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THE
PILGRIMS OF WALSINGHAM:

OR,

TALES OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

An Historical Romance.

BY AGNES STRICKLAND.

“Oh, have ye been to the holy lande
Of blessed Walsinghame?”—OLD BALLAD.

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THE PILGRIMS OF WALSINGHAM.

CHAPTER I.

Charles the emperor,
Under pretence to see the queen his aunt,
(For 'twas indeed his color, but he came
To whisper Wolsey,) here makes visitation.

Shakspeare.

The festival of Whitsuntide, anno 1522, had been kept with unwonted splendor, in London and its environs, on account of the friendly visit of the young and accomplished Emperor Charles V. to the English court.

It was the age of pomp and pageantry, and every costly device that the taste of the luxurious Henry VIII. could suggest and the wealth and ingenuity of his almost princely citizen-subjects effect, for his gratification, was exhausted in honor of an event so flattering to the pride of the English and their haughty sovereign.

The ostensible object of the illustrious visitor was to pay the duty of a nephew to the queen, his royal aunt, Catherine of Arragon, but his main purpose was to obtain personal influence in the councils and favor of her all-potent consort, in whose despotic hands the balance of power in Europe was, at that eventful period, suspended; and on whose caprice might be said to depend the destinies of the French and Spanish monarchs; a truth which, two years previous to this epoch, had been arrogantly enough intimated to the royal rivals, Charles and Francis, by Henry's presumptuous device, at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, which was an English archer drawing a bow with the following

motto—"He wins whom I favor," an assumption of superiority which, however galling to those high-spirited princes, neither of them ventured to resent.

The Emperor Charles, though apparently imbued with the lofty romance of the fast-vanishing age of chivalry, and affecting, in his general conversation and some few of his actions, the air and tone of a knight-errant, which, indeed, well assorted with the dignified grace of his person and the noble gallantry of his bearing, concealed, beneath the open serenity of a youthful brow, the cold calculating caution, the penetration and habitual deception of a mature politician, ever ready to observe and take advantage of the weak points of others.

Aware of the importance of securing, at any sacrifice, the friendship of the English monarch, at a juncture so truly momentous, and unwilling to trust the negotiation of a treaty, with a prince of Henry's peculiarities, in other hands, he, with the bold enterprise of a young, ardent adventurer, as the world at large imagined, but in reality, with the profound judgment of a skilful diplomatist, determined on becoming his own ambassador to the court of his aunt's husband; well knowing that in consequence of this close connection with the royal pair, he should derive advantages of unreserved intercourse with them both, which it would be impossible to transfer to any person acting as his representative.

It was on the probable opportunity which he anticipated of being permitted to exercise in private his persuasive eloquence of speech, his brilliant wit, and refined flattery, that he rested his hopes of success with Henry. It was not without good reason that he calculated on his powers of universally pleasing; since no one in Europe was a more accomplished master of that all-potent art, which it is morally impossible for any person of real integrity to be, since, in most cases it necessarily involves a sacrifice of the truth.

Those persons are, however, mere novices in the science of deception, who allow the slightest appearance of artifice to be perceptible in their manners; those of the Emperor Charles were distinguished by an apparent frankness and ingenuousness that deceived even the veteran statesman, Wolsey, into the belief that he was all candor and sensibility, and possessed of feelings that might be played upon by the designing and hypocritical at will. He was even kind enough to warn his imperial friend, as he considered him, of the danger of yielding to the warm impulses of a young and generous heart, inexperienced in the

sinuosities of princes and courtiers. The unfolding events of a few brief months, from that period, sufficed to convince the guileful premier and favorite of Henry, that he had been the easy dupe of the apparently rash, inconsiderate boy, whom he had ventured to counsel and admonish.

Aware that in Wolsey he had to cope with an accomplished dissembler, Charles, who was equally an adept in simulation and dissimulation, prevailed by an affectation of perfect artlessness; but, in his transactions with Wolsey's master, he was, in his turn, deceived into the erroneous belief, that bluntness of speech is a token of sincerity. And here a curious study might have been afforded to the acute observers of character, among those who witnessed the intercourse between the polished, insinuating Spaniard, and our bluff King Hal; who, under the rough cloak of habitual coarseness, and even rudeness of speech, was equally insincere, and more than a match in mental reservation and diplomatic chicanery, with his political and cautious visiter. In fact Charles, while he fancied he was humoring the English monarch to the top of his bent, by falling in with all his tastes for spectacles and quaint devices, and entering, with the apparent relish of a full-grown baby, into the varied diversions of feasts, pageants, and processions, which Henry prepared for his entertainment, was himself beguiled, by these means, into the most unseasonable delays and digressions from the business nearest his heart—the conclusion of an alliance offensive and defensive with King Henry; to be cemented by a treaty of marriage with the Princess Mary, at that time the heiress presumptive of England and Ireland.

Ten days of the precious, and indeed, to him, invaluable time, which he had with difficulty stolen from the arrangement of affairs of vital importance, had been already frittered away in a fatiguing succession of spectacles, sports, and festivities; each more annoying to the apparently delighted emperor than the last. It required all his address and command of temper to conceal his impatience and vexation, while compelled to play the wearisome part of a conspicuous puppet, day after day, to a foreign populace, whose admiration of his fine person and gallant horsemanship was of no value to him, while he felt the impossibility of obtaining the slightest opportunity of confidential intercourse with any of the parties with whom he was so desirous of forming the closest ties of interest.

To avoid a repetition of the splendid public ceremonials, in which he

found he could not decline the part assigned to him without giving a mortal affront to the imperious English sovereign, he expressed a wish to visit some of Henry's country palaces; but it was to little purpose that, in compliance with this desire, he was conducted in turn, to the royal seats of Richmond, Greenwich, Hampton, and Windsor; for each journey was performed with the pomp of a regal progress, and afforded fresh pretences for public festivities, with hunting, hawking, and all the other sylvan pastimes, in which the whole population of the adjacent country were permitted to participate. The amusements of the court, to the anxious and overburdened mind of him, in whose honor they were instituted, were the most painful penances to which he had ever been condemned.

Even the proud festival of his inauguration, as a Knight Companion of the Garter, gratifying as it was to his elegant tastes, and well according with the poetical spirit of romance which so singularly manifested itself, by fits and starts, throughout the splendid career of this Haroun Alraschid of modern history, he could willingly have dispensed with, because it consumed time, and did not advance him, the slightest degree in the important purpose for which he had visited England. Everything, it is true, appeared in a favorable train for the accomplishment of the treaty of marriage and political alliance with Henry; but he was sufficiently versed in the arcana of diplomatic affairs to perceive, that it would proceed no farther, unless something of a far more conclusive nature was agreed upon before he returned to the continent. To effect this desired end, he flattered himself that nothing was required but the opportunity of exercising, in the privacy of social intercourse with the king, queen, and cardinal, the unrestrained powers of his talents and fascinations.

His ingenuity finally suggested a plan, which offered some probability of withdrawing himself and them from the eternal drama of state pageantry, in which they had been so engrossingly engaged since his arrival in England. He assumed the air and tone of a pious devotee, one morning after attending high mass in Windsor chapel, and whispered in the ear of the saintly Catherine his desire of making a pilgrimage, incognito, with her, the king, the cardinal, and one or two favored members of the court and council, to the far-famed shrine of the Lady of Walsingham; nay, he went so far as to assert, "that he had vowed this pilgrimage, before the altar of Compostello, more than a twelvemonth before his first visit to England, 1520; and that the blessed virgin had

appeared to him, in a dream, to reproach him with wasting the time in sinful feasts and idle divertisements which ought to be devoted to the performance of his unfulfilled obligation of devotion to her honor and glory."

All those who are versed in historical antiquities will remember, that the town of Walsingham in Norfolk was celebrated, throughout Europe, for a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which was only second in fame to that of our Lady of Loretto; and Queen Catherine attributed the signal success with which she had conducted the government during Henry's absence, in his French campaign, the glorious victory of Flodden Field and the death of the invading Scotch monarch, to the especial favor of our Lady of Walsingham, to whose shrine she had already made one pilgrimage, and in the fervor of her gratitude had vowed another, in the name of herself and her royal lord. With Henry our Walsingham Lady appears to have been a favorite saint; for the chronicles and traditions of Norfolk record, "that he visited her shrine in the second year of his reign, walking barefoot all the way from Barsham, a neighboring village, to present the image with a costly necklace."

The artful Charles was perfectly aware of those circumstances, when he named our Lady of Walsingham as the peculiar object of his devout veneration; and rightly calculated that nothing would be more flattering to Henry's superstitious prejudices; since a favorite saint in those days, was adored with a truly partisan spirit; and it was a point of ambition in the votaries of our Lady of Walsingham, to win as many worshippers to her shrine as the rival fame of Thomas a Becket could boast. It was well known that Henry was zealously bent on asserting the superior sanctity of the Walsingham shrine to that of Canterbury, in which there was not only something of gallantry, as the former was dedicated to the first of female saints, but, perhaps, a little matter of party feeling, on account of the liberal principles professed by St. Thomas of Canterbury, of whom no despotic monarch of England could be a very sincere worshipper. Indeed, Henry took a very early opportunity of testifying his ill-will toward the memory of Becket, by the desecration and plunder of his shrine; expunging his name from the Kalendar of Saints, attacking his character, and condemning his bones to be burned with great indignity.

Queen Catherine, on whose tender conscience the remembrance of her own unfulfilled vow, of a pilgrimage to "the blessed land of holy

Walsingham," had from time to time pressed somewhat uneasily, readily undertook to do every thing in her power to induce her royal consort to comply with the pious wish of her imperial nephew—to visit our Lady's Norfolk shrine, in the capacity of private individuals, three to offer up the unrestrained homage of the heart, unfettered by the cumbrous pomp of royal splendour, and the presence of gazing crowds, before whom kings and queens must always be prepared to appear as actors, and perform their parts in every situation with grace and effect, whether it be on the throne, in the banqueting room, at the chase, or in the temple of God.

The queen, whose health and spirits were beginning to decline, and who was, doubtless, the first to perceive the gradual decay of the king's affections, was also desirous of promoting the projected alliance for her daughter; an alliance so every way gratifying to her feelings as a Spanish princess, and no less so to her maternal pride. She had, with anxious interest, watched the tedious progress of the negociation, which he had, hitherto, vainly endeavored to facilitate, without venturing to take an active part in the business, where she was aware her interference would be liable to suspicion or misconstruction. All she could do, therefore, was to render every indirect assistance in her power to her imperial nephew, who had taken especial care to render himself amiable in her sight, and whom she regarded with proud affection; considering him as the very personification of the *beau ideal* which the poets and romancers of her native land had drawn of a Castilian knight and gentleman; and if, at times, she was inclined to sigh that Heaven had not blessed her with such a son, she was consoled by the probability of his becoming the husband of her beloved daughter.

Mary was, at that period, a sickly, unattractive child, of seven years old, and Catherine felt the policy of obtruding her as little as possible on the attention of a gay, handsome prince, who had scarcely completed his twenty-second year; to whom the sight of a puny, peevish consort, of her description, would be productive of feelings rather inimical to the connection; so that her wise mother determined on leaving her in care of her nurse and governess.

The pilgrimage to our Lady of Walsingham was finally resolved on by Henry, in compliance with the united requests of his favorite sister Mary, the beautiful Dowager of France and Dutchess of Suffolk, whom Queen Catherine had won over to her interest, and of the fascinating Anne Boleyn, herself a native of Norfolk. Anne Boleyn, though secret-

ly inclined to Lutheran principles, was, at that time, quite enough of a papist to regard the shrine of Walsingham with reverence, which in these days, would be justly styled idolatrous; and which, perhaps, she would have considered so, had such a feeling been cherished by another, for any saint's shrine in Christendom, but that which was the pride and boast of her native county, that county which the sweet remembrance of her childhood told her was the fairest in the world; far preferable to the vine-clad vales and rosy bowers of France, where she had spent her early youth in the service first of Mary Tudor, the Queen of Lewis XII., and afterward in that of Queen Claude, the wife of Francis I., at whose death she returned to England, and had been recently recommended by her first patroness, Mary Tudor, now Dowager of France and Dutchess of Suffolk, to the post of maid of honor to Queen Catherine. Her beauty and vivacious wit had, two years previous to this period attracted the transient attention of King Henry, at the Field of the Cloth of Gold; and since her introduction into the queen's service, the impression made at that time has been gradually strengthening; and though it had not as yet assumed the character of that vehement passion which swept down before it every restraint of law, justice, religion and decency which impeded its gratification, the growing partiality of the king for Mistress Boleyn had been noticed by persons of the court; and her interest had been solicited by many a noble suitor, and, in some instances obtained, to the perversion of right and equity.

Even the high-minded and dignified Catherine had condescended indirectly to avail herself of the influence of her fair rival, in the present instance, by adroitly engaging her to discourse of her native country before the king, who was charmed with the freshness of feeling with which she described her remembrance of a pedestrian pilgrimage, that she once made with her grandmother and nurse, in the merry month of June, from Blicking Hall, the place of her birth, to the shrine of our Lady of Walsingham; and she concluded by vehemently expressing her desire to visit it again. Henry "at last swore, 'by the light of that very lady's brow,' that he would set out the next day, on a pilgrimage to her blessed shrine of Walsingham himself, were it not that he was bound in princely courtesy, as well as hospitality, to tarry at Windsor or London, so long as it was the pleasure of the emperor to honor him by remaining his guest." Charles, with the ready tact that was natural to him, instantly seized the opportunity of obtaining his own desire,

by an appearance of graceful anxiety to gratify Henry's sudden wish, of paying his devotions to our Lady of Walsingham, and assured him, "that he considered his pious declaration little less than holy inspiration from the blessed virgin herself." He then related his dream, and protested his intention of accompanying the king and queen on the pilgrimage, which Wolsey, who was in presence, taking his cue from Henry's apparent inclination for the scheme, pronounced to be their bounden duty to undertake as early as possible, and that without pomp or parade, but as meekly, humbly, and devoutly as such a journey could be performed.

"But how, my Lord Cardinal, can that be done, when an emperor, a king, two queens, a cardinal-archbishop, besides dukes, earls, maids of honor, and other such distinguished personages, travel a hundred and twenty miles in company, from the metropolis to the most famous shrine in Christendom?" said Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, the brother-in-law and favorite of the king.

"Thou hast well proposed the question, Charles," replied King Henry; "verily," he added, laughing, "our company will increase like a rolling snow-ball by the way, till we shall be stifled with the breath of the rude commons, and bring dust enough with us to bury our Lady of Walsingham, chapel and all; and then we shall be stared upon by so many thousand pair of eyes, each remarking upon our behavior, that our very sneezings will be chronicled, and we shall not be able to practise the slightest divertisement for pastime as we go along, and I am one who hold, that to be merry and wise is the duty of a good pilgrim."

"And whenever my royal brother appears in his own character, he must expect to be subjected to such inconvenient proofs of regard, from his loving lieges," rejoined his sister, the lovely Dowager of France, with a smile; "but, Henry, I can propose a remedy, which will, in all probability, prevent the evil of which you complain."

"Speak out, Marie, if thou knowest of any mode of prevention; and I will reward thee with a goodly necklace of faultless pearls, set in the device of a garland of star-flowers," said the king.

"Well, then, my royal brother, what say you to the simple plan of travelling as pilgrims in verity to this blessed shrine of Walsingham; whereby we shall avoid the inconvenience of being surrounded by an army of impatient spies, we shall win the grace of the sweet virgin by our laudable humility, and above all, brother mine, as we shall take a small but pleasant company of our own selecting, we shall be free to

amuse ourselves as we list by the way; and the adventures we shall doubtless meet with, on our journey, will serve us to make sport withal for the remainder of our lives."

"I will make a goodly romaunt of them, and cause them to be imprinted in a fair book, my lady queen, if you will admit me to attend you on this holy pilgrimage," said a graceful young man, in a page's dress, raising a pair of the most eloquent and expressive dark eyes from the ivory tablet, in which he had, despite the presence of royalty, been stealthily employed in inscribing characters.

"Ah, Sir Thomas Wyatt," she replied, with a smile, "your proposition is of itself sufficient to tempt us to set forth, on our pious undertaking, without another hour's delay, if we are to be honored with the company of a second Chaucer, to chronicle us all in sweet poesy; but, I must not hope for the distinction of being your inspiration, for your bright fantasies are stirred by a younger and fairer muse," and she glanced expressively at Anne Boleyn, near whom the enamored poet had stationed himself.

"Madam," replied Wyatt, in some confusion, "I am no eagle to soar so high as the resplendent sun, but content myself, like the pastoral swan, with wooing the gentle lilies on the margin of the quiet streamlet of private life, in which my lowly estate is cast. Yet, deem me not ungrateful for the gracious words of commendation, with which you have deigned to name my poor verses. The praise of beauty, and royal beauty too, is prouder guerdon to a British troubadour, than the golden violet of Thoulouse was of yore to the Provencal poets, who bent the knee before the noble Clemence D'Issaure."

