining them one day when all were on horseback, he found an opportunity of accosting the prince. Dismounting at his side, on pretence of arranging his saddle-girths, he attracted Edward's attention to his steed, of which he had before openly spoken in disparaging terms; but now, in an under voice, informed him that it was a courser of extraordinary speed, which had never yet been beaten, and that, if he could find a pretext for getting on its back, it would instantly bear him beyond the reach of his enemies, into a wood in front, where his friend Roger Mortimer was stationed with troops, waiting to receive him.

Edward's eye sparkled with joy and revived hope, as he turned it in gratitude on his friend; but he had no time at this moment to express either thank-

fulness or pleasure, for the emissaries of Leicester speedily closed around them; and an officious groom hastened forward to assist young Gloucester in remounting.

The prince, finding himself so closely watched, and dreading to lose the present unlooked for opportunity of escape, separated from his friend, and for a short time held no further conversation with him, lest it might excite suspicion; but he was not long in devising a plan by which to avail himself of his cousin's offer. Assuming more than usual cheerfulness, he proposed to his companions that they should, for their amusement, try the speed and mettle of their horses, by racing on the turf; and as each of the party felt secure of his own courser, and knew that the prince was badly mounted, no objection was made to the proposal.

Edward's steed was, indeed, of little value; but he urged it so long to the race, that all the chargers in the field were at length completely blown, excepting that of Robert of Gloucester, which for his own purposes he had restrained, pretending that it could not keep pace with its competitors.

Feigning himself now weary of the amusement, Edward dismounted; and his companions were glad to follow his example, and allow their horses time to breathe. Robert took care to alight close by his friend, so that the prince might, on the first favourable moment, vault into his saddle.

"Allow me to try the mettle of your restive steed? my young cousin of Gloucester," said Edward, vaulting on the horse's back, and as the words were uttered, he darted from amidst the group; and before they had recovered from their astonishment, was at a considerable distance from the party.

Looking back at his foiled and dismayed companions, he observed them hastily endeavour to remount, and urge their panting steeds after him; but satisfied that all their efforts would prove vain, he joyfully waved his hat in the air, and shouting a triumphant adieu, exclaimed, that those who could might follow him.

Whilst Edward's attendants in consternation continued the pursuit, Robert found means to retire from amongst them; and long before the affrighted party had returned, or found courage to announce to Leicester their misfortune, the youth was lodged along with Edward, safe under the protection of their mutual friend, the gallant and overjoyed Mortimer.

The happiness of the trio, at the success of their scheme, may be better imagined than expressed; but that of Prince Edward knew no bounds, when on joining the Earl of Gloucester, he found that the whole nation shared in his exultation, and that numbers crowded around him congratulating not only him but themselves on his escape. With the aid of his three tried friends, and various other adherents,

he was soon enabled to collect an army which he trusted would quickly reduce De Montford to submission, emancipate the kingdom, and restore the country to peace. His efforts, however, to accomplish this purpose, will be detailed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

A PROSPEROUS TERMINATION.

"There is not now a rebel's sword unsheathed,
But peace puts forth her olive everywhere."

THE Earl of Leicester now found himself encompassed by innumerable dangers. He was in a remote, and to him unknown part of the kingdom, surrounded by friends and vassals of the prince, and at too great a distance from his own party to hope for any immediate reinforcement of troops. On endeavouring to accomplish a retreat, and to send his adherents notice of his distress, he found that Edward had already broken down the bridges over the Severn, so that it was impossible for his army to cross the river. In this dilemma he dispatched a messenger to his youngest son, ordering him at every risk to hasten from London with troops to his relief.

Young Simon de Montford, in obedience to his father's command, marched directly with all the troops he could collect, and proceeded as far as Kenilworth, where he halted and remained for some days, careless as to the result, and totally off his guard, under the impression that Edward's attention would be directed

entirely against his father. But the prince, whose scouts were abroad in every direction, heard of his approach, and making a sudden and forced march, surprised him in his camp, where by an immediate and determined onset, he took young Simon, the Earl of Oxford, and all the great leaders of the faction prisoners, seized the banners, and dispersed the entire army, obliging the fugitives to make their escape by the way they had come, and take refuge in London. Edward now adopted a ruse commonly practised in war, he hoisted the rebel colours and marched instantly back towards the quarters of Leicester.

Meantime the earl congratulated himself on having been allowed to remain so long unmolested. Being quite ignorant of his son's fate, he procured boats, and crossing the Severn marched towards London, hoping every hour to be joined by the expected reinforcements. At length, having reached the neighbourhood of Evesham, he descried the colours of his party advancing. Already he began to recover his courage, and to feel those ambitious hopes revive, which from the moment of Edward's escape had been rapidly declining.

The prince, placing one portion of his army under the command of Roger Mortimer, directed him to keep the rebel colours flying in sight of the enemy, until he, with the main body of his troops, should get behind Leicester, so as to commence their attack at the same moment in front and rear.

The stratagem was so successful that De Montford never suspected his danger until the troops of Mortimer, at the appointed moment, suddenly hoisting the royal standard, made the hills resound with the trumpet call for battle.

Scarcely could Leicester credit the sounds he heard; but in a few minutes he was made fully aware of his perilous situation by finding himself opposed by his avowed enemy. "This is Prince Edward's doing," said he, "the young dog has learned from me to practise the wiles and stratagems of war."

To retreat appeared his only chance for safety; but on turning for that purpose, he perceived himself encircled by the royal troops; and once more losing the courage which he had formerly possessed, he exclaimed with pusillanimous terror, "The Lord have mercy on our souls! for I see our bodies are the prince's."

It is melancholy to think that even when impressed with this strong apprehension of instant destruction and whilst a violent death was staring him in the face, still his conduct betrayed that the devices of his heart were evil continually. Even at that moment the barbarity of his nature prompted him to place the aged and imbecile king in front of the rebel army, hoping that the old man might either stay the career of his son, or else be slain in the battle; which latter event had indeed nearly taken place.

The royalists, not expecting to meet their sovereign

in the field, did not recognise him in his armour; and shortly after the onset, he was surrounded and attacked by the troops of Roger Mortimer. Quite unable to defend himself, he would have been instantly put to death, had he not, on receiving a slight wound from one of the soldiers, directly called for quarter, crying out in terror, "Spare me! soldiers! oh, spare me, my subjects! I am Henry of Winchester, your King."

His timid appeal would most likely have been unheeded, for he was despised and disliked even by his own adherents; but Edward at some distance recognised the voice of his father, and spurring his horse to its utmost speed, he called on Mortimer's troops to desist, and happily succeeded in rescuing his parent. We can easily imagine the joy of both father and son on the occasion; but there was no time at that moment for its indulgence. The prince only waited to order guards for the safety of the king's person, and care for his wounds, until he again plunged into the fight; and after a successful conflict, had the satisfaction of seeing his enemies fly in every direction.

De Montford himself was slain calling out for quarter, which he supplicated with terror, equal to that which had been displayed by his pusillanimous sovereign. His eldest son with one hundred and sixty knights fell on the field of battle, leaving the rebellious faction without a leader, and devoid of

means to excite further commotion in the kingdom.

King Henry recovered entirely from his wound; his brother the King of the Romans, and several other near relatives, with many of his friends who had been held in captivity by Leicester, had their prison doors opened, and immediately flocked round his person to cheer and support the remainder of his days; but the greatest consolation he experienced arose from the valiant and dutiful conduct of his son Edward, who never ceased his efforts until the entire kingdom was restored to peace, and brought perfectly under the dominion of his father.

A short time after the battle of Evesham, a small remnant of the rebel army formed of refugees from London and other different quarters, placed themselves under the command of a bold, and renowned Baron, called Adam de Gourdon, and maintained themselves for some time within the limits of one of the forests in Hampshire, from whence these lawless troops committed acts of depredation and barbarity on the inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhood, and at last menaced the country with a renewal of the intestine war.

Prince Edward having returned from reducing the Castle of Dover and the Isles of Axholm and Ely, both of which had at first refused to own his authority, immediately turned his arms against De Gourdon. He advanced into the forest at the head of his troops,

and surrounded the intrenchments where the desperate band, trusting to the strength of their position, had hoped to resist all his attempts against them, but they speedily found that the ardour of their opponent was only excited by difficulty, and to their surprise and dismay, they soon beheld him in front of their camp. Whilst Edward halted to take a survey of the place, he happened to observe De Gourdon on horseback within his intrenchments preparing for defence. The prince instantly charged over the trench and attacked the Baron in single combat in the midst of the hostile troops.

Victory was long undecided between them, whilst both armies beheld in breathless suspense the dangerous conflict in which their respective commanders had engaged. At length our hero succeeded in wounding and unhorsing his antagonist. Standing over the fallen chief he raised his sword with an apparent intention of executing immediate vengeance on his vanquished foe; but the Baron asked no quarter and manifested no signs of fear.

The prince dropped his sword. "Rise, De Gourdon," said he, addressing the astonished rebel, "your life is safe, you are only my prisoner, you and I must henceforth learn to live as better friends together."

The contest being thus ended, Edward led his captive that same night to Guildford, where Henry for the present held his court. He presented De

Gourdon to his royal parents, and immediately procured his pardon, with the restoration of his honours and estates, from the king, who ever after found him a grateful and loyal subject.

Having restored his father to liberty, and the nation to peace, Edward, finding no further opportunities of singalizing himself in his native country, gave way to an increased desire for military fame, and set out to seek fresh laurels in the Holy Land.* Disapproving as we do of his design, we shall not follow this valiant prince in his future career of glory, but amongst the numerous heroes who adorn the annals of our English history, hope to select one of equal bravery, whose exploits may form the subject of another tale.

* In the Royal Armoury in the tower of London may be seen a curious coat of mail, which was worn by Prince Edward during his crusade. It is gilt throughout, and differs from all other suits in the collection, in having coverings of mail even for the feet, which was rendered necessary by the watchful exertions of the Saracens to discover some unprotected part of his body, on which their lances might take effect. The right arm wields a battle-axe, supposed to be the weapon used by this valiant prince in his dangerous encounters with these infidels.


HENRY V.; OR, THE BATTLE OF AGINCOURT.

CHAPTER I.

A DANGEROUS ADVENTURE.

"I know you all, and will a while uphold
The unbridled humour of your idleness;
Yet, herein, will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wondered at."

SHAKESPEARE.

"Harry the Fifth, too famous to live long!
His deeds exceed all praise;
He ne'er lift up his hand, but conquered."

SHAKESPEARE.

SO writes the poet. But in plain prose we must confess that this same person, commonly known by the name of "Mad-cap Harry," whose deeds are here said to exceed all praise, was, in his youth, so thoughtless and inconsiderate, that many people feared he would never grow a wise or valuable man. The writer, however, hopes to show, from some passages in his history, that God put better thoughts into his heart; that he grew ashamed of his misconduct, forsook his evil ways, and became, ere long, sensible that it was much more happy to lead a rational and reflecting life than to live in forgetfulness of religion and virtue.

I shall then begin my story by stating that Henry V., like most other children of the great, had from infancy been exposed to the danger of contracting thoughtless and selfish habits, from the unceasing care with which interested and flattering persons endeavoured to minister to his pleasure, by supplying him with a constant succession of fresh and fascinating amusements. His father, Henry IV., was an extremely wicked and ambitious king, who, from a mean feeling of jealousy towards any one who was to be his successor in the kingdom, took no pains to provide this his heir with occupations suited to his rank and station. Whilst all the other sons of the king were educated and employed, so as to make them become men of integrity and honour, Henry was left to roam about in idleness, and led to believe that he might live entirely for his own gratification. Imagining that he had nothing more to do than to eat, drink, and be merry to-day, he seldom thought of to-morrow.

As he approached manhood, the dissolute companions, with whom he spent his time, observing him at length grow tired of the senseless and disgraceful mode of life they had taught him to lead; and perceiving him often at a loss how to employ the hours which began to hang heavily on his hands, thought they had better try to procure him some new species of amusement, lest he should forsake their society altogether, and seek for other friends.

They, accordingly, one evening proposed to Henry, that they should all disguise themselves as robbers, and take their station, during the dusk, on some of the public roads near London, to plunder, or, at least, to frighten any travellers who might chance to come that way.

The youthful prince, forgetting that he was the son of a king, and destined himself to wear a crown, felt delighted at the prospect of such a novel adventure, and immediately consented to the wild scheme, joining with alacrity in the various arrangements of the plot.

Now, amongst the companions of the inconsiderate prince there was one named Falstaff, who was much more sinful than the rest. All were wicked; but he was the most sinful, since, from his advanced age, he might have been a useful adviser to the oldest amongst them. Though a knight of some distinction, he was a gross, bloated glutton; a huge mass of fat and flesh, with a stomach, grown so enormous from over-eating and drinking, that he could not, it is said, by any means contrive to get a sight of his own knees. He was, besides, a boasting, blustering, coward, who pretended that no person had so much courage or cleverness as himself. Having squandered his entire patrimony by riotous living, he had conceived the project of becoming in this night's frolic a robber in good earnest, and pocketing all the money he could plunder for himself. But dishonour-

able persons are generally suspected; and Henry, guessing at his intention, resolved to watch him closely, and, in case he should see him guilty of such misconduct, to find some means of punishing him as he deserved.

He, therefore, secretly determined, that whilst the rest of the party were lying in ambush, he, accompanied by Poins, one of his companions, should steal away, and conceal themselves at a little distance, so that they might be able to observe how Falstaff was carrying on the attack. Should they then discover that he was securing the plunder, Henry's project was to put his assumed courage to the test, by rushing out on him as highwaymen, and seizing all the treasure of which he had possessed himself.

Plot and counterplot being duly arranged, the whole party sallied forth to a certain hill near London, where the prince and Poins contrived to put their concerted plan in execution. After waiting a long time, until it was quite dark, they at last heard the trampling of horses, and saw a party of quiet merchants, with servants carrying lanterns before them, walking with cautious steps down the hill, whilst their tired steeds paced slowly beside them.

At this moment, the prince and his accomplice found it difficult to restrain their laughter, whilst listening to the exhortations of Sir John, who, wishing to keep himself secure, called on them, and all others of the party, by turns, to stop the travellers;

ordering them to rush forward, sword in hand, to the attack like men; to let none pass, but push boldly at them all, as he intended to do when he had got his sword out of the scabbard.

The assault commenced; and the knight, supposing Poins and Henry engaged along with the rest, at length brandished his weapon, and resolved to be the most clamorous if not the most forward amongst those who commanded the cavalcade to stand.

As the English roads were in those days infested by gangs of barbarous robbers, these inoffensive people imagined they had no means of preserving their lives but by delivering up their treasure on the first demand, which they accordingly did, Sir John dexterously contriving to be the receiver. Having resigned all the money they possessed, the travellers were at length suffered to continue their route quietly towards London.

Scarcely had they retired, when Sir John, believing that he was addressing Prince Henry, began to boast of the havoc he had made, and the blows he had dealt around him; but hearing from his associates that Henry had disappeared just as the affray commenced, he got into a rage, and stigmatized the prince as a vile cowardly deserter, loading him with many other approbrious epithets of the same kind.

Just as he was gasconading in that manner, the Mad-cap, followed by Poins, rushed upon him from

their covert, calling to him and his companions in such well-feigned voices, and with such loud vociferation, to surrender, that, supposing themselves beset by numbers, the whole party took to flight, excepting the terrified knight, who remained trembling in the hands of his assailants, too faint-hearted to defend himself, and too unwieldy to run away.

We can imagine the knight bellowing for mercy, whilst the prince, scarcely able to suppress his laughter, emptied his pockets; and after inflicting a few sound blows, rolled him over in the mud, and left him to his fate. There he lay, groaning and blowing like a great porpoise, and calling to his companions for assistance, whilst Henry, longing to give way to his mirth, mounted his horse, which stood at a little distance, and, with Poins, galloped back to London, never stopping until they had reached Eastcheap, where all had previously agreed to spend a jovial night after the frolic of the evening was over.

CHAPTER II.

A SURPRISE.

"Could such inordinate and low desires,
Such barren pleasures, rude society,
As thou art matched withal, and grafted to,
Accompany the greatness of thy blood,
And hold their level with thy princely heart?"

SHAKESPEARE.

THE prince, after sending Poins to order a good supper, seated himself to wait for the re-assembling of his party, hoping that the knight's cries had been long since heard by some passer-by, who would, doubtless, pick him out of the mud, and enable him to rejoin his companions. This was indeed the case. All reached the tavern in safety, and Sir John, on entering the prince's apartment, immediately began to revile him as a beardless coward, who had basely stolen away, and *left* him to bear the greater part of the fight by himself. He then told a fearful tale—of how he had been beset by an *immense* band of robbers, who, after forcing his companions to fly, had stript him of his own money, and would also have deprived him of his life, but that he fought with them, hand to hand, one after the other; slew many of them on the spot, and compelled the rest to run away.

The prince could no longer tolerate this boasting. Bursting into a fit of laughter, he announced that Poins and he had been the only antagonists of the party; that it was they alone who had robbed the knight of his ill-gotten treasure, and left him wallowing in the mud. This information drew forth peals of merriment; and under his disgrace and the continued ridicule of his companions, the knight had little to comfort him, except the good supper which the prince had provided—the thing, of all others, which he liked best. So down he sat to enjoy it with his usual appetite.

All were carousing, and making merry at Sir John's expense; he endeavouring not to mind their sarcasms, whilst he enjoyed their good cheer. But in the midst of their mirth, a loud knocking was heard at the door, followed by clamorous demands from some officers of justice for admittance. The knight, dropping his knife and fork, turned pale with apprehension, but immediately recovered from his panic, supposing that he could not be liable to punishment when the son of his king was a partner in his offence. His terror, however, returned, when a sheriff, surrounded by a band of soldiers, opened the door, and stood before them, saying he had been sent in the king's name to seize the whole party for a robbery which had been committed a few hours before on the public highway.

The travellers, it appeared, when recovered from

the alarm, had crept behind the hedges, and afterwards followed Sir John and his companions, unobserved, until they saw them enter the tavern. Then stationing themselves round the door, one of them was despatched to the nearest magistrate, who, when informed of the particulars, instantly procured military assistance, and, coming himself to the tavern, boldly entered the apartment, where the thoughtless prince and his companions were enjoying themselves without a suspicion of danger. The sheriff immediately accused them of the robbery, and, in the king's name, made prisoners of the entire party.

Our poor Mad-cap at this moment felt, no doubt, the full weight of the disgrace in which he had involved himself. He, the heir apparent of the crown, to be brought into the court of justice, charged with highway robbery! To be led forth, too, by a band of soldiers like a common criminal. There was, however, no alternative; submit he must, and submit he did, expecting, perhaps, that when the judge before whom he was to appear, should discover who it was that stood at the bar, he would instantly dismiss the entire party.

The judge, into whose presence he found himself ushered, was called Gascoigne, and was known to him, by character, as a man of strict truth and probity; one who was no less feared by the wicked than respected by the good. As there had been

many robberies lately committed in the vicinity of London, this excellent person rejoiced to hear that a whole band of the plunderers had been seized. He, therefore, ordered the prisoners to be instantly brought before him; but when he saw the son of his monarch, the successor to the crown, led in foremost of the group, he hung his aged head, we are told, in silent grief, and for a long time remained unable to speak.

At length, after an exclamation of sorrow, he ordered those wicked companions, who had led his prince into such disgraceful conduct, to be instantly taken to jail. Then, turning to Henry, he said, that from respect to his royal parent he would not that night lodge him in a common prison, but that he would keep him in safe custody in his own house, until he could in the morning acquaint the king with the affair.

At this decision, Mad-cap Harry felt equal astonishment and displeasure. The thing of all others which he most dreaded was, that his father should become acquainted with his misconduct; and he had persuaded himself that no person dared to give him this information. He was, besides, grieved to see his accomplices sent off to prison, for he had hoped that, on his account, all would have been dismissed with merely a reprimand.

Finding himself mistaken in his expectations, he became enraged, and so far forgot every feeling of

propriety as to strike the good old judge a blow in the face.

This venerable person bore the blow with perfect calmness. After a long pause, however, reflecting that he would injure the cause of morality, and destroy the efficacy of those laws which he was bound to uphold, were he to allow such misconduct to pass unpunished, he mildly, but firmly, told the prince that since he persisted in transgressing the laws of his country, by insulting one whom his royal father had entrusted with their administration, he must, in conformity with his duty, commit him to prison like any common offender. Then, turning to the officers, he peremptorily ordered them to do their duty; and the prince was immediately conducted from his presence, and lodged in the king's bench prison for the remainder of the night.

This was, indeed, a shoking disgrace: but it was, perhaps, the best and happiest event that ever befell our thoughtless prince; for there, in the loneliness of his prison chamber, he had leisure to reflect on the wickedness of his past life, as well as on the vices of those persons who had long encouraged him in crime. He was, no doubt, struck by the strong contrast bebetween the baseness of their characters and the uprightness of the judge, who had risked his fortunes by fearlessly punishing one who would, he knew, ere long, have power to deprive him of his office.

Before the morning came, Henry had made so

many wise and virtuous reflections, that we think he was no longer entitled to the appellation of *mad-cap*. He now felt truly sorry for his faults, and only longed for an opportunity of acknowledging them. Meantime, Gascoigne, expecting to be immediately dismissed for having so strictly performed his duty, had gone to the king, and, in great distress, recounted to him the whole transaction, entreating to know what further steps he should take in the business.

Henry IV., though only in his forty-fifth year, was now fast approaching the end of his life. He had, both in youth and age, committed so many deadly crimes (as you may read in the history of his reign), that he had long felt the judgments of his offended God falling heavily upon him. He had been allowed but little rest from his enemies during the whole course of his usurped reign, and had felt no respite whatever from the bitter upbraidings of his own conscience, which perpetually told him that his bad health, and all his other misfortunes, but more especially the conduct of his son Henry, were punishments inflicted on him through the wrath of an offended God. When, therefore, Gascoigne informed him of this new offence of his son, the king bore it with unwonted patience, manifesting as much pleasure at the upright conduct of the judge, as grief and horror at the impropriety of his child.

At a loss what to do, he sent for the prince, and, as a first step, commanded him to make an apology

to Gascoigne, not without apprehension that Henry would refuse to obey.

But the night's imprisonment had, as already stated, brought the delinquent to a better frame of mind than he had before possessed. His conscience told him how wrong his conduct had hitherto been in setting so bad an example to his father's subjects, and to the world at large; and to the amazement of all present, he at once candidly confessed his guilt to his father, and with a frank and manly air, stepped forward and begged forgiveness of the judge. The old man, it is said, shed tears of joy, as he kissed the proffered hand of the offender, and poured a blessing on his royal head.

The king was for some time struck dumb by astonishment and satisfaction. At length, deeply affected by this sincere proof of amendment, and feeling quite reconciled to the penitent, he joined in the judge's blessing, and exclaimed "that he was a more happy king than he deserved to be, in having a judge so faithful in the discharge of his duty, and a son so ready to acknowledge his faults." *

When due reparation had been made to all parties, the affair was hushed up, and seemed to be happily at an end; but those who once lose the good opinion of the world, will find it most difficult to regain. The friends of Prince Henry, for example, could not persuade themselves that he was so con-

* See Hume's History.

trite for his faults as he appeared. Even his father had doubts of his sincerity, and dreaded that he might again return to his evil course of life; and his dissolute companions were convinced that when he should once be seated on the throne, he would resume his former vicious habits, and become more wild and thoughtless than ever. They, therefore, longed to see him monarch of the kingdom, believing that he would, when that was the case, place the greater part of his power in their hands.

CHAPTER III.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

"You did commit me:
For which I do commit into your hand
The unstained sword that you have used to bear;
With this remembrance, that you use the same
With the like bold, just, and impartial spirit
As you have done 'gainst me."

SHAKESPEARE.

NOT long after the transaction related in the last chapter, Henry IV. died; and all those who crowded to the coronation of the new king expected that one of his first acts would be to dismiss the judge who had dared to commit him to prison. His former companions flocked to see him crowned; and as Gascoigne approached the throne, they observed with delight that Henry cast on him a look of coldness and displeasure.

The judge himself was not slow to perceive the expression in the countenance of his sovereign, and felt confident that he should now be dismissed. He did not, however, regret the part he had acted; no, not even when he saw the king look on him with a stern aspect, and heard him ask "how he could dare to come into the presence of a mon-

arch whom he once had the hardihood to punish with imprisonment?"

Gascoigne answered firmly, but respectfully, "that he had only dared to do what he considered his duty, and that no king ought to feel displeasure towards a servant who faithfully endeavoured to discharge the trust reposed in him!" The old man was then retiring, and Sir John Falstaff and his companions stepped boldly forward to offer their congratulations, when Henry threw aside his assumed anger, and extending his hand to the judge, exclaimed, "Gascoigne, you are a brave and good man, as well as a just and upright judge! As you had courage and honesty to enforce the laws against one whom you so soon expected to see upon the throne, I feel well assured that you will continue to enforce them for the safety and protection of my people. Instead, therefore, of retiring from the bench, as your enemies no doubt expect, you shall rise to the still higher situation of Lord Chief Justice of England, to which office your own merits have called you."

It would be difficult to describe the pleasure experienced by most persons present at this proof of magnanimity in the young king. The venerable judge cared little for his own aggrandisement, for his race was nearly run, and his heart had never been set on the good things of this world; but knowing the stimulus which is given to virtue by

the example of a just and upright monarch, and aware of the incalculable benefit which such example produces in society, he again wept from joy at seeing his country under the rule of a monarch who evinced, by his present conduct, that he was determined to use his royal authority in the suppression of vice and encouragement of virtue.

Every tongue was now loud in praise of the reformed mad-cap, and all, except Sir John Falstaff and his associates, augured from such fair beginning a wise and happy reign. This was the more hoped for, as it was soon known that Henry had privately sent advice to his former companions, entreating them to amend their lives, but forbidding them ever to appear at his court or in his presence again.

But faults generally bring on their own punishment. It is the natural and appointed consequence of long-contracted habits, that they are not, even under sincere feelings of contrition, easily forsaken; nor do we ever see the penitent enabled to conquer them without extreme difficulty and lengthened perseverance. Let the reader, then, in time take care to contract only those habits which he shall never be called on to forsake.

In the following chapter we shall find a proof of this truth, evinced by the difficulties in which Henry V. once more found himself involved through the natural and long-indulged rashness of his character.

CHAPTER IV.

A RASH ACT.

"Tell you the Dauphin I am coming on,
To venge me as I may, and to put forth
My rightful hand in a well-hallowed cause."
SHAKESPEARE.

IT should be known to the reader that, from the days of Edward III. up to the times of which we are now writing, a large proportion of the French territory belonged to England, whose monarchs during that period were even supposed to have a lawful claim to the entire kingdom.

France was in a miserable state of anarchy, occasioned by the insanity of Charles VI., the reigning king, and by the consequent struggle for power which took place between the queen and the dauphin, her eldest son, whose name also was Charles. Each of these persons, and many others besides, contended for the right of supremacy in the government; and nothing was heard of throughout the land but battles and bloodshed, treachery and murder. The nearest relations engaged in deadly feud against each other, all struggling for that crown which had already crushed the miserable head by which it was worn.

The queen consort, who was a woman of depraved character, had even attempted to take away the life of her son—then only fifteen years of age—in hopes of retaining that power which few were willing to concede to her. Our English king, from pity for the young French prince, was at first strongly disposed to enter into terms of friendship with him; but he was prevented by the horror he felt on hearing that he had stood quietly present to see the Duke of Burgundy, his own near relative, but one of his most powerful opponents, treacherously murdered. So great was the general feeling of abhorrence against the dauphin for this alleged crime, that he was obliged to conceal himself in the mountains of Dauphiny from the vengeance of his exasperated countrymen, leaving his unprincipled mother, the new Duke of Burgundy, and various other parties, to contend with each other for mastery in the kingdom. Henry, therefore, perceived that he might easily step in, and, like the dog in the fable, carry away the prize from them all.