"Thou art a very mirror of courtesy, Sir Thomas," replied the fair dowager, "and though I pretend not to emulate the munificence of the princely Lady of Thoulouse, yet I will venture to promise this *fleur-de-Lis* brooch of precious gems, from my own sleeve, to that pilgrim who shall cheer us on the way to Walsingham with the choicest tale or daintiest song."

The animated colour mantled on the cheek of the youthful poet at these words. He bent his knee before the royal Mary, and reverentially pressing the embroidered margin of her rose-colored velvet train to his lips, bowed with the air of one who considered himself the successful candidate for the prize, and replied in words of suitable acknowledgement,—

"Thou art very audacious to make thyself so certain of receiving the

palm of victory, Sir Thomas, when there be so many in presence who may perchance, foil thee at thine own weapons," said his cruel lady-love, the fair Boleyn; "who knoweth whether his grace, the king, may not win the prize?" she added in a half aside, that was nevertheless intended for the royal ear.

"I doubt me not but he will," said the queen, looking tenderly upon her fickle consort, "if he will condescend to enter the lists with those so much beneath him, both in rank and intellectual graces."

"Ye will make us stark vain an' ye offer any more of this o'er sweet incense, gentle ladies," said the king, endeavoring to conceal his evident satisfaction, at the compliment paid to his literary powers, of which he was notoriously proud. "Small chance," he continued, in a strain of mock humility, "shall we stand of bearing off a prize, for which there will be such accomplished competitors belike, as our imperial nephew here, who comes from the land of romance and song; our fair sister of France, who is, though I say it to her face, the ablest *raconteuse* I ever knew; not to speak of her loving husband, Charles Brandon, who can make indifferent good verses, and tell pleasant tales too, when in the humor; and then there is our worthy cardinal withal, whose wits have proved almost as good an inheritance to him as our royal kingdom; not to speak of our loving queen, who is more than our mistress in such matters; and her maid of honor the fair Boleyn, looketh as though she could tell a tale worth hearing. I say nought of our young poet, Wyatt, because we have at all times acknowledged him as one of the ornaments of our court, and been ever ready to commend his sonnets and madrigals; therefore, I needs must think, I shall only expose myself to contempt, if I venture to enter the lists against such competitors."

"Nay, my royal brother, thou shalt have fair play, and thou wilt so far pleasure us," said the queen-duchess, "and though I will not be so partial a judge as to promise the prize to thee, yet I will do more, I will ensure thee especially good pastime, in listening to the pleasant romaunts of thy fellow pilgrims, whom it will be but fair to reward with one of thy right merry tales, in return for the amusement thou shalt receive from theirs."

"Ah, sister Mal!" replied the king, "thou always wert a parlous wench in thy maiden estate, and I see thy queenly dignity hath not in aught saddened thy cheer, or stinted thy liveliness of speech! Many a quaint and pleasant device have we twain concocted together, for the

amusement of our queen and court, who nought suspected us, till we were fain to unmask to put them out of their perplexity and enjoy their surprise—for the remembrance of which happy times, I suppose, I must e'en oblige thee in this thy ardent desire, and play the masker and mummer with thee once more; in which I hope we shall be joined by this goodly company; who must be content, like me, to lay aside their dignity, of whatsoever degree, and shroud themselves in pilgrim's weeds, for a brief space, for the love of our blessed Lady of Walsingham; to whose shrine we will betake us, as her pious votaries did of yore, with scrip and staff and sandal shoon, taking especial care to keep our purpose secret, that we be not pestered with the rude rablement that would otherwise throng us on the road."

"Then, my gracious Lord," said Queen Catherine, "I should think our best plan would be to leave Windsor this afternoon, and travel in our whirlicotes to my palace of Havering Bower; where I invite you all to sup and sleep, and to-morrow morning, while the dew drops yet hang on the leafy glades of Epping Forest, we will up and commence our pilgrimage."

"Agreed," said the king, "now, sister Mal, let us reckon o'er our pilgrims."

"King Henry, Queen Catherine, and the emperor Charles, of course," said the Queen of France, as the lovely Mary Tudor was generally styled in the court of her brother. The emperor, to whom this beautiful princess had originally been affianced, sighed and looked down when he encountered the sparkling glance of her animated eyes, which she had, unconsciously, turned on him, as she named him, as one of the leading characters in the *dramatic personæ* of the Walsingham pilgrims that she was preparing to inscribe in the golden tablets, which she according to the custom of that period, wore suspended by a rich chain from her girdle.

Cold, cautious politician as he was, the heart of the youthful potentate was not insensible to the power of loveliness like hers; associated, too, as it was, with so many graces of mind and manner; and when he reflected that, but for his own breach of faith, this transcendant creature might have been his own, a visible shade of sadness clouded his lofty brow, and he sunk into a fit of melancholy musing, which was observed, and attributed to its right cause, by both king and cardinal, who had, in the first instance, been deeply mortified by his rejection of an alliance, then as eagerly desired by them, as it would now have

been embraced by their imperial visitor, had the choice remained in his power; but, like many others, Charles did not discover the value of the prize, he had so capriciously rejected, till it was too late. It was with feelings of absolute envy that he regarded the happy Brandon, on whose shoulder the royal Mary leaned, in the fond familiarity of wedded love, while she employed herself in inscribing in her tablets, from King Henry's dictation the following names:

"King Henry, Queen Catherine, the Emperor Charles, Mary Queen Dowager of France and Duchess of Suffolk, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, Cardinal Wolsey, Archbishop of York, Sir Thomas Wyatt, Page to his Grace the King, and Mrs. Anne Boléyn, Maid of Honor to the Queen." "Eight persons in all," she pursued, looking up, "to travel without pomp or state, to the shrine of our blessed Lady at Walsingham, in pilgrims' weeds, mounted on sober steeds and demeaning themselves discreetly and meekly to other pilgrims, whom they may encounter at hostels, ferry-houses, or convents, by the way-side; not boastfully asserting their own rights of royalty, or nobility, to obtain precedency and worship from those who may not otherwise be disposed to yield it to them; but preserving an inviolate secrecy as to their real names and quality, until they reach the chapel of our blessed Lady of Walsingham, whose grace may we all obtain. Amen."

"Thou hast indited it like a cunning clerk, Marie," said the king smiling graciously on his best loved sister, "and now will I set my sign manual to thy brief, in token that it pleaseth me well; and one scripture text will I add, for the edification and observance of our fellow-pilgrims, all of whom I request to lay the same to heart." Then taking the tablets from the hand of the fair writer, he headed the leaf, which contained the names of the pilgrims elect, with the following admonition from Joseph to his brethren:—

"See ye fall not out by the way."

CHAPTER II.

“ And now the progress of our pilgrims tell,
With each adventure, duly as it fell.”

Chaucer.

That great master of the human heart, Sir Walter Scott, has openly observed:—

“ Such inconsistent modes have we,
E’en when our passions touch the key.”

The Emperor Charles, when he saw everything in such unhopèd-for progress toward the accomplishment of his project, and that an incognito pilgrimage was actually to be commenced on the following morning, to the distant shrine of Walsingham; the very circumstances of which would afford him every facility of converse with the king, on the subject nearest his heart, was nevertheless sad and spiritless; not only during the journey to the queen’s jointure palace of Havering Bower, but even after his arrival at that pleasant retreat, his melancholy continued. That evening it was observed with surprise, by the fair ladies of the court, that he declined joining in the dance, the mask, or even in his own national games of tables or tric-trac, to which he was challenged by his royal aunt, the queen. Neither did he accord the tribute of a smile to the tricks and witticisms of the king’s Jester, Will Summers, or Wolsey’s inimitable fool Patch.

In short, the handsomest, the most accomplished, and most powerful prince in the world, was, for the first time in his life, in love, and hopelessly so too; for he plainly perceived, that the peerless object of his passion, his once betrothed but rejected bride, was so devotedly attached to her present husband, the comparatively speaking low-born Brandon, that she would not have exchanged one of his auburn ringlets for the imperial diadem, which Charles would now willingly have laid at her feet.

He had ventured to tell her so with his eyes, during the journey from Windsor to Havering Bower, and had received, in return, one of those stern glances of silent reproof, from which, when darted from the radiant eyes of virtuous beauty, many a daring libertine has shrunk back, as much abashed as Milton's arch fiend, when touched by Ithuriel's spear. For one day of his life, the Emperor Charles, in spite of his characteristic coldness, policy and habitual self-command, betrayed the feelings of a disconsolate lover. The fact has been chronicled by grave historians against him, and it was one of Cupid's proudest triumphs that a heart so apparently invulnerable should feel the sharpness of one of his light-feathered shafts, and that so keenly that he suffered his pain to be perceptible ; but it was for one day only, for those who had jested most on the melancholy humor of the love-lorn emperor, on the evening of the arrival of the royal party at Havering Bower, were compelled to acknowledge, that on the following morning, at break of day, when the illustrious pilgrims assembled at breakfast, none appeared so blithe of cheer as he, or saluted the king and queen, and even the lovely cause of his preceding sadness, Mary of France, with a greater semblance of ease and courtly gallantry ; and when having assumed their pilgrims' weeds, they all proceeded to mount their steeds and palfreys on the lawn, he, notwithstanding the incumbrance of hood and gown of russet grey, sprang on his fleet jennet Pelayo with the fiery spirit of a paladin, rather than the grave demeanor of a sober pilgrim, and woebegone lover ; and performed such caracols, in the apparent exuberance of youthful spirits, as excited the wonder and admiration of all the ladies of the court, and caused King Henry, whose increasing corpulency of figure made him feel, with some degree of bitterness, the impossibility of emulating such feats of noble horsemanship, to call him to order in these words :—

“ Why, how now, Sir Charles D'Espaigne ! art thou the first to break the rules of our pious pilgrimage, in which it was enacted,—‘ that the pilgrims were to be mounted on sober steeds, and to demean themselves meekly and discreetly ;’ whereas, thou art prancing in pride, in the very commencement of our journey, on a horse that hath more devilry in his conditions than the Dragon of Wantley.”

“ Wo, ho ! Pelayo !” said the youthful emperor, reining in his matchless steed to lamb-like quiescence, in compliance with the peremptory intimation of King Henry ; and by no means displeased at his assum-

ing the tone of familiar authority, which their near connection sanctioned, he replied, with a lively but deferential air:—

“I cry you mercy, royal uncle, for the peca-dillo; but indeed, I must vindicate my gallant Pelayo from the reproach you have cast upon his conditions; which, *ma foi!* are as you may perceive, by his present gentleness, as gracious and tractable as those of my Lady Aunt’s palfrey, Grissel; and the caracols which induced you to liken him to that perverse beast, your Dragon of Wantley, were, I must confess the result of mine own wanton levity, in urging his generous spirit too sharply with the spur, while at the same time I controled him with the curb.”

“Wherein, I needs must say, you acted more like a hair-brained school-boy, who hath mounted him on the back of a good horse before he hath gotten grace to handle him, than with the grave and majestical dignity of a Spanish Monarch, and German Emperor, to say nothing of the sad and sweet demeanor of pilgrim bound to pay his vows at our Lady’s shrine of Walsingham. Odds my life! Nephew Charles, how thinkest thou, such caperings agree with thy gray gaber-dine? Beshrew me, if I can tell what maggot hath bitten thee of late. Last night thou wert as mum as a mouse, and looked like an uncowled friar on all our divertisements, and wert so mopish and melancholic, that I began to think of ordering Dr. Butts to compound for thee a rare posset of mine own devising, for the cure of megrims and vapours, which Queen Catherine and other ladies have often taken with excellent good effect; but, this morning, thou art as merry and mad as a morris dancer on May-day.”

“Dost thou not know, my royal uncle,” said Charles, “that I was born under the influence of the planet Mercury, and am therefore affected by the change of the weather. Yesterday the heavens were overcast, and I was heavy of cheer; but this morn, the sun looketh forth so gaily upon our journey that I cannot choose but rejoice in his glorious beams—for, by my troth, he seemeth to smile on our pilgrimage, and I venture to predict that we shall have a bright week for holy joyance.”

The pleasant excuses of the imperial visiter having been accepted in the same playful spirit in which they were offered, King Henry gave the word for the procession to advance. The emperor took especial care not to rouse the petulant monarch’s spleen a second time by any unseasonable display of youthful grace and activity, but for the remain-

der of the day rode by his side with the sedate gravity of an equestrian hermit, secretly congratulating himself on having an opportunity of flattering the despotic temper of the ill-mannered Tudor, by any concessions which could be made without compromising either his inclination or his interests.

Henry was so well pleased with the respectful attention paid by Charles on this occasion, to the slightest intimation of his pleasure, that he once actually clapped him on the shoulder, and saluting him by the affectionate appellation of Nephew Charles, assured him "that he should consider his daughter, the Princess Mary, the most fortunate damsel in Christendom, if she became his consort. We only wish," added the king, "that the girl were eight years older, that we might see the business happily concluded without farther delay."

Charles, who was of course much gratified by this so favorable allusion, on Henry's part, to the proposed alliance, replied in suitable terms of courtly acknowledgment to the compliment, but at the very moment he did so, his eye falling on the wife of the happy Brandon, he with difficulty suppressed the rising sigh that almost choked the expression of his anticipated felicity, as the husband of her royal niece, whom, with all her mighty expectations as presumptive heiress of England, he would, politician though he was, gladly exchange for her beautiful aunt, whose want of portion had been so strenuously urged by his prudent ministers as the principal reason for breaking the contract of marriage between her and himself. A marriage which, now that it was a thing impossible, he fancied he would have compassed at any sacrifice, had it been in his power. I say he fancied, because it is more than probable that had the choice still remained in his own decision, he would, with the inconsistency of men in general, have consulted his interests rather than his happiness in the matter.

The first day's journey, which was pleasantly and for those times expeditiously performed, brought the royal pilgrims and their little train, as far on their way as Bishop's Stortford. Here they halted for the night, and took up their quarters at a small monastery, at the entrance of the town, where Wolsey, who was the conductor of the party, being well known to the superior, they received the most hospitable attention and entertainment, though the quality of his company was not suspected, it having been previously arranged by the king, who was very desirous of preserving his incognito, that in case of the

well-known person of the cardinal being recognised, the others were to pass for pilgrims travelling in his train.

Both king and queen were so much fatigued with the extraordinary exertion of travelling upward of twenty miles on horseback, immediately after their journey from Windsor to Havering Bower, that they proposed retiring to rest after partaking the evening meal, which was hastily prepared for their refection, by the hospitable fraternity, and to which King Henry, whose appetite was sharpened by the fresh air of the forest, and a longer fast than usual, did such ample justice, that the astonished prior asked Wolsey, in a whispered aside, "if the fat pilgrim were not indeed a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"Thou wouldst say, thou hast given a shrewd guess, an' thou knewest I all, master prior," thought Wolsey, who could scarcely forbear from smiling at the quaintness of the question as applied to the proceedings of his royal master at the convent supper—but assuming a grave countenance, he told the prior that if the appetite of any of his company exceeded their welcome, he should make a point of paying for what they consumed, as it was not his wish to be chargeable to any one.

The prior, who was one of those facetious souls who will have their joke, without regard to consequences, was sorely dismayed in finding that it had given offence to the mighty cardinal, and began to offer the humblest apologies for his observations on the fat pilgrim's devourings—which he assured Wolsey it did him good to see; nor should he have ventured a remark on his eating, had he not felt his curiosity excited by the singular behavior of the said pilgrim, whose manners, or rather lack of manners, made him suspect that he was not altogether what he appeared, but some very strange, outlandish person, who had joined himself to his eminence's worshipful train. "But mayhap," added the prior, who perceived from the cardinal's countenance that he was floundering on in the dark, from one blunder to another, and was at the same time very solicitous to repair his mistakes—"mayhap most reverend and puissant lord, I have fallen into great error in unadvisingly observing on the doings of yonder portly pilgrim, whom I now, from certain tokens, do opine to be your eminence's most worshipful fool."

"Friend," rejoined Wolsey, "it would be wiser of thee to defer passing thine opinion till it be asked, and then to say as little as need be of any man of whom thou knowest so little as of yonder

pilgrim : whose fangs (since thou likenest him to a wolf,) thou hadst better avoid."

Then observing that the king had risen from the table, the cardinal ventured to infringe upon the rules of the pilgrimage, by taking up the prior's own silver lamp to light the royal incognito to his chamber—an action which betrayed sufficiently, even to their simple host, the quality of the guest on whose appetite he had passed such indiscreet remarks ; and, falling on his knees full in the king's path, he exclaimed, in a doleful whine,

"Alack, alack! my lord cardinal, and have I put my holy neck into jeopardy by treasonably mistaking our gracious lord the king for thy fool. I cry him mercy, for I wist not who the portly pilgrim was till I saw thee rise to do him service, for well I wot there is but one man in Christendom, barring his holiness the pope, to whom thou wouldst condescend to offer thy devoir, and that must be our lord the king, whom may God preserve and bless."

"Odds! my life! what is all this pother about?" cried Henry, stepping back in surprise, "take me for thy fool, Wolsey, ha! The fellow may be nearer the truth, in some things, than he thinks, by the mass."

"My gracious lord," replied the cardinal, "this blundering prior is an instance of the truth of the proverb, 'a fool's bolt is soon shot.' I pray you to forgive his unmannered ignorance, since he was guiltless of intentional disrespect to your grace, and only uttered a random guess, to provoke me into disclosing your real quality."

"That I might enjoy the rare felicity of paying my dutiful and loving homage to your royal grace, by ordering such a breakfast for you as might prove my loyal and loving respect unto your royal person," rejoined the distressed prior ; "and, indeed, my gracious lord, you must lay the fault on the closeness of your masking, and the quaintness of your mumming ; but, in veritable truth, I took you for something extraordinary under it all—did I not, my lord cardinal?"

"For a lion in an ass's skin, was it, prior, ha?" rejoined the king, laughing at his own conceit, in reversing the position of the adage, and willing himself to turn the attention of the company from the simple prior's first guess. But the prior was one of those absurd people who are incapable of taking a hint—so he replied in a tone of horror,

"The saints forbid that I should have taken mine anointed lord for so rapacious a beast as a savage lion, that goeth about romping and

roaring, and seeking whom he may devour; or profanely likened the holy garb of a Walsingham pilgrim to the foolish skin of a vile ass, but indeed my gracious lord, I only took you, as my lord cardinal knoweth, for a wolf in sheep's clothing. Now a sheep is a very gracious animal—and if possessed of the valor and wisdom of a wolf, would be more respected than any beast of the forest; yea, he would be a worshipful creature, as I will prove by several demonstrable arguments."

"I must beseech of you, master prior, to defer them till the next time I call at your hospitable house," yawned the king; "at present I am somewhat sleepy, and would prefer one of your down pillows to the best sermon that was ever preached; though I must own you have chosen a queer text to hold forth upon."

Henry then gave Wolsey a sign to dismiss the rest of the company having no inclination to leave them to amuse themselves at his expense.

Wolsey was sorely vexed at what he considered the untoward conclusion of the first day of the royal pilgrimage; which he greatly feared would leave a disagreeable impression on the mind of the unreasonable and imperious monarch, his master, who he well knew would hold him accountable for anything unpleasant that might occur by the way, as he had, in compliance with the emperor's earnest desire, exerted all his influence over the mind of his royal master, to induce him to this mode of performing the pilgrimage. His feelings, therefore, were not the most enviable, when Henry, the next morning, as they proceeded to mount, told him, "He should take upon himself the conduct of the journey the rest of the way to Walsingham, since he had thought proper to betray his quality to so absurd a dolt, as the prior of Bishop's Stortford, whose garrulous folly on the occasion had been the means of exposing him to much ridicule and mortification before his imperial guest."

Wolsey replied with an air of profound respect, "That he doubted not of his grace's discreet arrangement of all matters on the road; but," he added, slyly, resolving on an expedient for restoring the king to good humor, at any rate, "as your grace is not so well acquainted with the 'Walsingham-way' as some of your subjects, and may find difficulty belike in understanding the provincial language and tones of your East Anglian subjects, will it not be advisable for the fair Mistress Boleyn to ride near your grace as she is a native of Norfolk, and is familiar with

the face of the country and the phraseology of the people on this road ?”

“By my halidom, thou hast spoken well, cardinal” replied the king, clearing his moody brow; “come hither, sweet Mistress Anne,” he continued, beckoning to the fair Boleyn, who, having fallen into the rear of the party, was just then very pleasantly engaged in carrying on, what in these days would be called an agreeable flirtation with her accomplished lover, young Wyatt. “Sweet Mistress Anne,” pursued the king, casting an amorous regard on her animated countenance, “an’ thou preferrest not the company of yonder rhyming springald, to the service of thy liege lord, and lend us thy counsel as to the track we take toward thy far-praised county of Norfolk.

The lovely Boleyn, though she cast a glance of affected vexation on Sir Thomas Wyatt, at this interruption, actually blushed with triumph at the royal requisition, which she obeyed with a coy air of pretty reluctance, that increased her charms in the eyes both of the king and his enamored page; and instead of confessing that the lapse of several years, since she (at that time a child, too young to pay much attention to the roads she travelled) had pursued that way, had wholly obliterated it from her memory, she undertook the office of the king’s guide to Walsingham, with the utmost confidence. She relied on the shrewdness of her own observations, and the occasional hints she trusted she should receive from Wolsey, as all sufficient for the purpose; but Wolsey, though he had artfully indulged the king with a *tete-a-tete* with his favorite beauty of the court, for the purpose of restoring him to good humor, bore her in secret no very good will, and being somewhat nettled by his royal master’s capricious conduct, in deposing him from the post of leader of the pilgrimage, he maliciously left the pair to their own devices, and falling into the back ground, gratified the emperor by conversing apart with him on the subject of the treaty, and, in his refined flatteries, and liberal promises, soon found consolation for the slight he had received from the imperious tyrant, his master.

Mary of France and Brandon, though they had been married for seven years, were still so much of lovers, that they preferred riding together, and entertaining themselves apart, so that the only persons of the company who were ill at ease, were Queen Catherine and Wyatt, on both of whom the apparent animation of the conversation between the king and the fair Boleyn inflicted exquisite pain.

CHAPTER III.

“ And here it falls in order to recite,
First how in social cheer they pass'd the night.”

Chaucer.

The first day's pilgrimage had been pleasantly enough performed, as the way was through the green glades of Epping Forest, over smooth roads, “ cut for the royal pleasure, and trimly kept by the king's ranger, at great cost and care;” but after they had passed through Bishop's Stortford, the country gradually became flat, barren, and dreary, and their track lay across wide moors and uncultivated heaths, over which, the fair but inexperienced guide the king had chosen, selected paths which she esteemed the most promising, and lying in the Norfolk direction, but which, in more instances than one, led to an impervious thicket of aboriginal forest, or to the very verge of some dismal morass. Had any other person been the means of leading the king into such manifold dangers, it had probably been dearly rued by the luckless elf; but the lovely Boleyn excused herself so wittily, and made such agreeable apologies to the enamored monarch, for every mistake, “ that he appeared,” as the queen, with a sigh, observed to Wyatt, “ to take pleasure in being so far beguiled from the true road, and led into such miry, doleful quags.”

Wolsey, however, knew from the appearance of a tall spire that rose in the distance on the left, that though they had diverged a little from the regular track, called the Walsingham way, it was in his power at any time, to lead them into the right road; but as he did not choose to do this unasked, he kept quietly in the rear with the emperor, and allowed his royal master to be “ wild-led,” (as the people of Suffolk would have phrased it,) through brake, and bush, and fen, and rush, by the fair “ *ignus fatuus* ” whom he was following, till he saw some danger of the portly monarch and his steed being foully engulfed

among the dismal marshes of Newport. Then out of consideration for the distress which he knew it would occasion the queen, he, with a stiff apology for the liberty he was taking, warned the king of his peril, and pointed out a firmer track. The ungrateful Henry, who was sorely out of humor with finding his nether garments completely defiled with black mud and oose, instead of thanking the cardinal for his useful admonition, muttered an ungracious rejoinder to the purport of "kings being less acquainted with marshy grounds than graziers' and butchers' sons."

The haughty cardinal, who felt any allusion to his humble birth more keenly than words can express, turned of a livid paleness at this speech, but possessed sufficient command over his temper to reply meekly, "It was scarcely to be expected they were," and once more retreated into the back ground, which certainly, under the present guidance, was the safest place.

It was now drawing fast toward evening, and the whole party were weary, hungry, and not a little uneasy, at finding themselves in the midst of a desolate moor, intersected with streams, pools of water, and deep ditches, while at every step they took they felt the ground quake beneath their horses' feet, and were occasionally splashed with mire and water. To add to their distress, the heavens, which had long worn a changeful, cloudy aspect, became suddenly black and lowering, and the rain began to fall in those large heavy drops which generally precede a thunder-storm.

The distress of the ladies was now very great; both the queens called on Wolsey for assistance, well knowing he was the only person at all likely to be of any service in guiding them out of their perilous situation; but, it was not till the king and his fair companion, Anne Boleyn, added their voices to the general demand for him to take the conduct of the party once more, that he deigned to afford them the aid of his counsel and guidance; and then it was so slowly and ceremoniously accorded, that King Henry, who, like all ill-mannered people, had forgotten his own rude speech, almost as soon as uttered, and was greatly hurt at the apparent insensibility of his premier to his peril, shouted at the top of his voice:—

"Hallo, there, my lord cardinal! wilt thou sit on thy mule's crupper quietly, looking at yon spire over thy left shoulder, while the majesty of England is well nigh floundering in a marsh ditch; I warrant me thou wouldst have shown a little more regard for one of thy father's

fat beeves, hadst thou seen it in like danger of being mired in Ipswich cattle marshes, ha !”

Wolsey, though he liked this second allusion to his plebeian origin still less than the first, was conscious that, this time, it was somewhat provoked, and hastened to render all the assistance in his power to extricate the king from his perilous situation. The royal steed was actually knee-deep in a quagmire, in which, oppressed by the weight of his burly rider, he was momentarily sinking deeper and deeper, and at length began to kick and plunge, in order to rid himself of his burden ; when Wolsey and Brandon approached near enough to lend their aid in drawing the terrified horse and discomfited rider from the unpleasant predicament in which they were involved.

As for the fair Boleyn, though a little alarmed at the execrations of the irritable monarch, whom she had unwittingly betrayed into such a strait, she was too active a horsewoman to be in much danger herself ; and lightly bounding over the treacherous ground, on her fleet-footed palfrey, and clearing one or two running streams and deep pools of water with flying leaps, she was on *terra firma* long before Wolsey and Brandon had impelled the panting, miry monarch, and his exhausted steed, to a place where they could with safety pause to recover breath.

The queen and the rest of the train now approached, with looks of solicitude to inquire how he was, to express their alarm at his late peril, and to congratulate him on his fortunate escape.

The king maintained a moody silence till he perceived Anne Boleyn, with a heightened color and dishevelled ringlets, endeavoring to shield herself from observation behind her royal friend and patroness, Mary of France—when, shaking his head reproachfully at her, he exclaimed,

“Ho, Mistress Anne, be these your tricks to entice me into your sweet, pleasant Norfolk pilgrimage ; and then, having beguiled me into a morass by the way, to fly off like a wild-fire Lady of the Fen, and leave me to get out of the quagmire as I might ? By the mass I shall look out for a different guess-sort of guide to-morrow.”

The fair Boleyn excused herself as well as she could, and the rain, now beginning to descend in torrents, put an end to all reproaches and recriminations, every one being eager to gain some place of shelter from the peltings of the pitiless storm.

Wolsey, who had some local acquaintance with the face of the country, once more assumed the lead, and after a little consideration, by taking a rather circuitous route, succeeded in finding a track across

the marshes, to a desolate hostel on the banks of that branch of the river Cam that is sometimes called the Granta, and in the vicinity of the springs of the Stort, the Chelmer, the Stour, and the Blackwater, among the sources of which rivers the royal party had been bewildered.

This hostel was, in fact, the Chesterford Ferry-house, known by the sign of "Saint Christopher's Oar." It was a damp, dilapidated building, with massive doors, and high narrow windows of a very antique appearance, and had evidently in former times been a fortified place; but whether the abode of some petty Norman chief, the retreat of robbers, or a den of fresh-water pirates, was uncertain. The ladies thought it had a suspicious aspect still, and certainly, to those who had all their lives been accustomed to the elegances and luxuries of courts and palaces, the blackened walls and iron-grated casements of the Chesterford Ferry-house had a very dismal appearance; but the strong red blaze of a bright fire within afforded some promise to the wet and wayworn travellers of drying their moist garments, and restoring warmth to their chilled frames; for though it was a June evening, the rain and the dense atmosphere of the Newport and Chesterford marshes where they had been wandering after sunset, had produced more ungenial effects than the wholesome sharp cold of a wintry day.

Wolsey, in his boyish days, had occasionally sojourned at this very house, with his father, when the sturdy butcher of Ipswich had been dealing with the Chesterford graziers for their cattle; and he knew too much of the place to be very sanguine in his expectations of obtaining anything of a very comfortable nature, in the shape of either accommodations, food, or even that cheapest of all articles, civility.—His host of "St. Christopher's Oar" had the appearance of an amphibious mud-monster, and the manners of a surly pig—not deigning to reply in other language than a hoarse sort of grunt, to the eager requisition of the king "for a good hot supper, and spiced ale and wine without delay."

Wolsey, well aware that his royal master's imperious manners were little likely to procure anything like attention with the person to whom he began to address his favorite expletives of "Ha," and "Ho!" assumed at once the social familiarity of an equal, and asked "whether he would oblige him by serving up a hot meal as soon as possible, and, in the mean time, prepare a cheerful bowl of spiced ale, or any other

comfortable liquor, for the refreshment of his wet and weary company."

"First come, first serve, all the world over!" replied mine host—"and here have I three parties of hungry folks to feed and warm, before I can think of the likes of you and your people; so you must make yourselves easy. Our mistress and her maid Tabby have enough to do in the back-house, with killing half a score of hens and an old goose; and not an hour to pluck the poor dumb things in, and make them fit for Christians to eat."

"Hens and an old goose!" responded the king, "is that the way you treat your guests in this outlandish country?"

"Never *yow* muddle *yar* brain arter them there hens and guse, old fellow," replied mine host; "they ar'nt for *yar* tooth, I can tell you, for they've been bespoke by *yar* betters, Squire Goggs, of Granta Grange, from over the water yonder; and if *yow* want pullen for supper, ye're like to wait till after midnight, and then we must take the setting hens out of the wood-stack, and the gander that be only five or six years older than goosey."

"A hopeful place you have brought us to, by my troth," exclaimed the king, darting a reproachful look at the luckless cardinal, whose enquiries after veal, beef and mutton, were not a whit more successful—but when, in utter despair, he named pork, the countenance of mine host brightened, and with some animation he replied,

"Plenty of good white bacon in our mistress's pickle pots, master!"

"White bacon?" exclaimed the king, in an accent of inquiry.

Wolsey was perfectly familiar with this viand, and he explained to his royal master that it was neither more nor less than fat pickled pork, which the inhabitants of Norfolk and Suffolk, to this day, prefer to either smoked or dried meat.

The hungry but dainty monarch curled his lip contemptuously at the information, which he communicated with great dissatisfaction to the queen, his sister, and the Duke of Suffolk, the latter of whom laughed heartily, and assured Henry that "rashers of white bacon, fried with new laid eggs or veal collops, formed by no means a despicable dish, and more especially if seasoned with that best of sauces—a good appetite."

The queen said if she were only permitted to approach sufficiently near the fire to dry her damp garments, and restore the genial warmth

to her shivering limbs, she should be well content with any food, however coarse, that was cleanly and wholesome. So said her lively, good humored sister-in-law, Mary of France ; as for Anne Boleyn, her youth, beauty, and winning speech had actually succeeded in obtaining for her a station near the fire, where, having removed her cumbrous hood, she was wringing the rain drops from her luxuriant raven tresses, which she had unbraided and suffered to fall in all their glossy pride down her graceful form ; while she was, with an appearance of perfect ease and pleasantry, chatting with the uncourteous group who had selfishly monopolised the whole circle of the blazing hearth, to the complete exclusion of the royal party, who were fain to occupy a rude bench, near an oaken table, in a distant corner of the common apartment, which was of spacious dimensions, with a stone paved floor.

It was to no purpose that Wolsey, Brandon, the emperor and Wyatt tried the powers of eloquence, reasoning, and even condescended to the use of entreaties, in order to obtain a place in the chimney corner for the Queen of England and the lovely Dowager of France ; or that King Henry poured forth a succession of angry expletives, that would have betrayed who he was to any one who had ever heard the report of the royal mannerisms of speech, and habitual vituperatives of "beast, knave, and fool," terms which he applied without ceremony by turns, to every individual who occupied and refused to resign, a place by the fire. But the person who most deeply excited his displeasure was a huge Cambridgeshire squire, who had taken possession of the place of honor—a matted settee, capable of affording seats for four, but which he had seized for his sole and separate use by stretching himself upon it at full length, while the bench opposite was occupied by four of his tenants, who travelled in his company. His cloak, his saddle bags, his riding cap, and a variety of purchases he had been making at Thetford fair, took up part of another settee, and three of his favorite mastiffs were sitting in front of the hearth, panting with heat, yet resolutely determined not to draw back or to allow any one to approach—snapping, snarling, and showing their teeth at every person who ventured to make an attempt to get within the circle of demarcation, to the infinite alarm and annoyance of three female pedlars and a tailor, who occupied the centre bench.

Sir Thomas Wyatt, though the youngest and least important of our Walsingham pilgrims, was more enraged than even the choieric king, his master, at the impenetrable phlegm with which the mighty Matthew

Goggs, Esq., of Granta Grange, Cambridgeshire, listened to the outpourings of the royal displeasure; the slightest indications of which would have been sufficient to make the proudest and the bravest of England's nobles tremble; and turning impetuously to Wolsey and Brandon, he exclaimed:—

“To what purpose is it, my masters, that anger is wasted, or fine words lost, on a fellow who hath neither manners nor feeling, and who I verily believe is compounded of a vile lump of Granta ooze? If ye will be guided by my advice, instead of parleying with the churl, ye will join with me, in making room for the ladies, by tossing his cloak and saddle-bags into the fire, whereby we shall set one bench at liberty, and whipping his curs from the room, for which I am sure we shall make the rest of the company our debtors, and as for myself—” the fiery youth advanced a step forward, and fixed a glance upon the recumbent spire of such determined meaning, as caused him to scramble from his comfortable station in great alarm; exclaiming, at the same time—

“Host, host! carest thou not if thy best customer, Matthew Goggs, Esq., of Granta Grange, be murdered and laid in a ditch?—Here you John Smithson, Jem Wilkin, and Roger Smith! Towzer! Wowler! seize him, pull him down!”