It was, indeed, his fixed belief that Providence, for its own wise purposes, and perhaps to punish the crimes and put an end to the disturbances of the French nation, was guiding him to the conquest of that country. "Do you not see," said he to those who would have opposed his wishes to invade it,—"do you not see that God is leading me by the hand to take possession of a throne to which I have a

just claim? The kingdom is in the utmost confusion; no one thinks of resisting me. Can I have a stronger proof that the Great Being who disposes of empires designs to put the crown on my head?"

Henry was at this time greatly beloved by his subjects. He had proved himself really anxious to repair his errors—had performed various noble acts towards those who had been oppressed in the last reign—had showed the most generous confidence in others who were adverse to his succession—and besides all this, he daily evinced a greater respect for religion and virtue, endeavouring to encourage both by every means within his power. Therefore, his people forgetting, through regard for his present character, the faults of his former life, felt inclined to listen with favour to any plan which he might suggest; and, after due consideration, his favourite project of invading France was agreed to by all parties.

Recruits quickly flocked to his standard, and crossing the channel with thirty thousand men, he entered the mouth of the Seine, a river of Normandy, which carried him close to the town of Harfleur. Here he disembarked his troops, and commenced a siege before the French had any suspicion of his approach.

Having discovered that the fortifications were in bad repair, and few soldiers in the garrison, he felt secure of taking the place; and believing that it

could not possibly hold out long against his gallant army, he rashly ordered his fleet to set sail directly on its return for England.

The inhabitants, at first thrown into despair, began to recover in some measure from their panic as they observed the ships quit their harbour. They now considered that, if they could only procure provisions for their garrison, and contrive to keep the besiegers out of the town until troops arrived, they might have the English king and his whole army completely in their power. Their great difficulty was how, where, or to whom they could send for assistance, since the heads of the government and all the nobles of France were so busy fighting their own quarrels that they seemed unable to cast a thought on the public safety.

Messengers were at length found, who, at the risk of their lives, stole past the English lines and made their way to the nearest place of strength, demanding instant succour. After some deliberation, the Duke of Orleans, cousin to the insane king, hoping by such exertion to obtain the entire management of the kingdom, proposed to lead an army to the relief of the besieged town.

CHAPTER V.

A SIEGE.

"As I am a soldier,
If I begin the battery once again,
I will not quit this half-achieved Harfleur
Till in her ashes she lie buried."

SHAKESPEARE.

HENRY, sensible when too late of the difficulty in which he had involved himself by sending away his fleet, and now aware of the danger to which he had exposed his army, perceived that their only chance of safety lay in their being able to establish themselves within the walls of Harfleur. He accordingly pressed the siege with all the skill and gallantry of which he was so abundantly master, but still the town held out.

The governor, hoping each hour to see troops arrive to his succour, procured a cessation of hostilities by nightly promising to deliver up the town on the following morning; but finding himself disappointed, he daily broke the engagement.

At length the Duke of Orleans set out to relieve the place with an immense army, declaring, as he approached, that he would crush all Henry's hopes and pretensions at one blow, and trample the paltry band of invaders under his feet.

Arrived within view of Harfleur, he looked around for the camp of the English king, which was, however, nowhere to be seen. "The cowards have already fled!" was his immediate exclamation; but on approaching closer to the place, he heard with dismay that our young monarch had, not many hours before, stormed the town and forced it to surrender; and that he was at that moment safely lodged within its walls, where for the present he defied all the duke's efforts to assail him.

Henry, however, enjoyed very little satisfaction from its acquisition. He daily saw more and more clearly how imprudent he had been in sending away the fleet, with which he might have commanded provisions from England, and protected the conquered town. Instead of this, he had now no means of obtaining supplies for his garrison. His soldiers, too, unused to the diet of that country, and tempted by the delicious fruits with which it abounded, were seized with dysentery, and carried off in such numbers, that in a short time only ten thousand men remained of his brave army.

What was to be done? Unless some bold measnre were adopted, all must perish by famine, or fall by the sword of their enemies. Our hero, therefore, seeing no alternative, at once resolved to use the only means he had left for averting the impending destruction. This was, to repair the walls of the city, leave within them a small number of troops

for the protection of the sick and dying, and then march directly with the remainder to Calais, a town possessed by the English, whence he could cross to Dover, and bring back a commanding force to their relief.

But how should he escape from Harfleur?—how march such a length of way, along public roads and past many strongly garrisoned towns, without being pursued by the Duke of Orleans and his numerous army?

"Never venture, never won," thought Henry; but then he probably recollected that he was on all occasions too prone to venture, and that it was from want of proper precaution he had drawn his faithful followers into their present dilemma. It was, however, evident there was no other means of escape; and the same Being who had, as he believed, led him into the country, would yet, he had the temerity to hope, extricate him from his difficulty.

His soldiers, confiding in the wisdom of his determinations, cheerfully acceded to his commands, and prepared, some to protect their disabled companions, whilst the remainder should follow him on the route to Calais.

On the 18th of October 1415, they commenced their retreat from Harfleur, whence Henry contrived to pass out unobserved by the enemy, and for several days and nights proceeded on his march without molestation.

During that time the king lived in every respect like the meanest of his soldiers, supporting their courage by a cheerful, friendly, and familiar conversation, and inspiring them by his own manner to hope for a prosperous termination of their retreat.

As he passed along the country, he deported himself with such courtesy towards the inhabitants, from whom he was obliged to ask provisions, and paid for all he procured with such punctuality, that supplies were frequently brought to him in defiance of strict orders which the people had received to withhold them.

The retreat was continued during an entire week, with unwearied fortitude and perseverance, but with great fatigue and danger. At length they arrived within one day's easy march of Calais, and began to consider their difficulties at an end, when, on the evening of the 24th of October, as Henry ascended an eminence near the village of Agincourt, being, as was usual, a little in advance of his troops, he suddenly perceived the whole of the French army drawn up in battle array before him.

He instantly made a signal to his men to halt, hoping they had not been perceived; and accompanied by a few attendants and a faithful Welsh squire called David Gam, he turned aside to a small rising ground whence he could survey the enemy's force. This he found to be tremendous, and their position so well chosen, that it would be impossible

for him either to advance or retreat, unless by fighting his way.

To fight, therefore, he was determined; and while Gam went to make a closer inspection of the French camp, Henry returned to his troops with a cheerful aspect, announcing to them that at the dawn of morning they should have an opportunity of attacking their adversaries, and that, with the blessing of Heaven, they would put them all to flight.

Seeing Gam return, after a little time, with rather an anxious expression of countenance, Henry exclaimed, his own courage rising with the increase of danger, "We shall beat them all, David!—ay, I tell you, we should beat them all were their numbers doubled! But they are not so numerous as they appear. How many, think you, they would reckon?"

David, who had carefully examined the army, without being able either to calculate its numbers or to discover any weak point where it might be attacked, shrugged his shoulders and replied, "There are plenty to fight, my liege, plenty to be killed, and plenty to run away."

A nobleman, standing by, expressed a wish that all the brave men who were at that moment unemployed in England could be with them in the morning.

"Not so," cried Henry; "I do not wish for one man more than we have. If defeated, we are too

many; but if it please the Almighty to give us the victory, as I firmly believe he will, then the smaller our numbers the greater our glory."

It was this firm confidence and courageous bearing in their leader which, under divine guidance, kept up the spirit of his troops, for, in truth, they had little else to cheer them. The evening was dark, lowering, and rainy, which the more timid regarded as a bad omen. But Henry, under cover of the twilight, and attended by David Gam, two other brave Welsh squires, and a few chosen men, set out to reconnoitre the surrounding country, and to make preparations for the coming battle.

Having examined the rising ground before mentioned, he found that one part of it, facing the enemy's camp, was encompassed on all sides by trees and thick brushwood, having in the centre an open space sufficiently large to contain his little army. This he immediately fixed on as his position; and so soon as the moon began to give him sufficient light, he cautiously and silently removed his whole force within the enclosure.

He then planted thickly in the ground, in front of his position, a number of sharp-pointed iron spikes, to impede the advance of the enemy's cavalry. Having accomplished this object, he lighted fires within, posted guards, and then saw his men lie down to rest, promising to keep guard for them himself. Many of them, however, spent the night in

supplications to their God, under the impression that it would most probably be the last of their existence. Nor were the thoughtless left without consideration of that awful moment. Before the morning dawned, Henry called them all to prayer, as the best preparation for battle, joining cordially himself in the duty. That being concluded, he disposed his small force in such a manner amongst the trees, as to make it appear much greater than it really was, and in this position courageously determined to await an onset from the enemy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BATTLE.

"Give me my cuirass—so: my baldric; now
My sword—I had forgot the helm; where is it?
That's well! No,
It was not this I meant, but that which bears
A diadem around it."
"Sire, I deemed
That too conspicuous, from the precious stones,
To risk your sacred brow beneath. The meanest
Soldier goes not forth thus exposed to battle.
All men will recognise you."
"Your part is to obey; . . . .
I go forth to be recognised, and thus
Shall be so sooner."

BYRON.

OUR hero, aware that the wisest plan which his adversaries could pursue would be to destroy his troops by famine, dreaded that they might determine not to attack him. He, therefore, to excite them to immediate battle, as well as to encourage his own people, mounted his war-horse, and rode along his lines, dressed in shining armour, and wearing on his head a crown sparkling with gold and precious stones. His figure, though slender, was tall and commanding; his features bright with spirit and intelligence; and his soldiers, as he addressed some animating speech to each corps, felt that they would cheerfully shed the last drop of their blood in his defence.

The French, believing victory secure on their side, had passed the night in feasting and riot; and, in their confidence, it was agreed among them that as they did not choose to be encumbered with prisoners, they would put every Englishman to death with the exception of the king, or such of his nobles as were likely to bring a large ransom.

The Duke of Orleans, thoroughly despising the English array, drew up his troops directly in its front, desirous only that they should advance in such a compact body as might at once overwhelm their opponents.

The English stood prepared for the shock; every man in his place, with his bow ready strung, waiting steadily for the first blast of the French trumpet, which was to announce the onset. No sooner was that heard than Henry's bowmen sent off a flight of arrows, every one of which penetrating through the dense mass of the approaching foe, took such effect that the foremost of their lines were at once thrown into confusion, but the cavalry followed up the charge and galloped forward, even over the bodies of their companions, until unexpectedly coming on the iron spikes, they too were thrown into complete disorder.

Meanwhile the English archers poured in shower after shower of arrows on their discomfited foes. The king waited only to see the last shaft in his possession discharged, when, ordering his men to follow, he rushed from the enclosure, and by the

The French, believing victory secure on their [illegible] [illegible] the night in feasting and riot; and [illegible] [illegible], it was agreed among them that [illegible] to be encumbered with prisoners [illegible] put every Englishman to death with[illegible] [illegible] of the king, or [illegible] of his nobles as w[illegible] [illegible] to bring a large ransom.

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BATTLE OF AGINCOURT.

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unexpected violence of his assault, put the entire of the first division to flight. A second, however, and a third, still more numerous, advanced. The conflict became awful. Victory appeared turning, now on this side, now on the other. At length the hardy English band were surrounded, but instantly their valiant leader was seen opening them a passage from the midst of their foes. Conspicuous from his glittering attire, and still more so from his activity and valour, Henry appeared in every quarter of the field as yet uninjured, here directing his troops, there pursuing his enemies or protecting his fallen friends.

The Duke of Gloucester, his youngest brother, having been wounded and thrown from his horse, the king galloped to his assistance, and fought standing over him until the youth was carried from the ground.

The French, encumbered by their multitudes, and destroying friends rather than enemies, now became sensible that they had little chance of success so long as the voice, arm, and example of the English king impelled the fight. Their confidence of victory was therefore changed into doubts as to the issue of the conflict; and nineteen of their bravest officers, headed by the Duke of Alençon, entered into a solemn engagement that not one of them should quit the ground until they saw their royal adversary either slain or taken prisoner.

With one accord they dispersed themselves through-

out the field, each eager to be the first in descrying the object of their vengeance. But though easily discovered, they found it a more difficult business to approach the hero. At length the Duke of Alençon, after various fruitless attempts, espied an opening in the ranks through which he might rush upon him unawares. Springing forward, he reached just near enough to cleave the helmet of the king through. The stroke, however, fell short of its deadly aim, and before the Duke had raised his arm for another, David Gam, who was ever close at his master's side, turned fiercely round, and slew the warrior on the spot.

Strange to say, the entire band of knights shared in succession a similar fate from the hands of Henry's three Welsh squires and others equally faithful.

The French, finding so many of their boldest leaders fallen, no longer thought of offering resistance. The rear division fled without striking a blow, leaving the king of England, with a comparatively small loss, master of the field, on which ten thousand Frenchmen were left dead or wounded, along with a greater number of prisoners than the victors could easily secure. Amongst the captives were the Duke of Orleans and several other noblemen of nearly equal rank, the possession of whose persons greatly increased the power of our hero over the French nation.

After this victory the British king marched the

remainder of the way to Calais in triumph, secure from further molestation, and followed by the acclamations of the thoughtless populace. The news of his success flew before him, and he was received by the garrison with shouts of ecstasy. After a short delay to refresh his troops, he set out for England, followed by two squadrons of transports; the first bearing his victorious troops, and the second his numerous prisoners.

At Dover the cliffs were covered with thousands of his people, who crowded to congratulate their gallant monarch on his victory; numbers of them plunging into the sea and swimming to his vessel's side in their eagerness to hail his glorious return to his native shore.

CHAPTER VII.

INSTABILITY OF HUMAN GREATNESS.

"This world is all a fleeting show,
For man's probation given.
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,
Uncertain shine, uncertain flow;
There's nothing sure but heaven.

And false the light on glory's plume
As fading hues of even;
And hope, and joy, and youthful bloom
Are blossoms opening for the tomb;
There's nothing true but heaven."

WE need scarcely state that Henry after some time returned to complete his conquests in France, where the people had arrived at such a height of factious wickedness that God most probably thought fit to make him an instrument to punish their crimes.