Wyatt had, however, seized a hot iron bar, which served by way of poker, with which he kept the mastiffs at bay. Brandon and the emperor belied the peaceful garb of Walsingham pilgrims, by flashing forth bright steel rapiers; King Henry had possessed himself of the cook's cleaver, with which he appeared somewhat inclined to try the experiment of ascertaining whether the thick skull of the Cambridgeshire subject contained any visible portion of the article yclept brains. The ladies screamed for help. John Smithson, Jem Wilkin, and Roger Smith overturned one of the benches, and disabled Jowler in their precipitate retreat from the combatants, whom they proclaimed to be four bloody-minded cut-purses; and the mighty Matthew Goggs, Esquire, was fain to accept the terms of pacification offered by Wolsey; which were, to retire, with his dogs and baggage to a remote corner of the apartment, leaving the settees and benches near the fire free for those whose turn it was to enjoy a due share of these conveniences.

Scarcely were the royal party comfortably established by the cheering blaze of the ample hearth, when mine hostess and her maid Tabby entered, followed by two barefooted urchins, bearing spits, saucepans,

fryingpans, and gridling irons, preparation for cooking the ancient poultry, for the supper of Matthew Goggs, Esq., and his yeomen.

“Ho! mistress,” said the disguised monarch, “when is it your pleasure that I and my company should sup?”

Mine hostess of St. Christopher’s Oar, to whom the report of the desperate proceedings of the Walsingham pilgrims had been repeated, with notable exaggerations, by the fugitives from the recent fray, replied, in a tone half vixenish, half timorous,—

“She thought they ought to be contented to wait till honest men were served; which would be but fair, since Squire Goggs had ordered the supper an hour before the likes of them had come into hostel; and all the pullen had been killed for him and his merry men.”

“Dost think we want to deprive your thick-headed squire of your old brood hens and ancient goose, mistress? Ha!” said the King, laughing; “our teeth are sound enough, we thank the saints; but we have too much consideration for the ease of our jaws, to weary them at such unprofitable work, as supping on your tough poultry; nathless our stomach will not abide so long a fast as waiting till those venerable jades of yours are cooked enough to render them eatable.”

“First come, first serve,” again repeated mine hostess.

“Nay then, mistress,” interrupted the tailor, “according to your own good saying, I am the man whose supper ought to be soonest placed on the board, seeing I came in a good half hour before Squire Goggs, and ordered a bacon-dumpling and cabbage for my supper.”

“And I,” said one of the female pedlars, “did likewise enter your hostel before the squire and his merry men, and ordered a mess of onion pottage, and lo! you care for his dogs before you think of me.”

“And I,” said another of the women, “craved a dish of stewed eels, which you told me I should have with all convenient haste.”

“And I,” rejoined the third, “called for a comfortable treacle poset, to warm my heart’s-bone, as I have got a cold fit of the ague coming on, for which cause I asked to have a glass of mint-water in it, and a grate of ginger with a toast.”

“And we all think it very hard, as we came first, to be put off for his squireship,” pursued the tailor.

“And, mistress, as we brought you in such a fine dish of fish this evening, we think it would only be kind of fairish, if you would fry some of them for our supper,” observed two fishermen, who were mending their nets in a corner of the room.

"You are all free to think what you like," retorted mine hostess, "but though I cannot help hearing what you say, I mean to do as I please for all that. Squire Goggs often comes our way, with his men and his dogs, and he always brings us game, for a present, and calls for the best of meat and strong waters, and is a gentle of favor and reckoning in his own country; and 't isn't likely but what I shall roast the goose and cook the pullets, he has been pleased to call for, before I attend to such rabblement customers as have got into the hostel to-night."

"But possibly Squire Goggs may be courteous enough to accommodate matters so that we may all sup together," said Brandon.

"May I go hungry to bed, and lack a breakfast in the morning, when I rise, if I do," responded the squire. "No, no, my masters, self comes closer than neighbors, all the world over. What I have ordered is not more than enough for Matthew Goggs, Esquire, of Granta Grange, Cambridgeshire, and his merry men; and if there be, the dogs come next, and what they leave you are welcome to divide among you. Though, now I think on it, I don't care if I invite that fair young gentlewoman, with the bright eyes, to share my supper; yea, and she shall be welcome to the whole breast of the goose, an' she like it, for a properer damsel did I never see in all my days."

Wyatt could scarcely refrain from breaking the truce, by some open act of violence, in his indignation at this coarse tribute to the charms of the lady of his heart; which the more especially provoked his ire, when he perceived her fair cheek crimson and dimple with pleasure, at the admiration of the Granta swine, as he styled Squire Goggs; who continued to ogle her profanely, with his round, unmeaning eyes, in spite of the resentful glances of Wyatt and the king.

Unfortunately for the fair and thoughtless object of the passion of both the king and his page, vanity was the ruling principle of her disposition; that inclination for coquetry, for which she finally paid so dearly, manifested itself, from early youth, in every action of her life; and, with the unthinking levity of a beautiful but giddy girl, she was wont to say, "The admiration of a clown was esteemed by her as much as that of a peer, and was, perhaps, a greater compliment to the power of her charms."

"Wolsey," said King Henry, aside to his premier, "an' thou findest not some mode of depriving yon selfish swine, Squire Goggs, of his supper, thy Archbishopric of York shall not be worth ten groats to thee."

"Your grace is pleased to treat me as despotically as the Caliph

Haroun did his luckless visier, Gaifer," responded Wolsey, smiling; "but I doubt not of finding a way to compass so desirable an end, without being guilty of either wrong or robbery in the matter."

Then turning to mine hostess, who was busily engaged in adjusting her spit to the wheel, he said:—

"My good woman, you have pleased yourself in slaughtering, yea, also, in trussing your ancient poultry; but as for cooking them, that is a trouble you may well spare yourself, since this is the vigil of blessed St. Boniface, and of course a fast on which flesh and poultry are forbidden by holy church; therefore, if you would avoid a deadly sin, and escape ecclesiastical censure and public penance withal, you will take hence your spits and gridling irons, and prepare us some good lentil pottage, and poached eggs, and a handsome dish or two of fish, which are refectious meet for Christian folk to partake of on fast days."

Mine hostess of St. Christopher's Oar, valiantly disposed as she was, durst not act in such direct opposition to the authority of the Roman Church, as to cook the forbidden viands, in the face of this unwelcome admonition; though she stoutly disputed the fact of its being the vigil of blessed St. Boniface, the patron of publicans, till Wolsey drew a magnificent breviary from his bosom, to convince her of the correctness of his assertion, an evidence she did not venture to resist; for though she did not know a letter in the book, yet the sight of it was sufficient to satisfy any person who did not wish to be considered a downright heretic; so repressing, with pain and difficulty, her inclination to invoke a blister to fall on Wolsey's tongue, in return for his orthodox caution, she contented herself with venting her suppressed wrath, by making as much clatter as she could, in removing her culinary utensils from the fire, and conveying them into the back-house, as she called the brick-floored apartment, in which the scullery work and inferior offices were performed.

Squire Goggs suspended the operation of sharpening a huge clasp knife, in preparation for his attack on the poultry, in his astonishment on beholding them take their flight; and as for King Henry, though he relished not the anticipation of a meagre supper for himself, he was so highly diverted at Wolsey's ingenuity, in exerting the authority of the Church to conquer the vixenish determination of mine hostess of St. Christopher's Oar, and to deprive the ill-mannered Cambridgeshire squire of his savory supper, that he laughed so loud and long, that the

queen felt some uneasiness lest his bodily health might suffer from the excess of his mirth.

The entrance of a company of fresh guests sorely drenched with rain, which continued to fall in torrents, fortunately prevented an ebullition of mine hostess's indignation; and as this new party consisted of personages of no less importance than the venerable Abbess of Ely, and her attendants, returning from a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury; and the Abbot of Glastonbury, who being bound to the shrine of our Lady of Walsingham, had joined company with her on the road; the household of the Chesterford Ferry-house was put into an unwonted bustle, to render every thing as comfortable as circumstances would admit, for the entertainment of these holy guests. Mine hostess secretly congratulated herself that the interference of Wolsey, in preventing her from cooking squire Goggs' supper, had preserved her hostel from the scandalous smell of roast goose on the vigil of St. Boniface; and she now hastily bestirred herself, in preparing such a supper as good catholics might eat with safe consciences.

Manifold and edifying were the courtesies that were exchanged between the royal party and the ecclesiastics; who, though strangers to each other, soon established themselves on those terms of mutual friendliness and ease which are usual among persons of education and polished manners.

When the supper was at length served up, neither the Abbot of Glastonbury nor the Abbess of Ely would consent to take their places at the homely board, unless the other guests were permitted to sit down and partake of the same meal with them; an instance of meekness and humility, in those days, very uncommon among the dignitaries of the Romish Church.

King Henry and Queen Catherine expressed their sense of such edifying conduct in terms, which, though not designed so to do, sufficiently intimated to the Abbess of Ely, who had been accustomed to the manners of courts, that the pilgrims were persons of very exalted rank.

The poor tailor who had entertained strong doubts whether he should get any supper that night, seated himself with a thankful heart, below the salt, as did the female pedlars; and even the mighty Squire Gogg ventured not to go up much higher than his own yeomen, for he perceived he had got into more worshipful company than himself.

The Abbot of Glastonbury, as a matter of course, took the head of

the table, and placed the Abbess of Ely and the other ladies on his right hand. Wolsey adroitly managed that his royal master should be invited to take the post of honor, on his left. The emperor, Brandon, Wyatt, and himself, seated themselves without any apparent care for precedence; and all parties appeared equally satisfied with the abbot's arrangements, and the homely cheer, which was more relished than the most costly banquet of which either of them had ever partaken.

When supper was concluded, the ladies having ascertained that the sleeping accommodations of the Chesterford Ferry-house were not fit for their use, Mary of France reminded her royal brother of the plan originally agreed on of passing away the time that was likely to hang heavy on their hands, in consequence of detention, from any cause, on the road, by each of the pilgrims relating, in turn, some pleasant tale; and as in the present instance they would be compelled to pass a sleepless night, "She considered," she said, "that they could not have a more appropriate opportunity, for commencing so agreeable a divertisement."

"With all my heart, Marie," replied King Henry, "provided this holy lady, the Abbess of Ely, and her good brother of Glastonbury, do not consider our amusement of too light and worldly a nature to be pursued in their godly company."

"Son," replied the venerable abbot, "the church hath never forbidden innocent recreations to her children; but rather enjoined occasional sports and pastimes, as wholesome and cheerful recreations to the body; and surely if the tales you relate be pure and blameless, both in style and subject, ye shall do well to pass the night in such pleasant exercise of wit and harmless merriment; seeing that much moral instruction may be conveyed in the ingenious form of fiction; and where you have the foundation of history, or even tradition to build your tales upon, ye shall do it the more to your own credit and the instruction of your hearers. Our convent libraries contain many a sweet and edifying story, written by pious recluses, who, though they would not conform so far to the fashion of the world they had renounced, as to write romants of love and chivalry, did nevertheless, occasionally weave a mingled wreath of poetic fiction, blended with historic truth, such as may be read with contentment and improvement by those for whose example and instruction they were written. One of these pleasant histories I will relate, when my turn cometh, to contribute my quota to the general entertainment of this good company; and I think I can answer for my pious sister, the Lady Abbess of Ely, that she will not refuse to requite

the amusement she will doubtless receive, by furnishing somewhat of interest when she shall be called on for her tale."

The lady Abbess replied to this observation, "That although she did not profess the pen of a ready writer, like Dame Julianna Burners, the prioress of Sopewell nunnery, nigh to the great Abbey of St. Albans, (who was not only capable of composing quaint tales and cunning posies, but had even written treatises on hunting, hawking, and angling) yet from the remembrances of the eventful scenes of her own life she thought she should be able to relate to them, when called upon in her turn, a tale which could scarcely fail to interest those who were lovers of truth, since it would be a romance of reality; not of herself indeed but of illustrious, nay, royal ladies, with whom she was once most intimately, most dearly connected."

The venerable lady turned away, and drew her hand and wimple over her face, to conceal the starting tears, with which her allusion to a subject of deep interest had suffused her eyes; and King Henry not being in the mood, just at that moment, for the pathetic, slapped the cardinal smartly on the shoulder, and saluting him by the familiar appellation of "friend Thomas," called upon him for a right merry tale.

"Merry and wise then, I hope, son," interrupted the Abbot of Glastonbury, "but thy manners are, I see, too courtly for there to be fear of thy relating anything worthy of reproof in the presence of gentle ladies."

"Father," replied Wolsey, "I shall bear your caution in mind, and relate a pleasant Norfolk tale, which I trust will make all parties laugh without enforcing any to blush."

"Despatch then," cried the king, "for if we spend the night in compliments, I shall presently begin to wish myself in the Chesterford and Newport marshes again, rather than within earshot of such formal follies."

Wolsey, who knew his royal master's peculiarities too well to withstand the slightest intimation of his pleasure, without further preface or apology, related the tale entitled "The Saxon Widow's Vow."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SAXON WIDOW'S VOW.

The stranger came with iron hand,
And from our fathers reft the land.—*Scott.*

The stronghold of Saxlingham had been bravely defended for many weeks, by the Saxon Thane Redwald, against the besieging force of Robert de la Loupe, a fierce Norman adventurer, who had taken a peculiar fancy to that convenient homestead and the fair and fertile domain of which it formed the central point. Robert de la Loupe had obtained of the conqueror a full and entire grant of the lands and forfeited house of Saxlingham; but if possession be, in these days, nine points of the law in the time of which I speak it was ninety-nine at least, and the Thane Redwald was determined not to yield one iota of his rights to the rapacious foreigner who was desirous of appropriating his inheritance.

Fiercely had the Normans assaulted, and stoutly had the Saxons defended the place from day to day; till Robert de la Loupe began, in his impatience, to think that the siege would last till doomsday; but famine and pestilence at length having shown their grim faces among the defenders of Saxlingham, effected within the castle what war without had failed to do. The valiant Thane Redwald and two-thirds of his

garrison fell victims to the contagion, and the young Thane Ethelbert, his son, after communicating this melancholy fact to the survivors, divided the last cake of bread among them, and demanded "whether they were disposed to sell their lives dearly in one more desperate sally on the besiegers, or, by rendering up the fortress at discretion, submit to the ignoble lot of bondage which the victorious Normans had prepared for them?"

This lot the young thane painted in the darkest colors; but it was in vain that he described the infamy of the men—the degradation of the women—and the sufferings of the children, in every place where the Normans had been admitted to the mastery over the fallen Saxons. The garrison listened to his impassioned eloquence in moody silence. The archers played with their empty quivers with significant glances, the spearmen declared they lacked strength to hurl their weapons, and the billmen appeared very little disposed to venture into the field in quest of daring deeds. In short, hunger, which tames the fiercest of all savage creatures, had, it was too evident, quelled the valiant spirit that had so long animated the brave Saxons against their Norman foes, and they had made up their minds to resist no farther.

The young thane, on perceiving their determination, tore his hair from very rage and impatience, and once more addressed them in the language of reproach, of entreaty, of promises and threats.

"All that men could do for his sake, and that of the deceased thane his father," they replied, [and with truth] "they had done, but now, as resistance was perfectly hopeless, they had resolved on submission."

"Oh! that it should come to this, ye faint-hearted churls, that would rather dine with a yoke about your necks than die free men fasting. Had the Normans known your temper, they would have been masters of the stronghold of Saxlingham six months ago," cried Ethelbert in the bitterness of his heart.

"Nay, cousin Ethelbert," said Tink, the jester, expanding his huge mouth into a sarcastic grin, "an' the leaguerer were aware of all the weak points of the garrison we should have short sieges I wis. Now Robert de la Loupe, at present, wots not either of the faint hearts or empty stomachs at Saxlingham; and if you will, for once in your life, be wise enough to take a fool's counsel, you will provoke him to a parley, and make the best terms you can for yourself and for your friends."

The garrison applauded the saying of Tink, the son of Torrold ; and their young lord, malgre his warlike ardor and high spirit, was fain to act upon the hint of the faithful Tink. He considered himself a fortunate man when Robert de la Loupe, who, unconscious of what had been going on in the strong-hold of Saxlingham, was about to raise the siege in despair of ever conquering such invincible people as he deemed its defenders, granted him and his garrison the honorable terms, of marching forth with their arms and money, having license to inter the dead body of the deceased Thane Redwald, without let or hindrance, among his ancestors, in the church on the adjacent hill. The Lady Selburga, Redwald's widow, remaining, with her six bowermaidens, at free quarters in the castle, till the seven nights vigils, which she had vowed to keep in the chapel, for the repose of her deceased husband's soul, should be completed.

Ethelbert thought the last article rather an unnecessary one. It had been insinuated into the treaty for the capitulation by Father Wulstan, his mother's confessor, who had written down the terms for the approbation of the belligerent parties, between whom he had also performed the office of herald and interpreter in addition to that of clerk of the peace ; and Ethelbert, who was incapable of reading what he was required to set his mark to, was astonished after the presents had been signed, sealed and witnessed, and Father Wulstan in a pompous tone, read the instrument of pacification aloud, in presence of the Lady Selburga and the garrison, to find it contained this extraordinary clause, which the holy father boasted of his diplomatic shrewdness in having extorted from the fierce Norman chief. The Lady Selburga, who was highly gratified at its insertion, expressed great satisfaction at the hearing thereof. Ethelbert, on the contrary, frowned, bit his lip, and assured his mother her pious resolve would be attended with the most serious inconvenience to him, and endeavored to persuade her that her prayers would be quite as efficacious if preferred in the parish church of Saxlingham, where the obsequies of her deceased husband would be performed. But the Lady Selburga, who was of royal lineage, and had been accustomed to the free exercise of all her whims and desires during the life of poor Redwald, was resolute on that point. She had a very high opinion of the sanctity of her own chapel, and the excellence of her own prayers, and protested that such was her affection for her lamented husband, and so great her confidence in the protection of her patron saint, that she would not hesitate braving not

only the terrors of Robert de la Loupe and his followers, but William of Normandy and all his fierce chiefs to boot, for the sake of abridging by her devout supplications, the pains of purgatory, which she believed, the soul of her beloved Redwald was then suffering, in consequence of the crimes he had committed in the flesh.

Sorely vexed and strangely embarrassed was the valiant young thane, her son, by this unseasonable fit of devotion, or bigotry, as he irreverently styled it, on the part of the Lady Selburga, which, as she obstinately persisted in it, reduced him to the necessity of leaving her and her handmaids in the castle, after its surrender to the rapacious Normans, when he and his faithful followers slowly and sorrowfully marched forth, with the body of the deceased Thane Redwald, to yield possession to their impatient foes.

Rage and grief contended for mastery in the heart of Ethelbert, as he sternly followed the bier of his noble father, which was borne on the crossed spears of his brave adherents, preceded by black banners, and attended by minstrels and singing-women, chanting, to a wild, mournful melody, a death-song, in which the high birth, lofty deeds, and generous hospitality of the valiant Redwald were set forth in a becoming strain of hyperbole, and his untimely fate was bewailed in a chorus of pathetic lamentations. On the road the funeral procession was met by the holy fraternity of monks belonging to the church of Saxlingham, who had always been supported by the bounty of Redwald and his ancestors. These ecclesiastics sang the funeral service and said the mass over the remains of their last Saxon patron in a very edifying manner, and after they had consigned his body to the grave, solemnly cursed the invader of his right, Robert de la Loupe, and his rapacious Norman followers, with candle, book, and bell, which was a great consolation to the sorrowful and bereaved heir of the deceased thane and his vassals. The number of these, however, was much reduced, and after the burial-rite of their late lord was concluded, six alone, with the faithful Tink, adhered to the fallen fortunes of Ethelbert, the rest withdrawing to take the oaths of fealty to Robert de la Loupe, whom from that day forward they regarded as their lord *de facto*.

The monks of Saxlingham, who considered that they had, by the performance of the two ceremonies aforesaid, nobly discharged their debt of gratitude to the family of their hereditary patrons, were somewhat desirous of settling themselves on amicable terms with their formidable neighbor, now lord of the lands of Saxlingham, and as such

they said, he ought to be regarded as their natural protector. They therefore felt some reluctance in allowing a temporary shelter to the young Thane Ethelbert, and his diminished retinue, he having declared it to be incompatible with his duty as a son, to withdraw from that neighborhood till the devotion of the Lady Selburga being completed, she should feel herself at liberty to accompany him to his projected retreat, the cheerless fens of Croyland, or Crowland, as it is likewise called.

This unfriendly disposition, on the part of the worldly-minded little fraternity, added in no slight degree, to the impatience felt by the young thane on account of his detention. This period hung very heavily on his hands, and was chiefly consumed by him in perambulating the narrow bounds of the church-yard, or reposing on one of the turf mounds which marked the last resting-place of some deceased peasant; where with his bow in his hand, the young chief listened with an absent air to the witticisms with which the faithful Tink strove to beguile him of a smile. Sometimes he would instinctively raise himself from his listless posture, to take aim at some unwary crow or kite, as it sailed within reach of his unerring arrow; and then, flinging the worthless quarry from him with contempt, he would start from the ground, and scan with vainly regretful eye the rich arable enclosures of Saxlingham, and its extensive line of open downs, interspersed with sweeps of waving woods, all once his own fair heritage; which had passed from him to the iron hand of the stranger for ever—"Sold, basely sold, for a mess of pottage, to satisfy the cravings of his recreant followers!" as he bitterly expressed himself of the terms of capitulation: and then, regardless of the representations of Tink, on the dire necessity which made the surrender of the fortress any thing but a matter of choice, he would work himself up to a pitch of bootless fury, and upbraid his own easy folly for ever acceding to the wishes of his followers in yielding up the place.

"Marry, Cousin Ethelbert, thou hast little cause to blame thyself in that business," interposed Tink, with one of his sarcastic grins, "seeing that affairs had arrived at that happy conjunction in which thy decision was a matter of no importance: since thy hungry churls had made up their minds to dine whether thou wert pleased or not; and verily, noble Ethelbert, it was scarcely to be expected, however desirable it might appear to thee, that thirty poor rogues should continue fasting within stone walls, and exposed withal to the assaults of Norman missiles for

the sake of maintaining thee a few days longer in the empty style and title of Thane of Saxlingham ; without the most remote chance of bettering their own condition by the sacrifice made by them, even if they succeeded in maintaining thee in thy rightful heritage, for well aware are they, that serfs they are, and serfs they will continue, whether the lands of Saxlingham remain with thee, or pass to the Norman stranger."

Home truths are never less welcome than when those to whom they are addressed are compelled, by mortifying circumstances, to admit their force. Ethelbert took the rejoinder of the jester in very evil part ; and, in a tone half bitter, half contemptuous, demanded of him—"Wherefore he had not imitated the prudent example of those whose worldly wisdom he appeared disposed to advocate, and gone to offer his services to the new Lord of Saxlington?"

"Because, noble thane, I am acting consistently with my vocation, as your lordship's fool," replied Tink, with a low reverence, "and after supporting that character all my life, I should feel a little out of my element, I doubt, if I began to practice discretion so late in the day."

"Go to," said Ethelbert, "your lord is a ruined man, whom it were best to leave to his fallen fortunes, as others have done."

"Fair and softly, my lord," replied Tink, with a grin, "an' thou knowest not when thou hast a faithful servant, I know when I have a good master, therefore I leave thee not."

"By the soul of Hengist !" replied Ethelbert, "I charge thee to be gone ; my own folly is too burdensome to require the addition of thine. I know thou art a kind-hearted fellow, but in our present case, I think it best that we should part company, lest men, when they see us together, should cry—'Behold the twain !'"

"They'll ne'er like thee the worse, my lord, even if they should suspect thee of being as merry a fellow as your humble servant," said Tink, "and it would be well for thee if thou couldest imitate a little of my philosophy, fool though I be, but thou art in so dolorous a mood, that it behoves me, in Christian charity, to cleave unto thee, in the quality of a physician."

"Of a physician, Tink ! What next ?" demanded Ethelbert in surprise.

"Aye, noble thane, a physician !" returned Tink, "I repeat the word, a physician to thy present infirmity of spirit, which requireth constant cordial drafts of quibs and quirks, and all sorts of healing medicaments

of pleasant sayings to rid thee of thy melancholic humor which preyeth upon thee."

"Tink," said Ethelbert, "I am weary of thy impertinent consolations and unreasonable gibes; and would fain, as I said before, 'part company.'"

"That you may go stark mad, master mine," said Tink, looking wistfully in Ethelbert's face; "part companies said you? Alack, my lord, and what would you do without me?—and how, in sooth should I endure the separation?—No, no, my lord it shall ne'er be said, for the honor of my office, that Tink the jester feasted on you in your prosperity, but forsook you in your first reverse of fortune. Desert you who may, your lordship shall find Tink's fidelity no joke; a fool I am and a fool I mean to continue."

"An' you are so wedded to the office, Tink, take counsel of me, and go offer your services to Robert de la Loupe in that capacity; and say I will commend thee as the honestest, the kindest hearted, and most pleasant fool in Norfolk," said the young thane.

"I might thrive well on your lordship's recommendation, were I disposed to change the service of that of the lion for that of the wolf," replied Tink; "but even if I could so far forget myself, yon rude, untaught, Norman robber understandeth not a Saxon joke when he heareth one, and I never could endure such a wastery of my good sayings, as to scatter them like pearls before swine, who have not wit enough to apprehend their value."

The term of the Lady Selburga's devotions was, at length, drawing to a close,—they were to expire on the following day; and never yet did bridegroom watch for the dawn of that which was to put him into possession of the object of his fondest hopes, than did the youthful thane for the morning of this, having prepared all things for a retreat to the marshes of Crowland; where a considerable body of Saxons were assembled for the purpose of resisting the authority of the Norman conqueror. Of this, his intention, Ethelbert had found means to apprise his mother, through the secret intelligence that subsisted between the worthy Tink and Edith, one of her bower maidens.

The message returned by the Lady Selburga, in reply to the request that she would hold herself in readiness to accompany him thither, was rather of a vague and oracular nature. It imported merely that she should be at the church of Saxlingham, on the following morning, as it was her intention to complete her devotions, by repeating a final prayer

for the repose of his soul over the grave of her dearly beloved and much lamented husband, the noble thane Redwald.

Before sunrise on that eagerly anticipated morning, Ethelbert found his party reinforced by the unexpected muster of half a dozen discontented Saxon peasants, who had already found reason to repent of the fealty they had sworn to Robert de la Loupe; and were now urgent with their former lord to be permitted to share his fortunes, and accompany him to his projected retreat. To these were added a like number of those who had assisted in the defence of the castle; and, although they had been among the readiest of those who were willing to surrender the place for the sake of satisfying the cravings of their importunate stomachs, they now found themselves, on having received a taste of the manners of their new master, very affectionately disposed to the young Thane Ethelbert; in whose service, they protested, they were ready to live and die.

Ethelbert frankly told them all that they had manifested their good will too late for it to be of any particular service to him; that he was now a landless adventurer, who could no longer reward his retainers; and if they chose to accompany him to Crowland, it must be at their own risk and expense, since he had it not even in his power to provide them with horses for the journey.

The spokesman of the party then demanded of the young thane, if he would permit them to accompany him to his retreat provided they could obtain horses for their own especial use.

Ethelbert, although he could not divine how this was to be done, by men of their condition, graciously signified his consent to accept of their attendance to Crowland, and service by the way. Then, after partaking of the last meal which he intended to eat at the expense of the inhospitable monks of Saxlingham, who, from indubitable signs and tokens, he perceived were as weary of his company as he was of theirs, he exchanged his morning tunic and surcoat for warlike harness, and ordered his gallant charger, Hengist, to be saddled, and provided with a pillion, for the use of the Lady Selburga; and betook himself to his old station, the church-yard, to watch for her approach.

The proceedings of the Lady Selburga were, however by no means in accordance with his impatience. That pious lady being apparently in no hurry to conclude her devotional exercises, though the sun was already getting high in the horizon.

A cloud gathered on the brow of Ethelbert, as the suspicion crossed

his mind, that her delay was occasioned by a breach of faith on the part of Robert de la Loupe, who might possibly have detained her and her maidens, in the hope of extorting money for their ransom; and he was actually about to proceed to the castle, at the head of the sturdy malcontents, who had just enlisted as volunteers in his service, to demand his mother of the Norman chief, when the sound of sprightly music broke upon his ear, and he beheld a gay procession cross the draw-bridge of the castle, and begin to ascend the gentle hill which led to the church. First marched a party of Norman soldiers on foot, with their spears garlanded with wreaths of May-flowers, preceding six or their comrades who were gallantly mounted, bedizened with ribbons of various colors, each wearing a huge nosegay on his left breast and carrying a Saxon damsel behind him on his horse. These were followed by minstrels, glee-women, and children, singing and strewing flowers before Robert de la Loupe, who, in all the bravery of burnished armor, white plumes and mantle gaily embroidered with gold and silver, came last, gallantly squiring the Lady Selburga, who in her widow's weeds and long black veil, rode behind him on his richly caparisoned white charger. This loving pair (as sooth to say they appeared) were accompanied by a young and beautiful maiden, who, from the richness of her habit, and the stately grace with which she managed her spirited palfrey appeared to be a damsel of high birth and courtly breeding.

"St. Edmund to speed!" cried Ethelbert, in surprise. "The pious demeanor of our lady mother must have wrought miracles on the churlish nature of yon Norman wolf, in that it has tamed the savage beast to an exercise of courtesy, so marvellous as that of speeding her forward, to the conclusion of her vow, with such extraordinary demonstrations of respect."

Tink expanded his capacious mouth into a grin of more than ordinary meaning, as the castle bells struck out into a merry peal which was answered simultaneously from the round tower of the church by one in blithe unison, she turning a significant glance on the young thane, he observed, in a peculiarly dry accent, "The customs of the olden time are likely to be turned topsyturvy it is true, and I own I am not versed in Norman fashions, but to my mind, this brave pageant looketh more like a bridal, than the procession of a sorrowful widow of scarcely ten days' standing, to pour forth prayers over her grave of her deceased husband."

“A bridal, fool!” ejaculated his lord, angrily.—“Whose bridal should it be, I pray?”

“I cry you mercy, noble thane!” said the jester, ducking his head as if to avoid a blow, “I only shot a fool’s bolt, but methinks it went near the mark, nevertheless, for Robert de la Loupe bears him marvelously like a jolly bridegroom, or one that will shortly be made such.”

“Belike then you dainty maiden, who sitteth on the gray palfrey so gracefully, is the bride?” said Ethelbert, “’Twere pity of her too!” added the young thane, casting an admiring glance on the lovely Norman damsel, as the party halted at the church gate; and Robert de la Loupe having assisted the Lady Selburga to alight, with greater show of gallantry than Tink said he had given him credit for possessing, approached the youthful horsewoman, whom he lifted from the saddle with no slight appearance of tender solicitude, surveyed her from head to foot with a look of proud approbation, then presenting one arm to her, and the other to the widow of Redwald walked sturdily toward the church, attended by all his merry men, followed by the six cavaliers who had escorted the six Saxon damsels, whom they were leading in very lover like fashion.

“There is some masking and mumming here that I fathom not,” exclaimed Ethelbert, hastening to the opposite portal of the church. He entered almost at the same moment with the procession, which was met in the porch by the monks of Saxlingham, arranged in new albs and hoods, and singing the *Miserere*.

“So far, so well!” muttered Ethelbert, withdrawing himself behind the shade of one of the pillars, to watch, unseen, the proceedings of his mother; whom in spite of himself, he could not help regarding with some degree of mistrust, in consequence of the excellent understanding that appeared to subsist between her and the Norman chief. Notwithstanding these vague and undutiful suspicions, the demeanor of the Lady Selburga was most edifying to all beholders, and her weeds were truly orthodox, both in regard to mode and material. She was closely veiled, and muffled in a widow’s hood and barb, and her majestic form was shrouded in an ample cloak of black cyprus, which concealed every part of her dress and figure and she carried a large square of white lawn, with deep black border, in her hand, which she frequently applied to her eyes, as, half supported by Robert de la Loupe, she followed the monks to the grave of Redwald; where kneeling down with every demonstration of the most passionate grief, she repeated a form of prayer

for the repose of his soul. In this, Robert de la Loupe, with all his followers, piously united, together with the Saxon damsels and the young Norman lady, who having thrown back her veil, displayed a countenance of such beauty and sensibility, that Tink, regardless of time and place, could not refrain from whispering to Ethelbert,

“Such a dainty bird as that were fitter mate for tassel gentle, than yonder carrion kite, I trow.”

“Peace, untaught knave! Hast no respect for my noble father’s memory, that thou dost presume to prate thus idly, while even his foes offer up prayers for the repose of his soul?” said Ethelbert, sternly.

“An’ your lordship set any store by such prayers as theirs,” muttered Tink, “it is more than I do, and as for my late lord, of blessed memory, I am sure if he could hear them, instead of considering them of any service in helping his dear soul out of the pains of purgatory, he would say they added fuel to the fire.”