In as short a time as the affairs of his kingdom would permit, he prepared a powerful army, and whilst the French nobles were engrossed by intestine dissensions, once more passed over to their country, subdued the entire of Normandy, marched straight against Paris, and at last terrified the contending parties so completely that the Queen and Duke of Burgundy thought it their safest plan to solicit his friendship and assistance against the other factions of the kingdom.

THE MARRIAGE OF KING HENRY V. AND PRINCESS CATHERINE.

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Henry consented to espouse their cause and protect the unhappy king on condition that they would appoint him Regent of France during the life of Charles, and also that the King and Queen would bestow on him in marriage the hand of their daughter, the beautiful Princess Catherine, with the reversion of the kingdom to their first-born son. The proposal was agreed to; the Princess and Henry, according to national custom, were publicly affianced, and the union of the two crowns announced by the Parliament, and received by the nation with every outward demonstration of joy.

The marriage was celebrated within a short space of time, and two days after it took place King Henry, now Regent of France, and immediate heir to that kingdom, accompanied by his lovely bride, set out to take the command of the royal army.

Anxious to revisit his native country, he in the course of a few weeks left his brother, the Duke of Clarence, in command of his army during his absence, and brought the young queen to Dover, where his subjects, proud of their successful and beloved monarch, conducted the royal pair in triumph to London, in which city Catherine was crowned with a degree of splendour and magnificence hitherto unknown in England.

After the ceremony the royal pair made a progress through the kingdom to the great gratification of their subjects; but their joyful career was suddenly

brought to an end by the arrival of unexpected intelligence from France. An unfortunate engagement had taken place at the town of Beaujé, in Normandy, where the Duke of Clarence had been defeated and slain by the partizans of the Dauphin. Henry instantly set out for Calais, and landed with a powerful army, and after a short and welcome visit to his father-in-law at the Bois de Vincennes, attacked the French prince and his confederates at the town of Chartres, drove them thence from place to place until he forced them to take refuge in the strong city of Bourges. At the request of the Parisians he undertook to reduce the city of Meaux, where a commander called Vaurus, notorious for his activity and cruelty, had shut himself up, and long been an object of terror and detestation to the surrounding neighbourhood.

Bursting forth occasionally from his stronghold, this daring adventurer, with unexampled skill and rapidity, ravaged the entire country round, carrying his devastations more than once close to the gates of the metropolis, and bringing off a vast number of prisoners in the hope of amassing treasure by their ransom.

His custom was to hang on one particular tree every captive who could not, or would not, pay the sum he demanded. Henry attacked and carried the town by storm; but Vaurus, with a part of his garrison, conveyed provisions into an adjoining fortress, and bade defiance to his assailants. At length, however, they were compelled to surrender.

The governor was decapitated. His banner, surmounted by his head, was placed on the summit of his favourite tree; and his body, with those of three of his followers, who had merited the punishment by peculiar inhumanity, suspended from the branches, as a warning to all who should be inclined to attempt similar outrages.

By these brilliant successes and decisive measures the greater part of France became subservient to the crown; and to add to the happiness of our hero, his queen, while he was thus engaged, gave birth to a son, who, together with his name and native kingdom, might, it was hoped, inherit both his conquests and his bravery. No sooner was the reduction of Meaux completed, than Catherine, with her infant, was conducted by the Duke of Bedford to her parents, at their residence in the Bois de Vincennes, where Henry joyfully hastened to join her. As it was now the festival of Whitsuntide, the two courts repaired in one grand procession to the metropolis, for the recognition of the infant heir of France; and while the citizens gazed at the magnificence of the regent and his court, and compared the respect and deference paid to him with the comparative insignificance to which their own unhappy monarch was reduced, symptoms of discontent were visible, and expressions of regret heard, which might have warned Henry of the instability of all human grandeur.

But he was now to receive a still more striking

warning. He had, during the early period of his life, injured a naturally fine constitution by imprudent and irregular habits; and now, in the midst of his renown, at the height of all his glory, and at a period of life when every mental and physical power should have been in their fullest strength and vigour, he was seized with some internal malady, which he for a time endeavoured to despise; and in despite of his suffering set out, at the request of the Duke of Burgundy, to assist him in reducing one of the refractory districts. His strength failing on the way, he was obliged to resign his command to his brother, the Duke of Bedford, and allow himself to be conveyed back to the Bois de Vincennes, where the rapid progress of his disorder convinced him that he had not long to live. He received a confirmation of this opinion from his physicians with the firmness and composure which so strongly marked his character, and appeared to resign every worldly object of ambition without a sigh.

For the welfare of his country, however, and more especially that of his child, both now to be subjected to all the evils of a long, and, in all likelihood, disturbed minority, he evinced the deepest solicitude,—inculcating perpetually, throughout his illness, on his brothers, and those members of his council who were collected around him, the wisest and most politic measures, to prevent the evils which he apprehended.

He nominated each to their appropriate place in the national affairs; leaving the Earl of Warwick tutor to his son; the Duke of Gloucester guardian to the British kingdom; and his eldest brother, the Duke of Bedford, Regent of France, and chief protector both of his family and his dominions.

On the last day of August 1422, he called his beloved brother, the Duke of Bedford, to his bedside, and recommended his wife and child to his peculiar care. Having completed the settlement of all his worldly concerns with equal wisdom and composure, he now banished every earthly consideration from his mind, and fixing his thoughts entirely on that world to which he was departing, breathed his last, we are informed, in penitence and prayer. Nor was it, we may hope, to the mere forms and ceremonies of religion that he turned his thoughts. We have every reason to trust that he then truly mourned over all the follies of his youth,—his hours misspent,—his blessings misapplied. And how happy is it for us who remain to know, that if his penitence was indeed sincere, his mourning may have been turned into hope and gratitude by a recollection of those merciful promises which are addressed in Scripture to every truly repentant sinner.

How must he have been consoled by hearing that blessed declaration, "He that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out" (John vi. 37). "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no

more" (Jer. xxxi. 34). And again, "Though their sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. i. 18). "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions; and, as a cloud, thy sin" (Isa. xliv. 22). But most of all must he have rejoiced to know, "That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3); and "That being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. v. 9).

To how many contrite hearts have these words, through life, or at the hour of death, brought hope and consolation! Oh, may their divine influence be felt by all; and may we, who ought to perceive in the erring life and early death of mad-cap Harry a picture of our own sinful and unstable nature, learn in time to fix our minds on those mansions of bliss, where "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 10).


HENRY VI.; OR, THE MAID OF ORLEANS.

CHAPTER I.

A FUNERAL.

"We quit this world's fantastic joys;
Her honours are but empty toys;
Her bliss an empty shade;
Like meteors in the midnight sky,
That glitter for a while and die,
Her glories flash and fade."

MORE.

THE funeral* of our last hero is, you will perhaps say, a melancholy subject with which to begin a new tale; yet we must commence our next by relating, that the remains of Henry V., having lain in state for some days at the

* Henry V. was beloved by the lower classes of the people, both in France and England; and by the military he was adored. The officers of the army in France resolved to prove the sincerity of the attachment, which they professed for him while living, by the extraordinary pomp with which they paid the last duties to his remains.

On the funeral car, and under a rich canopy of silk, was placed a bed of crimson and gold, on which reposed the effigy of the king in his robes, with a crown of gold on his head, the sceptre in the right hand, and the globe and cross on the left. It was preceded and followed by five hundred knights and squires in black armour, with their spears reversed. Around the corpse walked three hundred torch bearers, intermixed with persons bearing achievements, banners, and pennons. The clergy of every district through which the procession passed were arranged in lines on each side; and behind rode the nobility, the princes of the blood, and the King of Scots as chief mourner. After these, at the distance of a league, followed Queen Catherine, with a numerous retinue. In this manner the body of the king was conveyed to Paris and Rouen, where it lay in state; and from Rouen by short journeys to Calais, where a fleet was in waiting to transport it to England. As the procession approached the metropolis it was met by the bishops, the mitred abbots, and the clergy; and the obsequies were performed in presence of the whole parliament, first in St. Paul's, and then in Westminster Abbey. The corpse was interred near the shrine of Edward the Confessor; and the tomb was long visited by the people with sentiments of veneration and regret.

Bois de Vincennes, where he had breathed his last, were carried with great pomp and magnificence to the town of Calais, on the way to England,—the solemn procession passing slowly and sadly along that very road over which he had, so short a time since, triumphantly marched, with every prospect of a long and happy reign before him.

"But man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay!" That march of triumph and rejoicing was quickly succeeded by the mourning procession which conducted his lifeless body to be laid in its native earth. And now, all that remains of the once jocund, and thoughtless, but brave and highly esteemed hero, is the ill-defined character given by his historian, and his tomb in Westminster Abbey;* where all who enter, be they wild and thoughtless, or penitent and reflecting, when beholding the monument, as they must, with feelings of respect and affection, should say to their own hearts, Have I,

* In surveying the monuments of our English kings in Westminster Abbey, the glorious name of Henry V. called forth various reflections in my mind. I know that sights of this nature are apt to raise dark and dismal thoughts in timorous minds and weak imaginatious; but for my own part, though I would wish to be always serious, I do not know what it is to be melancholy; I can, therefore, take a view of nature in her deep and solemn scenes with the same pleasure as in her most gay and attractive form; so that I can endeavour to improve myself with objects which others consider only with terror. When I look upon the tombs of the great, or read the epitaphs of youth and beauty, every worldly desire dies within me. When I discover on the tombstone strong testimonies of grief in the survivors, my heart melts with compassion, till I reflect that the mourner is now in the quiet grave with those

like him, forsaken my evil ways; and am I ready for such a sudden call?

After all the vain and splendid ceremonies of his burial were ended, a new, and perhaps equally mournful, procession remains to be described. The Earl of Warwick, to whom Henry had left the immediate charge of his son, under the superintendence of his brother, the Duke of Bedford, walked at the head of a long and solemn train into the House of Parliament, in London, bearing in one hand the will of the late king, and carrying on the other arm the infant heir to the crown, then just nine months old, who was thus publicly introduced to the nation as their sovereign.

The little king, after he had been presented to the members assembled in the house, was placed on his widowed mother's lap, until a speech, which is considered necessary on such occasions, was delivered before him; and it appeared to some a bad omen of the coming reign, that the baby continued to cry in the most piteous manner while the Lord Chancellor read aloud a statement of all that a good king was required to do for his subjects.

they deplored; and that it is worse than folly, or vanity, to grieve inordinately after friends whom we must so soon follow. When I see monarchs lying beside those who deposed them; conquerors beside those they conquered; wit placed side by side with folly, the learned, or contentious, beside the peaceful and ignorant, I reflect with astonishment on the petty competitions which occupy mankind. Again, when I read the various dates on all these tombs,—of some who died but yesterday, and others many hundred years before,—I cannot but look forward to that day when all shall stand as contemporaries, and on equal footing before Him who will only acknowledge the distinction between those who have loved and remembered, and those who have despised and forgotten his laws.

The child was, doubtless, alarmed by the number of strange faces which he saw around him; and it is more than probable that the queen mother was not well skilled in the gentle arts of soothing his infantine distress; such, at least, if we judge by her after conduct, may be our conjecture, for scarcely was her gallant husband cold in his grave when she deserted his infant and married a low born and ignorant Welsh gentleman, called Sir Owen Tudor, whose only recommendation to her favour, historians say, was *that he had a handsome face, and was an active dancer.*

The royal child had no reason, at any period, to lament the loss of such a parent; nor had he cause to regret that the world said he did not in any respect resemble her; he seemed, indeed, not to have inherited the slightest likeness to either of his parents; displaying no signs of the courage and capacity which were conspicuous in mad-cap Harry, and no trace of the beauty and vivacity for which Catherine was so highly extolled.

Though tractable and good-natured, his intellect was extremely dull; and it was soon observed that his attention was seldom caught by anything beyond the glittering baubles of his nursery; amongst which were seen the tinsel diadems of France and England, with which his thoughtless attendants frequently decorated his person, endeavouring, even at that early period of life, to excite in his mind a spirit of ambi-

tion by teaching him to consider himself the monarch of both kingdoms.

And such indeed he appeared likely to become. Not many weeks after the death of his father, his grandfather, Charles VI. of France, died also; leaving him, according to his mother's marriage settlements, heir to the French crown.

Charles, the dauphin, who ought to have ascended the throne, had, as we have learned in the last story, been banished from his native land in consequence of the crime imputed to him of having assisted at the murder of his relative, the Duke of Burgundy; and the remembrance of that cruel deed still cast a cloud over his character, which nothing seemed likely to remove. Yet as he, from childhood to maturity, appears to have possessed a kind and gentle nature, it is more than probable he was ignorant of the murderous intentions of his associates, and therefore innocent of any premeditated share in their guilt.

Though only nineteen years of age, he had in his banishment married a very beautiful young person, the Princess Mary of Anjou, with whom he was preparing to live in privacy and seclusion from the world, when the news reached him of his father's death, and with it came the unwelcome intelligence that the infant son of his sister Catherine had been proclaimed King of France.

Charles, knowing himself to be the rightful

sovereign, lost not a moment in assuming his proper title. The town of Rheims was the place in which it was customary for all the French monarchs to be crowned, because there existed an absurd belief, that in the cathedral of that city was preserved the cruise of holy oil, out of which Clovis, their first king, had been anointed, and which had, it was said, been brought down by a dove from heaven for that purpose.

Could the dauphin have been crowned in this place, and anointed with this holy oil, all objections to his ascending the throne would, probably, have ceased, and the misconduct imputed to him would have been forgotten; for the faults of the prosperous are not long remembered in this world. But the prince was now a dependant. If deprived of the sovereignty, he was absolutely without means of support. It therefore behoved him to take possession of the crown without delay, whatever might be the difficulties he should afterwards have to encounter.

Money to defray the expenses of a journey to Rheims, or of a public coronation in that place, was nowhere to be obtained. His only resource was, therefore, in the disinterested affection, and trifling possessions of his bride, who, by disposing of her jewels and ornaments, raised a sum barely sufficient to enable him to have her crowned, along with himself, at the town of Poitiers.