Ethelbert turned angrily about to chide the incorrigible jester, but the solemn notes of the organ playing the *de profundis* claimed an awful silence from all present. The rites of holy mother church now commenced, and the monks began to say the mass for the dead. The Lady Selburga prostrated herself on her husband’s grave: Robert de la Loupe and his Normans assumed an air of extreme reverence, and Ethelbert, sinking on his knees, covered his face with his hands, while he vented the anguish of his full heart in floods of tears, accompanied by sobs so audible, that they attracted the attention of the lovely Norman maiden to the obscure nook in which he had placed himself—and when, at the conclusion of the solemn rite, he rose from his knee, he encountered her radiant glances, which were bent on his face with looks of tender sympathy. But no sooner did their eyes meet than hers were bashfully withdrawn; and, covered with blushes, she hastily enveloped herself in the folds of her veil, and, with a hurried step, followed the Lady Selburga and her maidens into the sacristy.

“This is a double solemnity, master mine,” whispered Tink, who had been conferring with one of the servitors apart. “These pious ceremonials are to conclude with the bridal of Robert de la Loupe, as I foretold your Lordship. Your fool will set up for a prophet, if all other callings fail.”

“Bid Ulfnoth bring my good steed Hengist to the postern left of the chancel,” exclaimed Ethelbert.

“Master, I take you,” responded Tink, with one of his peculiar grins. “The wolf hath hunted you out of your den, and you mean to carry off his mate.”

“That depends on whom she may be,” rejoined Ethelbert, “for by the rood that seemeth a riddle; but verily it passeth my patience, that my mother should so far forget her recent widowhood, and the respect due to my father’s memory, as to play the bride woman at the wedding of our foe.”

‘The bride! the bride you mean, Sir Ethelbert!’ exclaimed Tink, as the Lady Selburga, followed by her maidens, issued from the sacristy, arrayed in virgin white, having cast aside her hood, barb, and all other weeds of widowhood, and leaning on the arm of the young Norman lady, proceeded with a pretty bashfulness of look and step to the high altar, where stood Robert de la Loupe, holding the jeweled ring in readiness for the spousal solemnity.

There was a hush of expectation throughout the church, only broken for a moment by the whispered confidence which passed between Ethelbert and Tink, and the retreating steps of the latter, who hastened to communicate to the bold malcontents without, a shrewd scheme which had suddenly been planned between him and their dispossessed lord; in which they instantly prepared to co-operate most effectually, by seizing the good steeds of Robert de la Loupe, and the other Norman bridegrooms, while they were engaged in the important solemnity within the church.

Meantime the Lady Selburga had, after a faint show of reluctance, permitted Robert de la Loupe to place her at his left hand, and drawing off her silver-fringed embroidered gloves, gave them to her lovely bridemaid to hold during the ceremony. The six Norman cavaliers, each producing a ring, paired themselves with the Saxon damsels, whom they had so gallantly escorted to church, and to whom they were whispering very tender things in the back ground, all parties agreeing to wait, with no slight degree of impatience, till the completion of their chief’s nuptial rites should leave the officiating priest at leisure to unite them to their respective charmers in the holy bonds of matrimony.

There was a groan of disapprobation among the Saxon portion of the congregation at this sight, and not a few voices muttered—“Now, out upon the shameless jades, to forsake good men and true, and wed with foreign robbers on such brief wooing.” And when Tink re-entered the church, having performed his mission much to his own and Ethelbert’s

satisfaction, all eyes turned on him, to observe what effect the inconsistency of the false-hearted Edith, who was evidently about to plight her nuptial troth to Ralph, the banner-bearer of Robert de la Loupe, would produce on his sarcastic linaments; but Tink, to their infinite disappointment, appeared too intent on watching the countenance of his lord to evince the slightest emotion on the score of his own wrongs.

"Is all ready?" demanded Ethelbert, when the faithful Tink had succeeded in catching his eye.

Tink nodded a significant assent. Both then advanced with cautious steps to the high altar, and just as Robert de la Loupe was proceeding to place the nuptial ring on the finger of the bride, Ethelbert afforded a most unwelcome interruption to the ceremony, by seizing her from behind in his nervous arms, exclaiming,—“I forbid the marriage,” and before the Normans were sufficiently aware of his purpose to prevent it, he had crossed the chancel, and in spite of the Lady Selburga's stout resistance, placed her on his steed, which was in waiting at the postern, sprung to the saddle, and ridden off at full speed, followed by Tink, who had in like manner possessed himself of the faithless Edith, whom he manfully carried off on the gaily caparisoned steed of Robert de la Loupe, which he had seized for his own especial prey.

They were accompanied in their flight by the Saxon malcontents, each mounted on a goodly Norman charger, on which, elated with the success of their daring adventure, they scampered over hill and dale at breathless speed, till “their hairs whistled in the wind,” and were soon out of the reach of pursuit. Sorry am I, for the sake of Saxon gallantry, that truth compels me to record the fact, that there were some among the party, who boldly avowed the capture of the horses to be a far nobler exploit than the rescue of the reluctant ladies.

CHAPTER V.

She's won—and we're off, over bush, brake, and scaur,
They've fleet steeds that follow, quoth young Lochinvar.

Scott.

For a full second after the bold exploit of Ethelbert, Robert de la Loupe stood like one astonished at the audacity of the *coup de main*, which had robbed him of his half-wedded bride; while the jeweled nuptial ring with which he was preparing to plight her his troth, fell from his hand, and rolled on the chancel pavement, as if it had been a thing of nought, thus verifying the old adage,—

“Twixt cup and lip,
Is many a slip.”

Had it been his daughter, the young and lovely Adela, whom the daring Saxon had ravished from him, the Norman chief would not have been so greatly surprised, nor, sooth to say, so bitterly enraged; but the abduction of his bride elect, was an affront of the most deadly description. He had been greatly captivated by the blue eyes, flaxen hair, and blooming complexion of the Saxon widow, who was fair, and not much on the shady side of forty,—an accomplished embroideress, (the art of needlework being exceedingly prized by the Norman chiefs, who were all ambitious of wearing mantles adorned with rich needlework,) an excellent housewife, and had moreover testified such exemplary solicitude for the soul of her late husband, that Robert de la Loupe, being just then in great need of a second wife, thought he could not do

better than secure such a treasure for himself, especially as she was so well acquainted with the ways and conveniences of the homestead he had just acquired. In fact he had considered, from the first glimpse he had of her fair round face, that it would be the greatest breach of courtesy imaginable, to turn so agreeable a lady out of her own house. Her pious demeanor and pleasant conversation, during the seven days she abode with him, strengthened the impression her personal charms had made, and as he thought proper to attend all her devout exercises in the chapel, he began to experience some compunction of conscience for the wrong he had done, and considered that the best way of repairing the loss of her lamented husband, was by supplying his place, not doubting but his condescension would be most gracefully acknowledged by her dispossessed son, whom he had faithfully promised the Lady Selburga to take into his confidence and favor. His rage was proportionably great at the audacious conduct of the young thane and his Saxon adherents, and stamping furiously upon the pavement, he upbraided his warlike followers for their supineness in not preventing the escape of Ethelbert, and called "To horse!" in a tone of thunder. It was a call easier made than obeyed, as the Saxons had carried off all the horses belonging to the party, not even his own noble charger, Rollo, being spared, and his unhappy followers returned with looks of consternation to report the fact. A misfortune which they considered of infinitely more consequence than the loss of the mature lady-love of their chief, and the jilt-flirt Edith her waitingmaid. Even Ralph, the banner-bearer, appeared more afflicted at the departure of his good roan, than the abduction of his intended spouse,—“For,” said he, “my masters, it is a land overflowing with women, who are content, it should seem, to wed at short wooing, therefore I might provide myself with a wife, I trow at any time,—but how shall I get another horse, in a country where the churls ride to market in bullock-carts, and the evil-minded thanes would rather sacrifice their horses to Beelzebub, than suffer them to fall into our hands?”

Robert de la Loupe was not long in devising an expedient to supply his loss; he immediately confiscated all the horses belonging to the monks of Saxlingham to his own use. This extortion he impudently called “levying a benevolence,” from the convent. Had he said a malevolence, he had gone nearer to call things by their right names, for he and his rapacious Normans were followed by the ill wishes and execrations of the abbot and the rest of the fraternity, when they saw them

trotting forth on their fat well-fed beasts, in pursuit of the gallant Ethelbert and his Saxon adherents. These bold adventurers, meantime mounted on the matchless bays, greys, sorrels and roans of the Norman invaders, fled across the well-known wolds and woods of their native country like so many Arabs of the desert, while Robert de la Loupe was vainly spurring and assailing the abbot's sleek, over-fed mare with whip and reins, to rouse her from the easy abiding trot to which her lawful master had accustomed her; and his troopers as furiously kicked, pummelled and vituperated the other lazy animals, which had never been put out of their paces since they had enjoyed the easy servitude of carrying the peaceful purveyors of the convent to mill and market, or occasionally bearing one or another of the pious fraternity to preach at neighboring churches, or to shrine some dying person in the immediate vicinity of Saxlingham. Well fed and wilful, the convent horses paid no attention to the guidance of their new riders; and Ralph the banner-bearer, with a rueful countenance, observed to his chief,—“That it would be worse than a wild goose chase to think of farther pursuit of their ravished brides and stolen horses, on such worthless jades as these, whose best pace was a jog trot, and whose only action consisted in kicking.”

Robert de la Loupe sullenly acquiesced in the truth of the observation and returned with a crest-fallen air to his newly acquired castle to meditate on his disappointment, and devise means for the recovery of his loving bride and his fleet-footed grey.

The loss of that matchless steed would, perhaps, have grieved the haughty Norman chief less than its degradation, had he known that it had fallen into such ignoble hands, as those of Tink, the Saxon jester, who, by the by, showed no mean proficiency in the noble science of horsemanship, and proved Rollo's superiority even to his lord's boasted charger Hengist by keeping some yards in advance of the whole party though burdened with the additional weight of the faithless Edith.

That damsel, although apparently very malcontent, was not at heart displeased at the spirit and gallantry evinced by her first love in snatching her from her Norman admirer, and notwithstanding the fact that Tink had inflicted a hearty shaking upon her previous to placing her on the saddle, she confined her reproaches to a few pathetic complaints of his having sorely pinched her arms, and torn five great holes in her bridal veil, by poking his clumsy fingers through it, like an awkward churl as he was.

Tink, instead of exhibiting the slightest degree of penitence for these outrages, bade her, in a very authoritative tone "Sit still and hold her peace," while he received the commands of the noble Thane Ethelbert, as to the direction they were to pursue.

"To Crowland, my good Tink," replied Ethelbert, "it is the last free spot Saxons can now call their own."

"And are we going to dwell in those doleful quags and fens, along with the frogs and web-footed fowls?" sobbed Edith.

"It is the only place where geese may be considered in their proper element," said Tink.

"Aye, an' they be compelled to keep company with fools," retorted Edith, sharply.

"There be some who give rogues the preference, we know," rejoined Tink, "howbeit, 'tis no proof of superior wisdom."

"It is not every one who can boast of being knave and fool combined," again retorted Edith.

"I heed not your malice, maiden," replied the jester, "for I am well advised that false heart and false tongue are seldom far apart."

"They are nearer now than suits my fancy," said Edith, giving him a shrewd push.

How far this encounter of wits might have proceeded, it is not easy to say; but Ethelbert, for the present, put an end to the discussion, by drawing his bridle rein and giving the word to his followers to halt for rest and refreshment, beside a pleasant little stream near the outskirts of a wood, and in the immediate vicinity of a cheerful Saxon homestead.

"This spot hath a promising aspect, Tink," said Ethelbert, "we have ridden a full score of miles since breakfast, over rough roads, and doubtless a draught of mead or cider would be as acceptable to us, as the needful bait of provender to our hot and weary horses:" he alighted as he spoke, and unbracing his casque flung it on the grass, and lifting his mother gently from the pillion set her on her feet.

The first use the Lady Selburga made of her liberty was to inflict upon the young thane half a dozen boxes on the ears, with such vixenish vivacity, that she left the prints of her fingers on his manly cheek.

Her example was quickly imitated by her handmaid Edith, who finding that neither the pathetic nor the sarcastic produced the proper effect on her offended lover, was provoked by his sang-froid into the use of striking arguments.

“An’ ye had wooed yon Norman cut-purse after such a fashion, ye shrewish leman! he had never put me to the trouble of forbidding your banns in Saxlingham church this morning,” said the poor jester, rubbing his ears.

“’Tis meet you take the consequence of your impertinent interference then, Mr. Dog-in-the-manger,” rejoined Edith, “you who deprive another of that which you seem to hold in such small esteem yourself.”

“Small esteem indeed!” repeated Tink, “but to the full as much as you deserve.”

“Thou art an evil spoken churl,” said Edith, bursting into tears,—“but I will complain to the Thane Ethelbert of thy insolence.”

“Never waste thy breath so idly, maiden,” returned Tink, “the Thane Ethelbert is the sworn foe of all Normans and their lemans, so I wish thee luck of any good that thou mayest get by appealing to him.”

“I’m no worse than my lady, his mother, I trow,” said Edith, sullenly, “and if the Lady Selburga, at her discreet years, choose to marry a Norman, I don’t see why I should be ashamed of keeping her in countenance—and those who did not approve of my doing so, might have tarried in the castle to take care of me.”

“Thou art a jewel worthy of such care, art thou not, mistress mine?” responded Tink, with a sarcastic grin.

“An’ you prize me so lightly, master fool, how durst you commit sacrilege by taking me violently from before the altar, when I was about to wed a better man than yourself, whom I would now die rather than marry.”

“Wait till I ask you, wench, ere you presume to refuse me,” said Tink, drily; “for know, Mistress Edith, that I did not take you from your dainty Norman darling to wed you myself.”

“Oh, thou shameless ruffian, to tell me so to my face! But the young thane has some decency in him, and he and the Lady Selburga will protect me from your base designs.”

“The Lady Selburga will not be able to protect herself; you are both to share the same fate.”

“Oh, monstrous! The Lady Selburga too. That is beyond belief. But what fate do you mean?”

“That of taking the veil in the convent of Crowland, and leading a chaste and holy life.”

“Villain, I defy you!” cried the enraged damsel, “it is not all the fools in Christendom shall compel me to do that.”

“We shall find it a difficult matter, no doubt,” responded Tink—“but when we once render you up to the guardianship of holy mother church, she’ll keep you safe enough from the intrusion of Norman gallants, and as for Saxons they will none of you after you have disgraced yourselves so foully with their foes. So ’twere best, for your own sake, to make a virtue of necessity, and take the veil and vows of celibacy with a good grace. And, in the mean time, I will give you a share of this cup of cider and my oaten cakes, to show I bear no malice against you.”

“I would sooner die of starvation than take any thing that is offered me by such an ill-natured savage,” cried Edith, indignantly rejecting the proffered refreshment.

“Nay, please yourself, Mistress Edith; fasting is healthful both for the soul and body; Father Wulstan always recommended it as a remedy against carnal folly,” said Tink. “I am glad to see thee beginning a course of godly abstinence that may accustom thee to convent discipline.”

The conversation between the Lady Selburga and her son, if of a more reserved nature, was not a whit more friendly than that which was exchanged by the jester and the sorely mortified Edith, and during the whole of the fatiguing journey to Crowland, the malcontent ladies conducted themselves in the most disobliging manner in the world, and, though kept as far apart as circumstances would permit, they contrived to hold a silent intercourse, for the purpose of devising every sort of annoyance and delay on the road to impede the progress of the party. Certain it is that very little regard was paid to their objections and complaints by those to whom they were addressed; Ethelbert, who entertained a dutiful idea of the respect due to a parent, listened to everything it pleased his mother to say, in profound silence, or replied with an expression of regret, that his regard for her honor and his father’s memory should compel him to a course so contrary to her inclination.

As for Tink and Edith, the terms on which they had once stood, gave to their repartees a certain degree of piquancy which rendered their journey to Crowland lively enough; as they drew nearer to its conclusion, the vixenish vivacity of Edith sensibly abated from its acerbity,

and, more than once, Tink was surprised into manifesting some degree of tender solicitude for her welfare, during a heavy shower, or when they had to ride many hours without being able to procure refreshments, which so far mollified the resentful spirit of the damsel, that when the gray spires of the Abbey of Crowland were seen in the distance, rising in the centre of a dismal sweep of marsh and morass, she began to drop a few tears at the prospect of the eternal separation that was likely to take place between them, when she should be immured within those dreary walls.

“So, then, after all, you would rather marry me than become a nun, Edith?” demanded Tink.

“Why, if the truth must be confessed,” said Edith, “I believe I would.”

“No doubt,” returned Tink, “but I am not such a fool, as to be taken by way of an alternative.”

“Please yourself, Master Tink,” sobbed Edith, “Ralph, the banner-bearer, would have married me on any terms, even when he knew you had my heart, you ungrateful man.”

“I had your heart! a likely story, when you were going to wed your Norman bully on a week’s wooing.”

“And if I were going to marry him, how could I help myself, I prithee, when I was left to his discretion, a poor, helpless, virgin, abandoned by those who ought to have protected me with their lives. I had only the choice between marriage and dishonor, and I am sure, Tink, you ought to be the last to reproach me for my decision. But you are a base false-hearted man, worse than any Norman; and the moment we arrive at Crowland, I will hasten to the church, and profess myself a nun, if it be only to free myself from the company and persecutions of such a barbarian as yourself.”

“Nay, nay, Edith, no occasion for that,” said Tink, “I know that you are a deceitful baggage, and only want to marry me to escape from convent discipline, yet I am such a fool, that if you would promise to make me a special good wife ——”

“No, I will promise no such thing; I have made up my mind to take the vows, for the sake of sharing my poor dear lady’s captivity, and if I marry you, I dare say, I shall very often tell you of your faults.”

“In that case I shall stand some chance of amending them,” said Tink, with a grin; “and so, pretty Edith, we had better kiss and be friends.”

Edith extended her hand to him with the dignity of a tragedy queen, and the jester, forgetting how active that little hand had been in bestowing boxes of the ears upon him, raised it to his lips, with an air of paladin ; and, to the astonishment of Ethelbert, the indignation of the Lady Selburga, and the infinite scandal of all the Saxons, who had witnessed the faithless conduct of the damsel, the first event that took place, at Crowland, was the marriage of this couple, whose quarrels had afforded so much amusement to their companions by the way.

The Lady Selburga took this defection on the part of her handmaid in such evil part, that she refused either to speak to her, or admit of her attendance, as the bride of her son's jester, although, by so doing, she deprived herself of the only solace her present desolate situation admitted—that of discoursing of her Norman lover, to one who was acquainted with his perfections. No one else, she was well aware, would even tolerate his name ; and she had the mortification of finding herself treated with the most chilling distance by the noble Saxon ladies who had sought a refuge with the nuns of Crowland.

It was now that the Lady Selburga felt herself a widow indeed, for she had not only lost her husband, but saw herself entirely precluded from all chance of supplying his place ; for her name had become a by-word of contempt among her countrymen, by whom she was regarded as a Saxon edition of the Ephesian widow of old. Ethelbert, though aware that it was no more than her due, felt the contempt with which his mother was treated very keenly ; and more than once his proud spirit had been chafed into open resentment of the slights that were offered to her. This naturally created a coolness between him and the rest of the Saxon refugees assembled at Crowland ; which dreary asylum of the fallen great, was crowded with a far greater number of fugitives than its meagre resources could maintain ; and hardships incredible were endured by those who came thither poorly provided with money.

The local situation of Crowland was the most dismal that imagination could conceive ; exposed to the *miasma* of undrained morasses, and, during a prevalence of rainy weather, surrounded with inundations of water, which, on subsiding, left the country for miles round a pestilential swamp. No care had been taken to lay in a proper store of provisions before the influx of so many hungry individuals, from all parts of the kingdom ; and the prospect of actual starvation appeared in no distant perspective before the unfortunate migrators, who had flown

from the Norman subjugators. The mass of these was made up of very incongruous and of course jarring materials. There were indeed those, whom true patriotism had animated to retire to these desolate swamps, as to the last resting-place of freedom; where they might keep the foreign invaders of their rights and liberties at bay, or organise fresh armies to oppose their recognition as lords of the land; but for one of these noble-minded men, there were ten of the cowardly, the profligate, and the rapacious, who only made the name of patriotism a cloak for the pursuance of their own private ends, or an excuse for the commission of all sorts of excesses. And even among the most heroic lovers of their country, who had sacrificed or were willing to sacrifice everything to restore her prostrate throne and desecrated altars, there existed jealousies and personal feuds, that rendered their union for the public good a thing as impossible as the mixture of oil and vinegar.

Ethelbert, who perceived with unavailing regret the state of things at Crowland, represented to them the ruin that must result to their cause from the fatal discord among those in whom the last hopes of their oppressed country were centred; and urged them, for the love of every thing that was dear to them, to rouse themselves from the disgraceful inactivity in which they had, for so many months, allowed themselves to remain at Crowland, in as complete a state of stagnation as the fens with which they were surrounded; and by appearing in arms against the Norman invaders, to afford a rallying point for the thousands and tens of thousands, who were waiting to join them with arms in their hands.

Ethelbert's proposition was warmly seconded by the noble few whose hearts were not polluted by the plague-spot of party, and who were ready to die, as they had lived, in the cause of their oppressed country. But there were others, and these the majority, who resented the boldness of Ethelbert's language, in representing the folly or the guilt of measures which they had been abetting; and these raised a clamorous opposition to his counsel, not unmixed with recriminations of a personal nature, in which the conduct of his mother was alluded to in terms of the most bitter contempt. At this injurious usage the resentment of the young thane blazed forth in such a passionate burst of indignation, and he was transported into the utterance of so many home truths, more cutting to those to whom they were addressed than the most contumacious reproaches would have been, that a tumult took place in the divided assembly, and Ethelbert narrowly escaped paying

the forfeit of his imprudence with his life; and so violent were the scenes that took place, after he had withdrawn, that to avoid a bloody conflict among the contending parties, it was agreed to order him and his adherents to leave Crowland, within twelve hours, on pain of death.

Ethelbert's feelings on being informed of this iniquitous sentence may better be conceived than portrayed. The first effervescence of his anger had scarcely had time to cool, when he was informed that two ecclesiastics, from Saxlingham, craved to be admitted to a parley with him.

"A pair of errant rogues, no doubt then," said Ethelbert, "I well remember their hospitable treatment of me in my first reverse of fortune. Tell them I will not be pestered with their company, Tink."

"Nay, but master mine, it will do thee no harm to give them a hearing. Belike they be the bearers of good tidings, for they are not the people to put themselves to the trouble of trudging some score miles, to visit one from whom they thought nothing was to be obtained," said Tink. "I pray thee admit them, if it be only for the sake of venting thy wrath, by telling them a bit of thy mind."

"A sorry satisfaction that, I trow," said Ethelbert, with a sour smile; "however, as my curiosity is really excited to know what the selfish locusts want of me, I will seek them."

Tink, whose impatience to learn their errand far exceeded that of his lord, lost no time in introducing the two ecclesiastics in frocks and cowls; in the elder of whom Ethelbert was not long in recognising the portly figure and pompous bearing of Father Walstun, his mother's confessor; the other, who was apparently a slender stripling, was a stranger, and remained in the back ground.

Ethelbert cut the pompous salutations and exuberant benedicites, with which his former spiritual director began to address him, short, by turning sharply upon him, and greeting him sternly, in these words:—

"Thy business!"

"May it please you, noble thane, I am charged with the loving greetings of the Baron of Saxlingham," said the priest, somewhat disconcerted.

"The Baron of Saxlingham!" echoed Ethelbert, in amaze.

"Son Ethelbert, our Sovereign Lord, William of Normandy, the Conqueror and King of these realms, hath been graciously pleased to confer that style and title upon the valiant Sir Robert de la Loupe, my present patron."

"Thy present patron, old traitor!" exclaimed Ethelbert, with a raised color and flashing eyes, "and hast thou the hardihood to come hither, to prate to me about the rapacious robber of my rights? Have a care, false priest, that I cause thee not to be hanged for bringing messages to Crowland from a Norman."

"I prithee have a moment's patience, master mine," whispered Tink, "and hear what the old fox hath to say, for thou art in more danger of being hanged thyself at Crowland, for thy honesty, than in condition to bring others to account for their treason. Thou wouldst, in sooth, have work enough upon thine hands, an' thou couldst do that."

"Thou art only too near the truth, I fear, friend Tink," responded Ethelbert, with a melancholy smile; and Father Wulstan seized the opportunity to proceed in his mission, by informing Ethelbert, that Robert de la Loupe, being sorely distressed by the loss of his favourite charger, and the abduction of his intended bride, was very desirous of entering into a friendly negotiation with him for their restitution.

"By the mass, cousin Ethelbert, these tidings were worth the hearing!" exclaimed Tink, grinning and rubbing his hands, "I hope thou wilt name a goodly ransom for thy prisoner, the Lady Selburga, but as for the horse Rollo, he is my own especial spoil, the captive of my bow and spear, and if the Norman wolf require him again, he shall pay Saxon price for the corn he hath eaten."

"The Baron of Saxlingham will be content to purchase his good steed at the same rate as if it had never been his own lawful property," said Father Wulstan, "so that matter is settled, albeit, it is a very minor and secondary part of the embassy, for it is the loss of the Lady Selburga that doth so deeply concern him, that he lieth sick at the stronghold of Saxlingham for love of her, and the craving desire he hath to complete his marriage with so amiable and pious a spouse wherefore he hath sent me to thee, noble Ethelbert, praying thee, since gold is no object to him, to name thine own price for her restitution."

"Doth Robert de la Loupe take me for such a sordid wretch, as to suppose I would barter my mother to him for gold?" demanded Ethelbert, turning haughtily away.

"Nay, an' there be any thing in his gift which thou deemest preferable to gold, thou art free to name it," said the priest, drawing closer to the young thane, "and remember, son Ethelbert, thou wilt be performing the part of a dutiful child, in removing thy mother from

so doleful an abode as this Crowland, where she is held in very light esteem, and exposed to every species of inconvenience from the foul air of stagnant marshes, and the scarcity of food which hath long been felt in this dreary place, and by bestowing her on so loving and wealthy a husband as the powerful Norman chief, to whom she hath already given her affection and betrothed herself in promise of marriage. Thou wert surely guilty of great want of judgement in interfering to prevent this union, seeing tLou hadst no means of maintaining thy mother, in the state appertaining to a lady of the royal lineage, whereas, my present patron, Sir Robert de la Loupe, is willing and able to support her in a style of great splendour during the term of his natural life, and to dower her nobly in case of survivorship, which is a very probable contingency, considering the sore sickness which at present afflicteth him, therefore, thou, as her only son and heir, woudst act most unadvisedly in withholding her from so profitable and honorable a marriage. to the which it is a marvel, scarcely less than miraculous, that she should have been wooed, considering her mature age."

"I have heard you, Sir Priest, with an exercise of patience, which ought to surprise you, considering the subject on which you have enlarged so imprudently," replied Ethelbert, "and now be pleased to convey my defiance to him, who sent you with loving greetings to the ruined Thane of Saxlingham,—and tell him who hath robbed me of my inheritance, and driven me forth a penniless vagabond on the face of the earth, that I rejoyce to learn that I have one thing in my possession of which he cannot deprive me, and that it is not in the power of all the gold of Normandy to purchase for him the bride he coveteth."

"Albeit, she is not the most marketable article in this realm," muttered Tink; "however, we may say here, as saith the proverb, 'like lips, like lettuces.'"

"May it please you, noble Ethelbert," said Wulstan, "just for the satisfaction of him who sent me, to say what Sir Robert de la Loupe can give you in exchange for the Lady Selburga?"

"Tell him," replied Ethelbert, "that he hath but one thing appertaining unto him which can be placed in competition with my mother, and that is his daughter, who is, I understand, his only child,—and when he sendeth her to me, I will promise to bestow my mother upon him in exchange."

“Wilt thou stand to thine own terms, Sir Ethelbert?” demanded the young stranger, who had not spoken before.

“Aye,” replied Ethelbert, “I will freely engage to yield my mother to Robert de la Loupe, since she so much affecteth him, provided he gives me his fair daughter to wife, but not otherwise.”

“Sir Ethelbert, I will engage that thy conditions are accepted,” said Father Wulstan, “I am free to say that Sir Robert de la Loupe consents to receive thee as son-in-law, in a double sense of the word. as the husband of Lady Adela, her daughter, and by becoming himself the husband of thy mother, the Lady Selburga.”

Ethelbert, who had given utterance to this proposal by way of taunt, was struck with surprise at being taken at his word. and could only say,

“And who will assure me of the consent of the Lady Adela?”

“That will I, valiant thane,” said the youthful stranger, throwing back the cowl, and displaying the lovely features of the noble Norman maiden: “I undertook this embassy at the request of my brave father, in hopes of winning from thee the cure which his present melancholic distemper of mind doth lack; and since the condition thou hast named for the fulfilment of his wish are such as I am bold to fancy spring from love, which the brief encounter of eyes betwixt thee and me, at Saxlingham church, made mutual, I do not shame to say that I rejoice in being the happy means of restoring to my father his lost peace, at the sweet price of yielding my hand in marriage to the only man in the world whom I could consent to wed.”

“And is it possible, lovely Adela, that one so fair, so good, so fortunate withal, can have bestowed a thought on the ruined Thane of Saxlingham,” exclaimed Ethelbert, throwing himself at her feet, and covering her snowy hand with kisses.

“I will tell thee more about it when we return to Saxlingham as man and wife,” replied Adela, “or perhaps thou wilt delay our espousals till after my father’s nuptial contract with the Lady Selburga is completed.”

“Not so, in sooth, sweetheart,” replied Ethelbert, taking her by the hand; “when thy part of the treaty is fulfilled, I may venture to give my mother to Sir Robert de la Loupe in marriage, but not till then.”

The departure of Ethelbert, with his mother and followers, from Crowland, was of course within the time prescribed by his enemies;—and after the treatment he had received from his ungrateful country-

men, it is scarcely to be supposed that he scrupled to receive the hand of the lovely and loving daughter of Robert de la Loupe, at the bridal altar, or refused to bestow his mother in marriage on the powerful chief who had been willing to obtain her at such a price.

At that melancholy epoch of English history, it appears to have been the policy of the Norman conquerors, to obtain a sort of questionable title to the estates of the unfortunate Saxon thanes, by slaying their sons and taking their daughters to wife—loving sort of marriages must these have been! But Ethelbert, the dispossessed Thane of Saxlingham, in consequence of the Norman alliance, which he was by imperative circumstances in a manner compelled to contract, recovered not only his own inheritance, but succeeded to the wealth and honors of his powerful father-in-law, whose second marriage produced no issue to dispute the claims of his fair heiress, the Lady Adela.

CHAPTER VI.

The spiced goblets mantled high.

WARTON.

“Our ancestors, whose ideas of luxury were principally confined to the solid and the costly, were wont to imbibe divers and sundry mixed and compound potations, of which the principal were piment and hippocrass; these were wine or ale enriched with sugar and spices.”

“By my troth, thou hast acquitted thyself well, friend Thomas!” said King Henry, clapping the Cardinal on the shoulder, “and we give thee thanks for thy pleasant tale. Thou hast, I verily believe wit enough to excel in any calling, and if all trades failed thee, thou mightest get an excellent living as a raconteur.

“Ha! ha! ha! what sayest thou to the Saxon widow and her vow, sister Mal?” continued the merry monarch, turning significantly to the lovely Dowager of France.

Mary blushed deeply in remembrance of her own hasty marriage, a few days after the decease of her first husband, Lewis XII. of France, which event might possibly have taken place even earlier than it did, so impatient was she to be united to the object of her long and faithful love, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, if Wolsey had not addressed a most eloquent epistle to her, entreating her for the honor of England, and for the sake of her own reputation, not to marry again, at any

rate, before the funeral of the king her husband had been solemnised.

“Nay, marry, good brother,” she responded with some vivacity, “I will not deny the shrewdness of the tale, albeit it is little more than a modern version of that malicious romaunt of the widow of Ephesus, a tale I never could abide to hear for the honor of my sex even in my days of girlhood—and now by my fay, I could verily find in my heart to ask my Charles to cudgel Master Thomas soundly, for his saucy disregard of my feelings, in pointing the moral of his tale at me, who am, I wis, the only widow in company who hath wedded again.”

“There is your mistake, my fair mistress,” replied Abigail Trudget, one of the female pedlars, “for I have had much mercy shown to me, in having had the rare luck to marry and bury three husbands already. Yea, and I trust by the blessing of St. Bride, my patron saint, to obtain a fourth before I die.”

“It will not be thy fault, Goody, I’ll answer for it, if thou dost not succeed in thy wish,” observed the tailor, who had been rather particular in his attentions to the buxom Abigail.

“Indeed it will not,” she responded, “for I hold marriage to be a more honorable state than widowhood; and no honest man need be afraid of my refusing him, not even if he were a tailor, with no better inheritance than his goose.”

“I think any man would be a goose,” observed King Henry, “who had proved so fatal to three husbands.—By’s Lady! but I hope you won’t whisper your secret to any other wife in company, mistress.”

“An’ thou wert my husband,” retorted dame Trudget, “I would teach thee better manners; but thou hadst better make much of the good woman thou hast, for if thou wert to lose her, I do not know who would be troubled with the likes of thee. Not I, I promise thee, if I went to my grave a widow for lack of another man.”

Here Queen Catherine, feeling apprehensive lest her irascible consort should take umbrage at the disqualifying observations of the fair Abigail, requested Wolsey to try his skill in compounding a bowl of some pleasant beverage for the company; and the cardinal, who had not forgotten a single accomplishment of his early days, calling for some old ale, honey, spices, and cherry water, presently concocted a draught, which King Henry, after tasting of it, pronounced to be a most excellent *piment*, or cordial; and handed it to the emperor, with the significant commendation, that it was a beverage worthy of Caesar him-

self to drink, and as good as if made by a cardinal. In short, he bestowed so many commendations upon the compound, that the holy Abbot of Glastonbury deemed it incumbent to admonish him on the sinfulness of taking so much satisfaction in the creature comforts, bidding him remember, that gluttony and drunkenness were among the seven deadly sins, and very unsuitable for pilgrims bound to the holy shrine of our Lady of Walsingham.