The ceremony, however, when effected, was of little avail. Though a few persons acknowledged the titles of the youthful pair, their right was disputed by numbers; and whilst some were disposed to allow the claims of the little English monarch, the greater part of the nation were inclined to favour the pretensions of Philip of Burgundy, son to the unfortunate nobleman who had been slain.

This person, as might be expected in those unenlightened days, was inspired with feelings of the most deadly hatred and revenge against the perpetrator of his father's murder; and as he was rich and powerful, bold and enterprising, he appeared to have every chance of superseding Charles in the kingdom. The present then was evidently a favourable opportunity for the English to step in, as they had done under Henry V., and snatch away the prize from the hands of the contending parties.

Attachment to the memory of his deceased brother appears to have inspired the Duke of Bedford with the most devoted affection for his child; and those feelings, combined with an exalted sense of duty, made him endeavour, with unceasing assiduity, to fulfil every charge with which he had been entrusted concerning the crown and person of the infant king.

Though thwarted by the English nobles, many of whom were envious of his high character as well as jealous of his power, he never made the slightest

struggle for his own aggrandizement, but calmly, at their desire, resigned the title of protector, and satisfied himself with watching over the welfare of the helpless monarch, determined to defend him, and the rights and privileges of his kingdom, to the utmost extent of his ability, and to the last moment of his life. He, therefore, set out for France, as regent of that country, according to his brother's will; resolute not only to retain possession of all the provinces which of ancient right belonged to England, but also to make good, if possible, his nephew's title to the crown. As a first step, he had the little Henry proclaimed king at Paris, as well as in all the provinces north of that place, which were then in possession of the English; and next prepared to dispute the claims of both Charles and Philip to the other parts of the country, hoping, by prompt and active measures, to prevent the miseries of a protracted civil war.

CHAPTER II.

A BATTLE.

"A braver knight in arms,
Fought not that day. Bold heart and potent hand,
And lofty mien, and eyes that flashed with valour."

WHILST the characters of the dauphin and the Duke of Burgundy were lightly estimated even in their native country, the worth and talents of the Duke of Bedford stood so pre-eminently high as to gain him a daily increase of friends, not only in France, but throughout Great Britain, where, after a little time, the whole power of the nation seemed under his control.

He was at the head of a gallant army, which, when commanded by his brother, had been inured to warfare, and accustomed to victory. Besides this, he was a general, to the full as brave, no less generous, and much more prudent, than that brother had been. With all these advantages, it was plain that the French crown, which the unfortunate dauphin was so much better entitled to wear, would speedily be placed on the head of the young English king.

Charles, however, obtained for the present a short respite from the danger of having it immediately torn from his grasp; for scarcely had the Duke of Bed-

ford commenced his operations, by laying siege to some of the French towns, when the English nobles recalled him to London for the purpose of settling some petty disputes which had arisen among them. Charles was, therefore, allowed time to seek for assistance, and to collect the friends and allies whom he so much required.

His friends, however, within his native land were few in number, and totally devoid of power to help him; and the only allies whom he could call to his aid were the people of Scotland, who, owing to their dislike of the English, readily consented to come over and fight the French king's battle against that nation. With their assistance, Charles attacked and reduced several of the fortresses which were of most value to the Duke of Bedford, and as the Scots came pouring in every day in greater numbers, and as each success brought fresh native recruits to his army, he hoped in a short time to see the English completely expelled from his dominions.

Bedford, on hearing of his success, was not long in hastening to the combat, and was, doubtless, provoked and mortified on finding the entire province of Brittany, with many other places, wrested from his hands. What was worse, the spirit of his party was depressed, and the number of his friends much reduced, in consequence of the dissensions of the English nobles, which had so inopportunely withdrawn him from the scene of action. But difficulty

served only to rouse his powerful mind to greater exertion. He found means to engage the Duke of Burgundy on his side; brought back to his interest many of the friends who had deserted him; revived the confidence of his troops, and led them directly against the revolted towns and provinces, all of which he speedily reconquered, and completely restored the strength and courage of his army.

The French king now looked around in vain for power to put a stop to these successes. But assistance was nowhere to be found. Town after town, and province after province, which had adhered to his interest, was taken by the English. The metropolis, and most other places of strength, were already in their possession; and two cities alone were wanting to give Bedford complete dominion over the kingdom.

At the first of these places, the town of Verneuil, the unhappy Charles resolved to make a final stand for the preservation of his throne; and as the main body of the English army was now reduced to a small number, owing to the several detachments which had been sent to garrison the newly-captured towns, he expected, in this instance, to encounter his enemy with an equal, or, perhaps, superior force.

A band of fourteen thousand men, composed of Scotch troops and young inexperienced French recruits, all commanded by the hitherto victorious Earl of Buchan, was sent to defend Verneuil, and were

placed by him in a strong position under the city walls, which afforded them protection both in flank and rear.

Here Buchan awaited the advance of the English, who soon presented themselves in front, led on by Bedford in person; but so few in number, that the Scotch general felt confident of success. In this opinion he was confirmed by knowing that the neighbourhood afforded no vantage-ground to his enemies, and by observing them hesitate where to take up their station. So disadvantageous, indeed, was the ground from which they were obliged to choose, that Bedford, following the example of his brother, found it necessary to strengthen his position by placing palisadoes in front of his troops, and having taken this precaution, he determined quietly to wait the attack of the enemy; but Buchan, doubly secure in his stronghold, was determined not to move from it until assailed by the English.

In this situation day after day passed away, whilst both Scotch and English displayed all that steadiness and forbearance which are so requisite in war, and for which both nations have been always commended. But the inexperienced French troops, impatient of control, at length became refractory, and, mistaking the inaction of their enemies for a proof of fear, would no longer be restrained from the attack. Notwithstanding the remonstrances of the Earl of Buchan, they sallied forth, and rushing for-

ward with impetuosity against the English, they soon got entangled amongst the palisadoes, where they were received by an unexpected shower of arrows, accompanied by the wonted shout of success from their adversaries, who had until that moment remained quiescent.

The Duke of Bedford now observing the Scotch leader advance his force to support the French, took immediate advantage of the movement. Leading some troops to the rear of their position, he attacked, and drove the Scots forward, until they, too, unexpectedly encountered his palisadoes, when the rout became general, the whole army flying in every direction, leaving the English conquerors of the field, and, in consequence, masters of the town.

CHAPTER III.

A SIEGE.

"I would give
Those realms, of which thou wert the ornament,
To call thee back.—I will not weep for thee;
Thou shalt be mourned for, as thou wouldst be mourned."

BYRON.

THE large and beautiful city of Orleans, a place of vast strength and consequence lying on the River Loire, and situated exactly between the provinces of France belonging to England and those possessed by Charles, now alone remained to be conquered, before the little British king should be brought over and crowned monarch of France.

The Duke of Bedford, therefore, without delay, laid siege to that important place. But, prudent as he was brave, his first measure was to possess himself of all the minor towns and villages by which Orleans was surrounded, and to place redoubts, or encampments of soldiers, between them, to prevent the possibility of any body of troops getting back or forward to the city without his knowledge. By this means he hoped to prevent the approach of any supplies that might be intended for the besieged, and thus oblige them to surrender.

The River Loire ran at a distance past one side of the town, commanded by a bridge having two strong fortifications at either end, which had hitherto afforded the French a safe entrance. The duke therefore sent the Earl of Salisbury, one of his most able generals, to attack the fortification, with orders to secure the bridge at any risk.

The gallant earl lost no time in making the assault. One of the principal towers was seized in the dead of night; and as morning dawned, whilst he was standing on the summit taking a survey of the next which might be attacked with advantage, the enemy, pointing a cannon at the spot, shivered the walls around him, and shattered his body in so dreadful a manner that he survived only a few hours.

His death was not only a severe loss to the whole army, but a deep private affliction to the Duke of Bedford, who now collected whatever troops he could spare from other places to this point, which had cost the life of his most valued friend, determined to evince his regret in a manner best suited to the memory of a hero, by following up the attack in the same bold spirit with which it had been commenced. He accordingly carried the second tower by assault, crossed the bridge in despite of every opposition, made himself master of the remaining fortresses which defended the pass, and at length securely invested the town on this side, as well as on all the others.

It was now the depth of a severe winter, which rendered the work of a besieging army even more laborious and difficult than is usually the case. The duke, therefore, satisfied himself with drawing his redoubts closer around the town, hoping his troops might remain in safety and repose until want of provisions should force the garrison to surrender.

The time was not, however, suffered to pass in tranquillity. The inhabitants, despairing of escape except by some desperate effort, made various spirited sallies against the besiegers, but were always repelled with equal valour. Supplies were, however, at moments of slackened vigilance, sometimes stolen in between the redoubts of the English army; yet famine rapidly increased within the walls, and Bedford had only to wait patiently for the hour when it must secure his success.

Meantime the eyes, not only of England and France, but of all Europe, were riveted on the spot where the French were making a last struggle for the rights of their lawful sovereign.

Being totally unable, from the factions that divided his country, to collect any army which could dare to approach the English, the unfortunate Charles, resigning himself to his fate, prepared to fly from his native country, and to abandon a crown which he found he had not power to preserve. Had he even possessed an army disposed to fight in his defence, it could not have been maintained in the field,

since revenues for his personal support were not to be procured; and although he had long since laid aside every appearance of royalty, he now could scarcely furnish common necessaries for himself or for the small band of disinterested followers who still adhered to him.

Nor was it this small band alone which, in his present circumstances, appeared to feel for Charles. His youth and many misfortunes, but still more his gentleness and courtesy of manner, caused his past faults to be forgotten, and made him an object of interest and commiseration with all parties. A young and engaging prince, reduced to a miserable state of degradation, and driven into poverty and exile, by the cruelty of a parent and by the dissensions of his subjects, could not fail to excite sympathy and compassion in every humane breast. His situation became the subject of conversation in all countries, and amongst all ranks of people. The peasantry of France spoke of little else; even the postboys along the roads described to each other as they passed the progress of that siege on which hung the fate of their unhappy monarch; and it might with truth be said that the brave inhabitants of Orleans and their unfortunate master were now objects of intense and universal interest throughout the European world.

CHAPTER IV.

A HEROINE.

"I am by birth a shepherd's daughter;
My wit untrained in any kind of art;
Yet Heaven has graciously been pleased
To shine on my contemptible estate;
Willed me to leave my base vocation,
And free my country from calamity."

SHAKESPEARE.

THE writer of this history has often met the female peasants in the south of France riding to market, in a manner which may perhaps amuse the reader. They were dressed in white muslin caps, with very broad and full borders, flying back from the face. With these they wore long gay-coloured calico mantles, floating behind them in the wind. They were mounted on immense shaggy horses, stretching forth a stout limb horizontally from the pack-saddle on which they sat, along each side of the horse's neck. The feet and ankles were defended from the weather by wooden shoes and short scarlet stockings, the latter closely gartered round the calves of the legs, while the hem of the petticoat was tucked carefully under the garters, so as to secure the warmth of the knees, which must otherwise have remained uncovered.

How these equestrians could keep their seats in this awkward and insecure position while their horses trotted briskly along, was matter of astonishment to the writer, until one of them good-humouredly explained the mystery, by reminding her that "habit makes all things easy."

It is asserted that in former days females of every rank rode on horseback in a similar manner, and that it was not then considered either unfeminine or ungraceful. Whether this be true or not, there was, at the period of which we write, one female, at least, whose dexterity on horseback excited universal admiration, and became well worthy of record. She was a young peasant girl of the province of Lorraine, who, to assist in supporting her parents, had hired with the proprietor of a small inn at a village called Domremy, where her chief employment was leading, and sometimes riding, the horses of the innkeeper to water. She was of perfectly irreproachable life and amiable character, possessing a degree of intellect which those around her had not acuteness to perceive, although it in general attracted the notice of travellers.

Her occupation, which afforded little or no scope for the improvement of her mind, had of late procured her hourly opportunities of hearing the current news of the day, and of learning all the reports which were at this time carried to and from the city of Orleans. Her ardent mind became inflamed with

sentiments of pity for the dauphin, and interest in the siege on which his fate depended.

The sufferings of the brave and loyal defenders of the town, and, above all, the distresses of their monarch, filled the maiden's thoughts by day, and influenced her dreams by night. She was seized with an enthusiastic desire to aid her sovereign in this his extremity, and felt that, since hope was abandoned by all others, the voice of even such an humble individual as herself might possibly rouse the universal feeling of pity into a spirit of active exertion, calculated to serve his cause. At all events, her making the attempt could, she thought, do no injury.

"A mouse once set a lion free;
A slave a king;—then why not she?"

So argued this simple peasant girl, who probably imagined, like many wiser persons, that "all things are possible to those who think them so."

What is there that an eager mind will not attempt? and what is there, indeed, which it may not achieve, if its ardour is wisely directed? What pity, then, that wisdom and enthusiasm are so seldom found working together, hand in hand.

The young person of whom we speak, from constantly ruminating on the subject of her sovereign's wrongs, at length began to fancy that the desire with which her soul was filled had been kindled by divine inspiration, and that she was destined to become the means of effecting his deliverance.

She foresaw all the peril that must attend her attempt, whether it should prove successful or otherwise; but she felt within herself a degree of courage and intrepidity that told her she could, in such a cause, encounter any danger, endure any fatigue, and submit to every hardship and privation. She therefore cast away the diffidence attendant on her low station, as well as the timidity naturally belonging to her character, and, unknown to any person, set out from Domremy, whence, making her way to Vaucouleurs, the nearest town of any note, she at once demanded an interview with the governor.

Compliance with the demand was at first rudely refused, and the denial was positively and frequently repeated; but she expected difficulty, and was not discouraged. Her unceasing and importunate solicitations, at length obtained admission to the mayor, from whom she instantly entreated a safe conduct to the presence of her king, saying she had information to communicate to his private ear, which would reverse his present evil fortune, and place him securely on the throne of his ancestors.

The governor, when at length induced to hearken to her strange assertion, perceiving that such an idea, however wild and visionary, might prove beneficial to Charles, by raising a superstitious confidence amongst his subjects, gave her, after some hesitation, the escort she required; and Joan d'Arc (for so the maid was called) forthwith set out, attended by a

guard of soldiers, to the residence of the prince. Charles was then living in retirement at Chinon, where a note being delivered to him from the governor of Vaucouleurs, instantly procured our heroine admission to his presence.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment of the king, on seeing a young peasant girl ushered into his apartment, who stood for some time silently scrutinizing the company. So soon as she could summon courage to speak, she fixed her eyes on Charles, and said that she was come by the appointment of Heaven to assist him in raising the siege of Orleans; and that she would, when that achievement was effected, conduct him to the city of Rheims, there to be crowned and anointed king of France.

There was something in the dauntless manner, humble appearance, but still more in the wild assertion of this young person, that made it impossible for Charles, or those around him, to refuse her their attention; nor could they, after she had withdrawn, dismiss from their minds the subject of her conversation.

Knowing the character of the French people, they were struck with a conviction of the good effects which might result from her strange predictions, if at the present momentous crisis of affairs, they should awaken hope, and inspire the disheartened soldiers with renewed courage.

That greater publicity might be given to her pro-

phecy, they expressed an entire disbelief of all she had uttered; but convened a council of learned clergy to examine her predictions, and declare whether or not she was to be considered a false prophetess, or one on whom the nation might with safety rely.

The council immediately met, and found it their interest to say she was a true prophetess; and as stratagems are unhappily thought allowable in war, they publicly avowed their opinion that she was divinely inspired; asserting that she had known the king amongst a number of other persons, although she had never before beheld him, and that she had mentioned several circumstances concerning his private life, such as she could only have discovered by inspiration. This put the question beyond doubt in the minds of the ignorant; but besides, she had, it was reported, commanded to be brought to her from the Church of St. Catherine de Fierbois, a certain sword which had lain there unobserved for centuries, describing its marks and tokens, exactly as it was found, and declaring that with that miraculous weapon she would lead the French to victory.

Crowds of grave and learned men, who came to attend the council, left Chinon, either believing or pretending to believe, that she was an instrument in the hand of Heaven, destined to work out the deliverance of France.

Even falsehoods, when propagated by high authorities, find easy credit with the ignorant; and the

people, hearing the rumours which were afloat concerning the prophetess of Domremy, flocked to the king's standard, anxious to share in the glory of her enterprise. French and English, besieging and besieged, were alike excited and astonished by the story; but while it encouraged the followers of Charles, it damped the ardour of the British soldiers; and their commander saw with indignation and alarm, a spirit of superstitious dread taking place of the dauntless bravery, for which his troops had been hitherto distinguished.

CHAPTER V.

A STRATAGEM.

"'Twas there ye raised, mid sap and siege,
The banner of your rightful liege
At your, *the Captain's*, call.
Who, miracle of womankind,
Lent mettle to the meanest hind,
That manned each fortress wall."

ROSE.

MEANTIME Joan d'Arc was preparing alike for combat and conquest. Her first act was to send a letter to the generals who commanded the besieging army, ordering them, in the name of the Great Being who held the fate of nations in his hands, to raise the siege of Orleans, and march quickly out of the kingdom, as the only method of saving themselves from divine wrath.

The Duke of Bedford, and his officers, professed to deride, alike the maid, her letter, and her predictions; saying, the affairs of Charles must be reduced to a low ebb, indeed, when he could confide in the assistance of such a champion. Some, however, amongst them, as well as the greater number of their soldiers, appeared strongly impressed with an idea that this extraordinary woman was appointed by

providence to place Charles on the throne. Bedford, alone, continued to repel the supposition, and felt incensed by the probability that it might finally lead to the defeat of his troops, and to the destruction of all those conquests which he had so nearly completed. He evinced the utmost contempt for the superstitious credulity, which appeared to be rapidly turning an army of veteran warriors into a herd of timorous serfs; and continued his schemes and operations exactly as if the maid of Domremy were not in existence.

But our heroine felt similar contempt for his derision, and dauntlessly hastened forward the work which she had begun.

The friends and relatives, with recruits of every description, who daily crowded around her, were marshalled among the regular troops; and on an appointed day, attended by two of her brothers, she appeared at their head, mounted on a beautiful white charger, ready to review them in person, in presence of the king. She was clad in the military costume of a knight, bearing in her hand the consecrated sword before mentioned; and displaying such skill and dexterity in manœuvring her soldiers, and managing her war-horse, that shouts of enthusiastic applause rent the air, as she passed before the people.

Having ordered her men to confess themselves, before their departure on the intended enterprise,

she set out on her march, towards the town of Blois, still attended by her attached brothers, who never afterwards forsook her. At this town a convoy, with provisions for the suffering inhabitants of Orleans, had been long waiting for some leader, possessed of sufficient hardihood to conduct it past the redoubts of the besieging army. But the convoy, it is believed, might have remained there until now (so great was the terror of the English arms) had not the heroine, with her miraculous sword and consecrated standard arrived, and volunteered to lead it forward.

Meantime the people within the walls were reduced to a state of famine, which made a speedy death, even by the sword of their enemies, appear preferable to the lingering tortures they had long endured.

Numbers had sunk under disease and want, and the day, nay the hour, was approaching, when the exhausted survivors must be compelled to open their gates, and throw themselves on the mercy of their conquerors. Rumours now, however, reached them through some chance stragglers who had escaped the vigilance of their foes, telling of a mysterious prophetess, who was coming herself to set them free. The dreaded hour of capitulation was, therefore, delayed. The watchmen on the towers forgot the agonizing pangs of hunger, whilst, gazing beyond the redoubts of the enemy, they hoped

to descry some signs of the promised deliverer; but days passed on, and no such liberator appeared.

At length, on one side of the city, were heard sounds of war; and at a short distance from their outposts, the English observed a formidable force, hastening to attack them.

As many troops as could be spared were immediately collected by Bedford, from the bridge, and from all the surrounding intrenchments, and every preparation was quickly made for battle. The attack commenced, and was received by the English with their accustomed bravery, which, through the exertions of their general, appeared likely to be crowned with complete victory; but whilst the anxious inhabitants watched from the ramparts the issue of this engagement, terrified by the rapid success of their foes, they descried a body of French troops approaching the town from an opposite quarter, covering a small squadron of boats, which stole quietly up the river, almost within gunshot of the fortifications on the bridge.

The detachment by whom the little fleet was guarded, placed itself in battle array on the river's bank; whilst a female, standing erect in the foremost boat, carrying in one hand a glittering sword, and with the other waving a standard before her followers, conducted her little train of vessels to the opposite shore; and even within sight of the enemy, boldly disembarked her troops and provisions.

The garrison, within the towers of the bridge, looked with astonishment on the scene; and, reduced as they were in number, dared not quit the fortifications which the French stood ready to seize on, should their troops move forward to intercept the supplies.

Even Lord Suffolk himself, the hitherto intrepid and successful defender of the bridge, viewed with surprise, not unmingled with admiration, the progress of this little party and the dauntless bearing of its female leader; appearing to be at length struck with the common belief, that she was led forward under divine guidance.

The passage of the river was made good. The troops and provisions disembarked, and then, headed by their inspired conductress, the detachment marched straight forward to the city.

Those gates which the inhabitants had apprehended must only be opened to admit the enemy, were now in trembling silence cautiously unbarred, and the maid of Orleans, for so from this moment she was named, with her entire convoy, entered in safety. The gates were once more closed, the bars drawn, and, as they shut in the last soldier of the escort, a shout of exultation burst like a peal of thunder, within the walls; even the sick and dying lent their feeble voices to assist in that triumphant cry, the sound of which brought back hope and joy to every desponding heart. Every bell in the city

was instantly in motion, and the tumultuous clang of triumph and rejoicing was carried even to the ears of the besiegers, increasing their mortification, and seeming to assure them that their day of victory was hastening to its close. The provisions, which had been introduced to the town, would now, they knew, enable the garrison to hold out for a protracted length of time; and their augmented terror confirmed their belief that the enchantress, who had hitherto achieved such wonders, was raised up for the utter destruction of the English. The relief to the inhabitants of Orleans, therefore, was doubly advantageous to the cause of the French king; and even the supply of provisions was lightly regarded by the famishing garrison, in comparison with the joy of having their miraculous protectress safely enclosed within their walls.

From this moment the state of the contending parties appeared reversed; and already the former conquerors were looked upon as conquered. But there was still much to be done; and our bold enthusiast, hourly confirmed in the belief that she was protected by the hand of Heaven, felt eager to meet her enemies in the field.

She delayed only for a short time to let the garrison gather strength; and then, collecting around her all who were able for the enterprise, made a vigorous sally from the walls, and bravely attacked the English intrenchments. One of the strongest

forts was seized without resistance, the terrified soldiers having scarcely ventured to strike a blow in their own defence, and the garrison was brought captive to Orleans, increasing the exultation of its inhabitants.

CHAPTER VI.

A VICTORY.

"She comes! she comes! I hear the bound
Of many a trampling war-horse nigh;
I hear the clarion's silver sound
Peal the glad notes of victory!
She comes! and Orleans now is free;
Maiden! the praise is due to thee."

DALE.

AFTER these repeated successes, both the followers and adversaries of the warlike maiden considered her invincible; and the strength and courage of the English diminished as rapidly as that of the French increased.

Her next exploit was to attack the fortifications on the bridge, as possession of that pass was indispensable to her final success.

These were, therefore, boldly assailed, but not so easily captured. The Duke of Bedford, before obeying a new and mortifying summons to depart for England, had hastened to the spot, and endeavoured to revive the drooping courage of his troops, by promising to lead them in person once more to victory. Through his exertions the French were driven back, and their valiant conductress forced for a short time to retire; but, knowing that the slightest reverse of

fortune would cancel all her claims to invincibility, she returned; and standing alone, waving her sacred banner in the air, besought her flying troops to renew the charge. Her glowing countenance, animated gestures, and vehement exhortations, recalled the renegades; they renewed the attack; and emulating the courage of their all-conquering leader, rushed with such impetuosity upon the English, that they were on the point of carrying the day, when an arrow, which had been aimed at Joan by one of the English archers, struck her in the neck and compelled her to stay her course.

All seemed now lost! Those who observed the disaster stood still in despair; but, seeming completely to despise the accident, she commanded the officers who stood near her to advance and lead their companions to victory, declaring she would make but an instant's delay, and speedily overtake them.

She then retired a few paces, pulled out the arrow with her own hand, had the blood stanched, and, remounting her horse, galloped back to her troops, just in time to plant her sacred standard on the ramparts of the captured fortress, which now afforded all the friends of Charles free access to the town.

How shall we describe the rapture of the citizens at this decisive victory? The Duke of Bedford conquered in person, the bridge laid open, the town no

longer surrounded, and its inhabitants free! It was not with shouts of applause that Joan was welcomed back at this her third entrance; it was rather with the silent homage of reverential awe, which they considered due to a supernatural power.

The English had lost in these engagements above six thousand men; and what was still more fatal to their cause, the survivors appeared entirely deprived of that intrepid hardihood for which they had been so long renowned. None of the generals had the slightest power to revive their courage, except the Duke of Bedford himself; and, as if to sink the troops still deeper in despondency, he was, at this moment of their utmost need, called away from them to England on some frivolous pretence.

Lord Suffolk, who was left in the command, whilst endeavouring to combat their credulity, felt unable to deny the various proofs which his men brought forward, of the maiden being guided by supernatural power. Nor did his declaration that, if so, she must be aided by a diabolical, not a divine spirit, tend to restore their courage or dispel their superstitious forebodings; since they naturally replied that the chastenings of a benevolent being would be greatly preferable to the persecutions of a malicious one.

Perceiving that it was vain any longer to oppose a feeling which was likely to bring destruction on the entire army, Suffolk determined to raise the

siege, and, in the dead of night, commenced a retreat.

He was immediately followed, and driven from the walls by the maid of Domremy. "Behold my first prophecy fulfilled!" she exclaimed, on returning with her victorious forces, after chasing the besiegers to a considerable distance. "Did I not say that I would raise this siege, and put to flight the enemies of my country? Now, if there be no unnecessary delay, I will with equal certainty fulfil my second prediction, and have my prince crowned at the city of Rheims with the honours due to a sovereign of France."

But improbable as the recapture of Orleans had once appeared, this new undertaking seemed still less probable; for Rheims, which stood at a considerable distance, was in the hands of an exasperated enemy, who occupied the entire country, and could with ease defend every road or pass which led to it against the comparatively small force which Joan commanded.

Nothing, however, seemed to her now impossible. She immediately urged Charles to commence the enterprise, and he being resolved to follow her wishes in all respects, very soon set forward on the expedition. Their army consisted of twelve thousand men, who were prepared to fight their passage through every danger and difficulty. But difficulty and danger seemed to fly before them.

On approaching the first garrison town, which they had intended to besiege, it instantly threw open the gates, and surrendered to Charles as its lawful sovereign. All the cities along their line of march followed this example; and long before his arrival at Rheims, ambassadors came to inform him that the gates were open, that his enemies had fled, and that every preparation was already made for his coronation in that sacred place.

Arrived in safety within its walls, the ceremony was in a short time completed. During its performance, the Maid of Orleans stood by the side of her youthful monarch, clad in shining armour, and still bearing the sacred standard, which she at times triumphantly waved over his head, attracting, by her gestures and appearance, more attention than was bestowed on the sovereign himself.

The spectators, as they surveyed this scene, which had been produced by such a train of wonders, rent the air with acclamations, and believed that no recompense would be too great for her who had achieved them; but nothing was further from her own thoughts than the idea of reward. The awful and impressive ceremony had scarcely ended, when, the natural feelings of her sex overcoming her assumed character, she burst into a violent flood of tears. Flinging herself on the ground, and embracing her sovereign's knees, she thanked Heaven that her prophecy had been so happily accomplished, and

that she had been made instrumental in its fulfilment; declaring that since her wishes for his success were now fully achieved, she had no other desire than to return to her family, and resume her former humble and peaceful mode of life. Having in this manner taken leave of Charles, and solicited permission to depart, she withdrew from the assembly, and prepared with her brothers to rejoin their affectionate and anxious parents. Another chapter must declare whether or not she was suffered to fulfil her intention.

CHAPTER VII.

PROGRESS OF ERROR.

"No man e'er reached the heights of vice at first,
But stepped from lesser errors to the worst."
TATE.

WE are now drawing near a period in the history of Joan d'Arc which will undoubtedly shock the reader as much as it has ever done the writer of these stories. But those who describe real characters must, like the painter who copies from nature, represent the dark and disagreeable side of their pictures no less faithfully than that which is bright and beautiful.

Whilst we contemplate the Maid of Orleans kneeling at her sovereign's feet, and, with tears of pious gratitude, supplicating leave—now that her arduous undertaking was accomplished—to retire into her former sphere of life, we cannot avoid lamenting that she was withheld from pursuing such a virtuous inclination.

Finding her willing to resign every claim to the fame and fortune which she had justly merited, and believing her sincere in her desire to fly from the allurements by which she found herself surrounded, we cannot help wishing that it had been our ap-

pointed task, instead of following her steps in the course which she afterwards pursued, as we now must do, to have carried her back to the lowly station in which she was born, recording her performance of its quiet duties, and tracing her path through life to a happy termination. But such a course has not been left to our choice. It, on the contrary, becomes our painful duty to acknowledge some faults into which she allowed herself to fall, to record the sufferings in which they ended, and to show, from the conduct of those around her, the rapid strides by which sin, if not opposed, finds entrance to every human heart.

There are, it is asserted, but *three steps* required for the commission of *any* crime*—the wish, the plan, the act; to explain which, let the young reader, if he has ever been a truant at school, remember that his first step towards the crime of disobedience was *a wish* that he could escape the task allotted to him—the second, some plan to avoid it —the third, his deserting it. And so, in all cases, he will find that it only requires the same three gradations to arrive at even the most atrocious acts of guilt. The dauphin of France, for instance, felt at first merely a wish that his rival, the Duke of Burgundy, would be removed out of his way; next followed his listening to a plan for entrapping the unfortunate nobleman into his power; and lastly

* See Abbott's "Corner Stone," p. 235.

came the act of standing by to see him inhumanly butchered.*

Little did Charles VII., when raising the Maid of Orleans from her prostrate position at his feet, reflect on the selfishness of the wish for her detention which at that moment arose in his mind. Feeling, however, some gratitude for the unlooked-for success she had procured for him, he sent General Dunois to express, in gratifying terms, his desire that she should remain in his camp, to establish the throne on which she had placed him; and to entreat that she would not desert his troops.

These flattering persuasions too easily prevailed. She yielded to the request, and from that moment the blessing with which Providence had hitherto vouchsafed to prosper her exertions seems to have been withdrawn.

In the first part of her career, self never appears to have entered her thoughts. Her enthusiasm evidently sprang from disinterested love to her king and country. She now saw both in a situation to obtain their own rights; she knew that her services were no longer required, and conscience whispered

* Though Charles VII., after the murder of the Duke of Burgundy, appears to have enjoyed a long succession of prosperity, yet the reader will find from history that his share in that crime brought, in the end, its own punishment. Recollecting the treachery in which he had himself been led to participate, he became apprehensive of similar misconduct in others; and having received from his eldest son (afterwards the depraved and merciless Louis XI.) only too much cause for such suspicion, he died a miserable death, occasioned by actual starvation—having refused every kind of food, from the dread that those by whom it was prepared had been employed to poison him, and wishing, as he declared, to spare his child the guilt of murdering his parent.

that her duty was to lay aside her assumed character, and return into the sphere of life in which Providence had originally placed her. But the thoughts of a sovereign whom she had been instrumental in fixing on a throne, still suing to her for aid; the pride of hearing his most renowned generals apply to her for directions under their difficulties, and the feeling of gratified vanity which arose at seeing the whole French army bow down before her, were temptations too powerful for human strength. She neglected to ask for firmness to resist the trial where alone it could have been obtained, and, heedless of the warning voice within, consented to remain in the camp. At first she declined any remuneration for past or present services, but after a little time she was persuaded to accept of a large pension and patent of nobility for herself and her family.

All generous and noble-minded persons rejoiced at her having obtained a reward, which they considered due to her important services; but the generals of the army, and many persons of rank and distinction in the country, began to wish that the renown of their achievements had equalled that of this poor peasant girl, and to envy her, not only the fame of her exploits, which had now spread over every country of Europe, but also the fortune which her merits had procured.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHALLENGE.

"And you, sir, are you slumbering on your throne?
Or has all majesty fled from the earth,
That women must start up, and in your council
Speak, think, and act for you; and lest your vassals
Rise and cast you off, must women too defend you?"

Francis I.

WHILST the rational part of the British nation looked upon the Maid of Orleans with abhorrence as a designing impostor, who had spell-bound their troops, by pretending to a mission from heaven, the irrational part listened to every exaggerated account which was brought over of her miraculous achievements; and whilst some attributed her power to diabolical, and others to heavenly agency, the whole nation began to feel a disinclination to prolong the war with France, and refused to send the Duke of Bedford supplies, either of money, or troops, for its continuance.

Though distressed at seeing the fruits of all his brother's conquests thus likely to be wrested from his grasp, the powerful energy of the duke's mind seemed only to rise with the difficulties of his situation.

By the strength of his representations, he induced

the British Parliament to let his nephew accompany him to Paris, where he had him crowned King of France; calling on the inhabitants of all the conquered provinces to attend the coronation, and causing them to renew their oaths of allegiance to the infant king. But this gorgeous ceremony, notwithstanding all the pains and care taken to increase its effect, produced little advantage compared with that which had attended the coronation of Charles; and Bedford plainly perceived that his only chance of recovering his lost ground, within the French territory, lay in showing the nation that the Maid of Domremy was not that invincible person which she had taught them to believe. He, therefore, persevered in his efforts to obtain even a small supply of troops with which he might be enabled to gain such an advantage as would produce the desired effect. At this juncture he fortunately met at Calais with a body of five thousand English soldiers proceeding on a crusade to the Holy Land. He instantly supplicated them to change their destined route and lend him their assistance for even one campaign; during which he assured them, that they and he together, would easily "cut off that accursed *limb of the foul fiend,* who had hitherto deceived the world by her enchantments."

His entreaties prevailed, and with this small body joined to the disheartened remnant of his former army, he set out in search of the French King.

But Charles, who felt unwilling to stake the crown which he had so unexpectedly obtained on the event of an uncertain battle, used every precaution to avoid the meeting, and no sooner did Bedford arrive in any quarter in which he hoped to encounter his foes, than he learned that they had marched in an opposite direction.

Provoked at what he considered his opponent's cowardice in thus letting himself be chased from place to place rather than come to action, Bedford wrote a letter upbraiding him with dastardly conduct, not only in the present instance, but in his having condescended to accept of military assistance from a woman; daring him at the same time to vindicate his character from these charges by bringing his troops to battle, or else by meeting him in single combat before both armies.

To this letter Charles gave no reply, but continued to obtain from his scouts intelligence of the movements of the English, and to shape his own course so as to keep out of their reach.

Weary of this fruitless pursuit, the duke at length began to retrace his steps towards Paris, when suddenly, near the town of Senlis, at about thirty miles distance from the metropolis, on ascending opposite sides of a hill the two armies unexpectedly came in sight of each other. The French, flushed with their past successes, rejoiced at the accidental encounter, believing that their king must, in despite

of all his caution, allow them an opportunity of obtaining fresh laurels.

The English, though so much inferior in number, and though convinced that Charles had now, in full confidence of victory, at length marched against them, prepared for battle with their usual bravery, and with a firm resolution that no human power, or sorcery, or enchantment, should compel them to retire from the field until they had obtained a victory.

The French officers, impatient for the engagement, urged their king to hasten the moment of its commencement; but were directed to restrain their ardour until the Prophetess of Orleans should be consulted on the subject.

Mortified at being at such a crisis refered to a *woman* for decision, the generals felt no regret on finding that the maid's spirit of divination had forsaken her.

In answer to the royal inquiry she hesitated what to advise. At one moment fearing to lose (should Charles be defeated) the advantages which had been obtained, she dissuaded him from the engagement; the next, dreading to forfeit her character for courage and intrepidity, she proposed an immediate attack. Again the possible loss of all that had been won to France, and of the glory of her own past achievements made her deliberate.

With what unsullied honour would her name have been handed down to posterity, had she

avowed her incapacity to decide on such important matters, and candidly declared that an enthusiastic desire to risk her life for the preservation of her prince (blessed by Providence in the effect which it had produced) was hitherto the only inspiration of which she could boast; that if it was the king's wish she would still follow, but would no longer attempt to conduct his army.

Instead of pursuing this virtuous course she continued two entire days in a state of uncertainty, whether to avoid or commence the battle; whilst Charles, too timid to decide on attacking the English without her concurrence, removed his army to some distance, and thus lost a promising opportunity of securing the victory.

CHAPTER IX.

A CAPTURE.

"Damsel of France, I think I have you fast:
Unchain your spirits, now with spelling charms,
And try if you can gain your liberty."

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Duke of Bedford, on discovering that Charles had withdrawn his army, thought it more prudent to march against a less formidable quarter of the French force, which he hoped to surprise in Normandy; and Joan d'Arc, so soon as she was assured of the duke's departure, urged Charles to proceed immediately against Paris, assuring him that the city would throw open its gates on the moment of his approach.

Following her advice he marched his army to the entrance of the metropolis, and stopped on the heights of Montmartre to demand admission, offering at the same time, in return for the expected compliance, a free pardon to the inhabitants for all former offences against his crown. But the friendly summons was unheeded, and the king was unwillingly obliged to commence an attack.

After four hours of unsuccessful assault, Charles, feeling mortified and disappointed at meeting with

such determined resistance where he had expected immediate submission, once more withdrew his troops into a place of safety.

In retiring it was observed that Joan d'Arc was nowhere to be found, and it was now reported that she had not been seen since the commencement of the attack. Search was made for her and at length she was discovered, lying dangerously wounded in one of the trenches where she had remained unheeded during the entire battle, having been knocked down by the first fire.

She was carried safely to Bourges, a town in the neighbourhood where the king resolved to pass the winter, and where she soon recovered from her wound; but her influence over the soldiery was greatly diminished. They had latterly observed that she was liable to misfortunes, and subject to mistakes and errors like other persons. Her former services, therefore, began to be undervalued and forgotten. Each soldier, on looking back to past events, recollected some share of merit which he thought he might claim to himself, and the generals especially felt an hourly increasing jealousy of the fame which Joan had acquired. To try, however, what use could still be made of her remaining influence over distant parts of the army, Charles, by the advice of his most experienced officers, sent her to the relief of Compeigne, a town then closely besieged by the Duke of Burgundy and already in such ex-

tremity that it was daily expected to surrender. Here, it was hoped, she might still exert some influence; and on her approach to the city, the inhabitants, finding that she was coming to their succour, felt sure of deliverance.

At no great distance from the town she overtook a small body of Burgundian troops, who, under the direction of a celebrated general called Franquet d'Arras, offered her such skilful and determined resistance, that Joan was for some time, even with her superior numbers, fearful of defeat; at length, however, the hardy band was conquered and their leader taken prisoner.

The victor had already yielded to the desire of being considered a divinely inspired and irresistible leader; but finding her pretensions disputed she began to form plans for enforcing such belief, by instilling a feeling of terror into the minds of her adversaries. Forgetful of every womanly and Christian feeling, she, therefore, commanded the head of the brave d'Arras to be struck off on the spot.

The inhuman order was executed; and flushed with victory and exulting in the belief that fortune was once more turning in her favour, she hastened forward unperceived to one of the out-posts of the town expecting to take it by surprise; but just as she imagined herself on the point of effecting her purpose, she was in her turn surprised by a party of the

besiegers, who assailed her troops with such determined spirit that the whole body, including her hitherto intrepid brothers, were quickly put to flight.

Her officers, jealous of her fame, made, it was believed, no exertion to recall their men ; but Joan, desperate from the near prospect of defeat, stood to her post, bravely urging the troops to turn on their pursuers. Her efforts were, however, vain. An archer, seeing her stand alone in her bold attempt to rally, rushed forward and made her prisoner. Having seized her horse by the bridle, he rudely pulled her to the ground and carried her to the tent of his commanding officer.

At sight of her capture, the triumphant shouts of the whole besieging army announced to the besieged that their expected deliverer was a captive.

The garrison, now sensible that she was not the invincible person they had been led to suppose, and ashamed of their credulity in having hitherto believed her such, roused all their native courage to maintain the town; and finally succeeded in preserving it for Charles.

But its surrender could not have afforded the besiegers such complete triumph or occasioned so much rejoicing, as did the capture of the long dreaded, and far famed deliverer of Orleans.

CHAPTER X.

A RASH ACT.

"The wall is high; and yet will I leap down
Good ground, be pitiful and hurt me not!
I am afraid; and yet I'll venture it.
If I get down, and do not break my limbs,
I'll find a thousand shifts to get away
As good to die and go, as die and stay."

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Duke of Bedford, as stated in a former chapter, had for a length of time eagerly desired to make the Maid of Orleans his prisoner. Besides the justifiable anxiety which he must have felt to conquer her in the field, and to expose the falsehood and folly of her pretensions to supernatural power, it is much to be feared that he also indulged a wish to punish her for the disasters which she had occasioned to himself and his army. Had he resisted the first impulse of that sinful desire, what crime, what misery, what an everlating stain to his otherwise unsullied memory might have been avoided!

The unfortunate captive was purchased by him from the officer, into whose hand she had fallen; and was kept in close confinement for several weeks, whilst debates were held throughout the army as

to the manner in which it would be expedient to treat her.

What her feelings must have been during that period, may easily be imagined. At one moment, reflecting on all that she had achieved for her king and country, she felt aware that if ever monarch had been indebted to a subject for his crown, Charles VII. was that king. She had roused his people from their terror of the English arms, had taught them to conquer, and had established the kingdom firmly in his hands even when that kingdom had seemed irretrievably lost. Surely then, not only he, but the nation at large would purchase her redemption at any price.

Months, however, passed away, and no ransom was offered; no effort made to set her at liberty; no exertion attempted even to soften the severity of her confinement, until, at length it became evident that she was already forgotten.

"Now that my services have accomplished their object," sighed she, in the solitude of her prison, "I am no longer needed, no longer thought of. The French commanders, with their new monarch at their head, feel perhaps well pleased to have a low-born peasant girl confined, where her actions can never again tarnish the glory of their achievements."

Then followed a hopeless desire to see the two beloved brothers who had attended and protected her through all the snares and dangers of her mili-

tary career; to behold once more her humble home, to embrace her affectionate parents! What would she not now have given that she had gone back to them at the moment when her conscience first warned her to pursue that course. Why, why had she not fled from temptation and returned to her home, unstained by crime and happy in the accomplishment of her first project? But regrets were now unavailing; neither brother nor parent could gain admittance to her prison, and it was plain that she was intentionally left to her fate. What that fate was likely to become was a question which now rose with intense anxiety to her mind.

Was she to be doomed to die by the hands of a common executioner? or should she be left to linger out a miserable existence in captivity? Alas! at this instant conscience reminded her that it was no uncommon thing for conquerors to decree the death of the vanquished; and she shuddered as this inward monitor brought to her mind the execution of the brave d'Arras; but the thought of perpetual imprisonment was no less appalling.

Despairing at that moment of aid either human or divine, she looked around for means to escape from her prison; but the strength of its walls, and the watchfulness of her guards forbade every hope of her being able to effect such a purpose.

Her only possible chance seemed to lie in the desperate design of leaping from a turret wall,

where she was at times permitted to breathe the open air.

Death was not what the infatuated girl dreaded; neglect or public degradation seemed to have been the principal objects of her apprehension; and forgetful of every duty which religion would have taught, had her mind been open to its dictates, she determined, on the next opportunity, to put her dreadful design in execution, and fling herself from the tower.

Not long after she had formed this resolution, some persons walking below saw her bend several times over the wall, and suspecting that despair might have suggested an intention of saving herself from public disgrace in this manner, they watched until they saw her spring from the parapet, when they were fortunate enough to catch her in the fall, and prevent her suffering any injury. The attempt, therefore, had only the effect of causing the miserable captive to be loaded with heavier irons, and for the future to be kept in still closer confinement.

In an evil hour we have first seen Joan d'Arc yield to the sinful wish of passing herself for a divinely inspired prophetess and invincible conqueror; next followed the determination to support that character even by the perpetration of a murder, which in former days would have been abhorent to her nature. We need not therefore wonder that the wicked spirit, since not resisted in the first instance, had gradually led her forward to that act, which, had it

been successful, must have consigned her to everlasting misery; nor is it surprising that the same spirit still kept possession of her mind, inducing a belief that some miraculous interposition would ultimately secure her liberation, and fostering perhaps the hope that she would yet be allowed time for repentance.

An opinion that the king, on whom she had conferred so many benefits, would not in the end forsake her, and that the nation would never leave her to perish, once more took possession of her imagination. Again she was assailed with the desire of inspiring a belief that she was divinely taught. When questioned on the subject in her prison, she continued to assert that she was indeed an appointed minister of the Almighty, and that she had been often favoured in her solitary cell by visits from his angels, who brought her the revelations of his will.

This she asserted with an apparent conviction of its truth, which strengthened in every charitable mind an idea that her sufferings and strong occasions of excitement had injured her reason, and that she was not now accountable for the falsehoods she uttered, but her enemies only considered her assertions as additional proofs of her depravity.

The Bishop of Beauvois, her own countryman, on pretence that she had used the arts of magical incantation, falsehood, and enchantment *within his diocese*, presented a petition to the Duke of Bedford, desiring to have his prisoner tried as a sorceress. A

council of inquiry was immediately opened in the city of Rouen, where the little English king then held his court, at which a great number of French prelates, together with one English bishop, whose name we should blush to mention, were appointed to act as her accusers and judges.

Far from being dismayed at these proceedings, the Maid of Orleans now hoped that the hour of her emancipation was drawing rapidly near. What, she exclaimed, had she to fear? If justice had its course there was no possible chance of her being condemned, since the entire tenor of her conduct towards France merited reward, not punishment. Under this impression the enthusiast hailed rather than lamented the approach of the day which was announced for the commencement of her trial.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEFENCE.

'Her look composed, and steady eye,
Bespoke a matchless constancy."

SCOTT.

THE day of trial at length arrived, and multitudes both of French and English assembled to hear the examination, and witness the deportment of the Maid of Orleans.

The court was seated, and all things solemnly prepared; guards were sent to the prison, with directions to clothe the prisoner in the male attire which she had herself voluntarily adopted, and to bring her in armour, but loaded with chains, through the public streets for the purpose of letting the populace behold her degradation.

"This will but rouse a stronger feeling in my favour," thought the dauntless but deluded girl, and she passed silently and proudly along, expecting acclamations from the people, and anticipating only the joyful moment of freedom.

Catching a sight of her mother* and brothers

* Amongst the friends and relatives of the Maid of Orleans, sorrow for her untimely loss seems to have been swallowed up by grief and shame at the stigma affixed upon her memory, and by indignation at her unmerited condemnation and inhuman execution. Her brothers and her widowed mother loudly appealed

weeping amongst the crowd, she turned and gave them a cheerful smile, which seemed to bid them fear nothing on her account.

She entered the council hall with a firm step and composed demeanour, and when she was seen laden with heavy chains, and decked in that costume in which, on her first appearance in arms, she had excited such enthusiastic admiration, and in which she had afterwards achieved such glorious deeds for her country, a murmur of mingled shame and pity did indeed arise, confirming her in the belief that no sentence of condemnation could be passed against her.

She was now placed before the bar, and ordered to plead guilty or not guilty to the several charges brought against her, upon which she entreated to be relieved from her chains before she should be required to answer. This her hard-hearted judges refused, alleging that as she had already made one desperate effort to escape, she might have recourse to a second.

She acknowledged having made such an attempt, and roused in all probability by their inhuman conduct, avowed that, had she opportunity, it should be repeated. But this recurrence of improper feeling,

against the decision of the University of Paris, and never relaxed their efforts at Rome until the case was brought before the Ecclesiastical Court for reconsideration. Twenty-five years after her execution, Calixtus, who was then Pope, at the earnest entreaty of her mother, appointed the Archbishop of Rheims and the Bishop of Paris to re-examine the charges on which she had been condemned, when the judgment was reversed, and the injustice of the sentence under which she had suffered openly declared, thus removing all disgrace from the memory of the unfortunate Joan d'Arc to that of the persons who had been the authors of her destruction.—See Reynald, vi. 77.

occasioned by insanity, soon subsided; and as the trial proceeded, her manner bespoke, not alone the composure of innocence, but such acuteness of intellect as resembled sound understanding. It was only when the ruling passion of her mind—the ambition to be esteemed a prophetess—was touched on that her judgment was found to be decidedly defective.

The first charge brought against her was that of her having gone forth to battle clothed in male attire, assuming command over men of rank and experience, contrary to the usages and decorum of her sex.

She replied that her excuse lay in the motive, which had simply been to assist her king when in extremity of danger, and to expel his foes from the country; and that in whatever dress she appeared, even the English, her bitterest enemies, had never charged her with the slightest species of levity either in her manner or conduct.

Not only had her brothers remained by her side, both in the field and camp, while she was employed in active service, but persons of her own sex, and of the most acknowledged rectitude, had been her constant associates whilst she remained in garrison towns. She therefore defied her most inveterate foe to prove that any decorum of her sex had been neglected.

Foiled in this frivolous charge, her judges next

accused her of having without any just cause cruelly put to death a gallant officer whom she had made captive in war.

Here Joan must once more have felt conscience-stricken, but she endeavoured to justify the act by saying that d'Arras, though a brave commander, was a man of evil character, who had been already condemned to death by the laws of his own country.

The plea was not admitted, and she was found guilty of this charge.

She was next asked why she had dared to carry a standard consecrated by magical incantations at the coronation of her sovereign, or to take upon herself any part in that solemn ceremony.

She replied that the person who had shared with that sovereign all the dangers of his warfare was, in her opinion, entitled to accept of a proffered share in the honours and glories of his success.

The question was repeated why she had carried and placed an idolatrous confidence in the standard she carried.

Joan answered that she did not put any confidence in the standard. Her whole trust, she declared, was in the Supreme Being, with whose image the flag was impressed; and she carried it, she averred, merely to show her troops under whose guidance they and she went forth to battle.

The accusers, who had hitherto gained little or no advantage excepting in the one point of d'Arras's

execution, now taxed her with profaneness and hypocrisy in pretending that she had intercourse with departed spirits, and received through them revelations from heaven. She was therefore commanded at once to undeceive the ignorant by avowing the falsehood of such pretensions. But on this subject no arguments could induce her to recant what she had asserted.

On sixteen different days she was brought in the same manner before the Council, having been warned that she must be sentenced to death as a heretic unless she acknowledged the guilt and falsehood of her pretended inspiration. Every effort was tried to induce her to make a frank confession, but she remained inexorable, and proudly repeated her conviction that she had been the minister of the Almighty, asseverating that she was still favoured with visits from saints and archangels bringing her the annunciation of His will.

CHAPTER XII.

A DEED OF CRUELTY.

"That woeful maid,
Gathering her powers to speak essayed,
Twice she essayed, and twice in vain;
Her accents might no utterance gain.
Nought but imperfect murmurs slip,
From her convulsed and quivering lip;
But when her silence broke, at length
Still as she spoke she gathered strength."

SCOTT.

SINCE our heroine could neither be moved by threats or promises of rewards, nothing more could be done. Her judges either could not perceive or would not admit her lunacy, and her answers were laid before the University of Paris for the final decision of her fate.

There, we shudder while we relate it, condemnation was pronounced against her *as a servant of the evil spirit,* who by impious inventions and pretended revelations had deluded the people, and injured the cause of religion. For these foul crimes, as her warrant said, she was sentenced by the Romish Church to be burned at the stake in the market square of Rouen.

A day for announcing this dreadful sentence, both

to herself and to the public, was fixed; and she was led for the last time into the council hall to hear the warrant read.

She entered as before, with firm step and fearless manner, still confident in her hope of escape. But when the awful words condemning her to the stake were actually uttered, she at once yielded to feelings of anguish and terror. Reason appeared suddenly restored; and she with tears of penitence acknowledged her delusion; promising on oath never again to lay any claim to supernatural guidance, or to take up arms or clothe herself in male attire, if only her judges would remit her sentence and assign her some punishment less dreadful. Surprise at her sudden recantation after such extraordinary firmness held most of the by-standers silent. But whilst some inwardly rejoiced in the hope that her penitence would insure her pardon, others loudly declared their satisfaction that her character was at length unmasked, and that the vulgar opinion of its being inspired was proved to be without foundation. In short the spirit of animosity seemed only augmented by her acknowledgment of guilt, but as the former sentence could not now be put in execution a new decree was pronounced by the court, condemning her to perpetual imprisonment, and to be fed on bread and water during her life. This punishment was not, however, sufficient to satisfy the rancour of her enemies. Their desire was to have her put to death,

nor were they long in devising a plan to accomplish their purpose.

Having observed that long habit had given her a preference for male attire, and suspecting that, in despite of her oath if such dress were left within her reach she could not resist the temptation of resuming it, her persecutors placed in her cell a suit of man's apparel, which after some time being disregarded she at length observed with wistful eyes.

On beholding those habiliments in which she had acquired so much renown, her former martial feelings revived, and looking with disgust on her disgraceful prison-garb, she ventured in the solitude of her cell to deck herself once more in the forbidden dress.

Her insidious jailers who had watched night and day hoping to see her fall into the snare, entered her apartment the moment she was clothed and instantly carried her into the presence of her judges.

The fault, if one it could be called, was interpreted by them into a decided relapse into heresy. No declaration of innocence on her part would be heard; no repeated recantations of past errors received; no pardon, no remission of punishment granted; and she was condemned, in conformity of her first sentence, to be immediately burnt at the stake in the midst of the market square of Rouen.

The unfortunate girl now afforded an additional proof that a deranged imagination was the cause of all her errors, which, had they been of much greater

magnitude, could never have cancelled the obligations which she had conferred on her ungrateful king and faithless country.

The fanciful persuasion of her being an inspired person again took possession of her mind. Even when she was led forth from the prison to the place of execution, and saw the awful preparations complete, and the people whom she had delivered assembled in crowds to witness her death, the certain expectation that a heavenly deliverer would be sent to her rescue upheld and comforted her to the last; thus in some degree frustrating the determined malice of her enemies.

Though bound to the stake she was mild and quiescent as a lamb from the same happy belief; and it was not until the flames began to envelope her person that she became sensible of her situation. At length they gathered closely around her, and at that awful moment the spectators heard her, while she grasped her crucifix, calling fervently on her Redeemer for intercession and pardon.

Oh, may the same mercy which we trust was reserved for her, have been before their death extended to all the sinful actors in this tragic scene, and may those who gather from the page of history the dreadful crimes which spring from the indulgence of *any sinful* wish, learn to watch every thought and desire of their hearts lest *any* should lead them into the path of evil.

Being revolted by this dreadful story we shall not longer follow the Duke of Bedford in his faithful and continued efforts to preserve his nephew's power in France. The reader, when disposed to peruse the history which may be found in many larger works, will scarcely be surprised to learn that all the subsequent efforts of the regent to maintain his ground in the French territories proved ineffectual.

Foreseeing at length the total expulsion of the English from that country, he fell, it is said, into an illness brought on by disappointment, augmented, no doubt, by remorse for the cruel deed he had sanctioned; and terminated his life in the town of Rouen just four years after the execution of his unhappy victim, the far famed and much lamented Maid of Orleans.