“Father” replied the disguised monarch, “albeit we have expressed some approbation of an excellent *piment*, and have moreover, partaken with an indifferent good appetite of a meagre, but well cooked supper, of eggs, fish, and pottage, we trust we are fully aware of the impropriety, to say nothing of the sinfulness, or committing an excess either in the way of eating or drinking; and to prove that we are a lover of temperance, we will relate a moral and edifying tale on that subject, setting forth the evil consequences that had well nigh befallen a King of England, from his too free indulgence in the pleasures of the table. It is moreover a right pleasant story, and hath withal some foundation on truth, as those who are learned in the monkish chronicles can bear me witness. So now, with the leave of this worshipful company. having first prepared myself for the fatigue, by taking a sip of this excellent *piment*, I will relate the tale of “William Rufus and the Salmon-Pasty.”

CHAPTER VII

WILLIAM RUFUS AND THE SALMON PASTRY.

Après William Bastardus, regna Wil le Rous.

Fitz-Stephen's Chronicle.

“At whose funeral,” continues the obliging chronicler, “men could not weep for joy.” I have commenced my tale with this pithy quotation, inasmuch as it affords a lively idea of the esteem in which the second of the Norman line of monarchs was held by his unloving subjects. Albeit, it is a difficult matter for a king to please all his people, even if he were desirous of so doing, and, sooth to say, I have often laughed outright at the dolorous expressions of regret with which the malcontents of our days refer to the memory of the olden times; and I have bethought me, that could the annals of those years of ignorance and tyrannous insolence, of both kings and nobles, be proclaimed in the ears of the people, they would thank Heaven that they had lived under the sway of the present line of princes, who love learning, and have withal a paternal regard for the church and all dutiful subjects, over whom Heaven has appointed their happy reign.

William Rufus, or the Red King, as he is called by contemporary chroniclers, though not worse than some of his successors, and in my poor judgment, not a tithe so bad as the craven King John, appears to have been held in ill esteem by the monkish historians, who scruple not

to charge him with impiety, rapacity, cruelty, and a list of grosser vices too monstrous for repetition.

Prejudice apart, his sway was doubtless an iron one, and it is an accredited fact, that in the year of grace 1093, his jarring Norman and Saxon subjects, though divided on every other point, united most heartily in praying for his death.

Now whether the report of this unprecedented act of ill-will, on the part of his lawful leiges, might have some effect on William's mind, or whether Heaven were in a manner moved by the unwonted sincerity and fervor of these petitions in the royal behalf, or whether his highness had partaken too largely of a rich salmon-pastry, I will not take upon myself to decide, howbeit, the fact is certain, that the king fell sick at Gloucester of a very grievous malady.

Unused to pain, and unaccustomed to submit to the slightest restraint, for never before had a day's illness interfered with his course of robustious health, or caused him the least cessation from either war or pleasure, or those violent exercises to which his restless disposition constantly urged him, the king exhibited the most fractious and impatient humors on the first symptoms of indisposition, which commenced with the usual effects attending excessive repletion. His personal attendants and lords of his household, though by no means free from alarm, lest his natural irascibility, aggravated as it was to an unusual pitch by his illness, should be productive of evil consequences to themselves, were not in the slightest degree amazed at the malady of their royal master when they called to mind the quality and quantity of his devourings on the preceding day. So great indeed had been William's relish for the aforesaid salmon-pastry, that he had, in defiance of all laws of chivalry, and to the great scandal of—even *his* corrupt court—knighted the cook who had compounded this dainty, and appointed him a pension suitable to his new honor. Moreover, he had evinced his devotion to the pastry by causing it to be brought into his chamber, that he might make a second repast upon it before he slept, and feast his eyes withal upon it, in case he should chance to awake in the course of the night. In consequence, however, of his violent indisposition, his reminiscences of it soon became the very reverse of agreeable, and therefore, after uttering a succession of dolorous groans, and showing a strange variety of grimaces and contortions, indicative of his loathing, he pointed with his right hand to the gilded beaufet opposite to his bed, where the late

avored object of his exclusive preference had been placed full in his view, saying, in a rueful tone,—

“By Saint Luke’s face ! yonder stands the traitor that hath slain me outright.—Take it hence, my masters, for if I look upon it once more, my royal stomach will be turned inside-out.”

The king’s injunction was instantly obeyed, but his sore sickness instead of decreasing, became so alarmingly worse, that Robert Bloet, his favorite, ventured to suggest the expediency of summoning a physician to his aid. This he did with fear and trembling, because he was well aware, that among a notable array of other barbarian prejudices, William Rufus entertained a furious antipathy against all learned physicians, ever since the hour, when, through the instigation of one of the tribe, the deceased queen, his royal mother, had, in his childhood, so far exerted her maternal authority, as to compel him to swallow a draught, composed of a decoction of rue, tansy, horehound, coltsfoot, hyssop and camomile-flowers, farther enriched with a handful of earth-worms, half a dozen wood-lice, and four centipedes ; which delectable beverage, under the superintendance of the queen and her physician extraordinary, had been, by the assistance of four yeoman of the guard, actually forced down Prince William’s throat, with a silver drenching-horn, despite his most active exertions in the way of kicking, cuffing, biting and screaming ; and such was his remembrance of the flavor of this detestable compound, that he was wont ever after to say publicly, that the sight of Beelzebub himself would be more agreeable to him, than that of a physician, and that he should hold those guilty of demitreason to his person, who should ever mention in his presence the name or calling of any sort of leech or mediciner. Consequently it may be supposed that these worthies did not abound at the court of the Red King, and nothing but the extreme urgency of the case could have induced the favorite to run the awful risk of proposing to his monarch the introduction of one of this abhorred fraternity. The rest of the courtiers stood aghast at the temerity of Bloet, but their consternation was converted into astonishment, at the change that a few hours’ severe illness had effected in the royal caprices, for, after rolling himself upon the bed, in the violence of his anguish, he roared out,—

“A leech, say you ? aye, any one that can bring me ease ! Out upon ye all for a pitiless set of varlets, that could stand and gaze upon my torments, and not think upon the mediciner ere this ! Fly, ye barbarous wretches ! Ye false-hearted traitors, and hale hither by the ears

a skillful leech forthwith, or I will make all your heads leap from your shoulders, without the benefit of clergy, before ye are ten minutes older!"

This courteous intimation of his benevolent intentions towards the trusty lieges who surrounded his sick bed, would speedily have cleared the room of every soul but his favorite, had not Rufus perceiving indications of a general retreat, called out:—

"Ha! ye false villains, think ye to leave me thus to die alone? Tarry, I say! you Mortimer, Grantmenil, Ufford, and Eustace de Boulogne. And you, my Bloet, hasten for a discreet and skillful leech—but ere you venture to bring him into my presence, strive to discover, by closely questioning him, whether the knave have any intention of dosing me with rue and horehound, and if he have any such venomous compounds in his book of recipes, cause him to be hanged forthwith, for a conspirator who would finish the treasons begun by yon accursed pastry,—and seek me out another without delay."

Here a violent paroxysm of the disorder intervened, brought on, doubtless, by the continued reminiscences of the rue decoction, and the salmon-pasty.

The courtiers cast a look of dismay upon each other, and Bloet, without delaying even to soothe or support the sovereign in his sore distress, hastened forth pale with apprehension, in search of medical aid. He presently returned, bringing with him Leptimus Fitz-Leech, the most eminent mediciner at that day in the good city of Gloucester. Few, indeed, could compete with him, not as touching his skill, but regarding the peculiar good fortune of his birth, for he could boast of ther are desideratum of being the seventh son of a seventh son, an advantage vainly evinced by his rivals in the healing art.

The Red King turned a piteous regard upon Fitz-Leech as he entered; a look that spoke of humbled pride, and supplicated to him for prompt assistance in his woeful condition. Fitz-Leech perceived the state of the royal mind, and felt his own self-importance increase in proportion to the king's evident terror. The haughty Rufus was, in truth ready to promise him any reward for his cure, even to half of his kingdom. Albeit, the seventh son of the seventh son, possessed no such skill in the healing art as his royal patient was willing to hope, yet what he lacked in science he made up in presumption, and after feeling the king's pulse, with a mysterious air of solemnity, which caused Rufus to thrill with apprehension, the physician proceeded according

to the most approved practice of that golden age of ignorance, to suit his prescription rather to the quality of his patient than to the nature of his malady. He demanded a diamond, a ruby, and an emerald; then drawing from under the folds of his gown a small pestle and mortar, he beat the gems to powder, and administered the costly compound to the monarch, in a large spoonful of honey, which, fortunately for Rufus, producing a return of his sickness, prevented the fatal effects that might have resulted had he retained any part of the costly nostrum.

The king, who had swallowed this precious dose with a faith in its efficacy of the most laudable description, was grievously disappointed at experiencing its painful effects. Howbeit, Fitz-Leech did not scruple to assure the sick monarch, that it would produce the most beneficial result, and that its operation was the forerunner of speedy relief. Moreover, he proceeded to spread with a variety of muttered incantations, a plaster of frankincense, bees-wax, aloes, and several other adhesive drugs, on white leather, cut out in the form of a heart, with which he covered the royal stomach: and placed another plaster in the shape of a cross, on the back of the patient; likewise he encircled the king's wrists and ankles with bands of the same, but by the time he had accomplished these doings, the king had grown visibly worse, and, gnashing his teeth on his physician, he assured him that unless he effected a speedy cure he would incontinently cause him to be hanged.

"Gads-fish," cried Fitz-Leech, "the pain and fever which torment your highness would, long ere this, have yielded to the sovereign remedies my skill has applied, had not the sore disease been aggravated by your impatience and testiness in which you have been graciously pleased to indulge, to the infinite risk and peril of your mortal body, and to the still greater endangerment of your immortal soul."

"Fellow!" cried the king, in an access of fury—"How durst thou presume to increase my miseries, by the mention of my immortal soul? Verily, I will cause thee to suffer the penalty of high treason, out of hand, for wickedly imagining my death in thy perverse and wicked heart!—Tell me—my masters," he continued, raising himself up in his bed and, glaring round him with a wild horror in his rolling and blood-shot eyes (which chroniclers assure us were of different colors)—tell me whether I am in danger of death, as this vile slave would traitorously aver?"

The courtiers, though willing at all times to flatter their unreasonable

and imperious master, were on this occasion mute ; and the king read in their pale countenances and portentous silence, a fearful reply to his question ; yet he continued to gaze in desperate expectancy of an answer. At that instant, the deep pause was broken by a long and general howl from the hounds in the royal kennel, beneath the windows of the king's chamber : scarcely had this cadence ceased, when a voice which certainly was in the room, but yet proceeded from no visible agent, pronounced in thrilling tones these awful words,—

“Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live !”

A fearful cry broke from every one present, that stood about the bed, and the king, bowing his face upon the pillow, in an agony of despair and terror burst into a flood of tears. Then, starting up, he exclaimed,

“My soul ! my precious soul ! For the love of the saints, send for a dozen monks ! Hand me a crucifix ! Have none of ye a rosary, ye profane and godless crew ! Oh Bloet, if thou lovest me, help me out with an ave, lest, peradventure, I should depart before a priest cometh.”

Robert Bloet was perfectly competent to the service required, for he had been bred a churchman, but had forsaken cowl and cloister, and abjured his vows, for the sake of becoming one of the corrupt ministers of William Rufus, and an associate in his dissolute way of life. Nevertheless, the sight of his miserable master's sufferings and despair, alarmed his troubled countenance with the memory of his own guilt and broken vows so fearfully, that he became incapable, through agitation and remorse, of calling to mind any prayer, excepting the appropriate ejaculation to his state of—

“‘Lord be merciful to me a sinner !’”

“Diable !” cried the king, transported into a sudden fit of fury—
“Art thou wasting my precious time in praying for thyself, false traitor ! Oh, blessed Saint Luke !—Holy Evangelist ! whose name I have so often profaned by using it as a ribald oath,—send some comfort, and if thou canst, raise up for me a leech, wise and honest as thyself ! Will no one give me a rosary ? Here ye profane men of Belial—Grantmenil, Basset, Fitz-Haymon, and Eustace de Boulogne come hither, and bend your stubborn knees, and say what prayers ye can muster among you for the benefit of my soul.”

The warlike Normans looked at each other in dismay, at this unwonted command from their sovereign, whose paroxysm of pain

returned on him with redoubled violence, in consequence of his alarm and distraction of spirit.

Peter Grantmenil now produced the only string of beads that could be found among the courtiers, and these he had retained about his person, rather in the way of a charm or amulet, to secure him from the attacks of evil spirits, than from any religious use he made of them.

"Oh, that our holy sister, the nun, were here!" cried the king, as he turned the beads about without being able to recal one prayer to his memory.

"Kneel down, I say, ye perverse heretics, and repeat what prayers ye can!"

There was an immediate genuflection round the royal bed while Basset, Mortimer, Grantmenil and the Count de Boulogne began to stammer forth disjointed fragments of Aves, Paternosters, Glorias and Credos in a clamorous confusion of tongues, which greatly afflicted the king's head, though it afforded no relief to his spiritual distress.

"Silence!" he exclaimed, "ye noisy, untaught varlets! Silence, I tell ye! Of what service is Latin gibberish to me, when I wot not one word that it meaneth. Is there any one in presence, who can repeat a whole prayer in English or in Norman French?"

The nobles shook their heads, protesting that Latin was the language of the holy mother church, and therefore Latin prayers must, doubtless, be more efficacious than any others; and though they one and all admitted that they did not understand the meaning of a single word that they offered up, yet they said, "God assuredly did, and that was all sufficient."

The conscience-stricken king was not to be thus satisfied, and he continued to demand spiritual assistance so pertinaciously, that at last a little Saxon page was found, who was said to know an English prayer. This boy, who was in the service of Grantmenil, was led by his master to the foot of the royal couch, and devoutly crossing himself, the page knelt down, and in the innocence of his heart repeated, in Anglo-Saxon, the following ancient invocation—

"Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Bless the bed that I lie on!
There be four corners to my bed!
There be four angels over spread!"

Two at my head, two at my feet,
 To be my keepers while I sleep,
 If I die before I wake,
 Sweet Mary's son my soul pray take!"

"Simple boy, that prayer is a good vesper for a pious child; but of what avail can it be to a man deep dyed in guilt and fearful iniquity, when he is smitten of the Lord for his sins?" said Anselm, Abbot of Bec, who at that moment entered the chamber, bearing the cross in one hand, and upholding the host in the other.

"Holy father," cried the king, turning toward him, with clasped hands and streaming eyes, "what shall I give thee to save my soul from the pains hereafter?"

"Wretched man," replied the abbot, "dost thou hope to preserve thyself from the wrath to come, through the Mammon of unrighteousness? I tell thee, William of Normandy, if thou wouldst give me thy house full of silver and gold to speak peace to thy guilty conscience, I would not do it."

"I sent for you to give me absolution for my sins, not to increase my misery by enlarging on mine iniquities," interrupted the king, angrily. "I tell thee, moreover, that I am not worse than all these nobles here, for they have all shared in my crimes, and committed a huge stock of their own, withal. There is not one in presence, but has been guilty of sacrilege, murder, adultery and perjury; not to mention gluttonies, extortions, wrongs and robberies too numerous to be recorded—"

"Son," interrupted the abbot, in his turn, "didst thou send for me that thou mightest confess their sins or thine own?"

"Father, I sent for thee that thou mightest save my soul."

"I save thy soul, thou misguided and foolish man! Dost thou not know that God has expressly declared that no man can redeem his brother, for it cost more to do that—"

"As for the cost," replied the king, "I told thee before that I was willing that thou shouldst name thine own price for my shrift. Ranulph Flambart, my treasurer, hath lately brought vast sums of silver and gold into my exchequer, and I will pay thee handsomely for thy trouble if thou wilt fall to work to pray my soul speedily out of its woful imperilment."

"Aye, thou wouldst willingly barter that which can now profit thee

nothing, as the price of thy redemption from the penal fire. But dost thou deem, oh vain man! that thy bribe will be accepted, when thou dost remember thee that it is made up out of the spoils of the church. Hast thou not laid thy godless clutches on abbeys, bishoprics, and hospital endowments, and stuffed thy coffers with the maintenance of the poor and sick—and to whom thinkest thou the things will pertain for the which thou hast pulled the wrath of heaven upon thy head?"

"I cannot exactly take upon me to say unto whom they will pertain," replied the royal penitent, whose thoughts were somewhat unseasonably diverted from the state of his soul by this question; "but of this I am sure, that my brother Robert and my brother Henry will contest for them till the last gasp. Thanks to my patron St. Luke, they are both, at this present, occupied in settling their quarrels in Normandy, or I should stand a chance of one or other of the twain making himself heir, both to treasure and throne, before my death."

"Miserable man," said the Abbot of Bec, "thy thoughts cleave to the world, and to the fruits of thy unrighteousness to the last—and thou wilt die in thine iniquities, and perish eternally, without so much as partaking the benefits of purgatory."

"For the love of blessed Mary, say not so, holy father," returned the king, in a fresh ecstasy of terror. "Only tell me what I am to do, and I will be meek and complying in all things. Yea, I have twelve rich abbeys and six bishoprics in mine own hands—besides the mighty revenues of the archbishopric of Canterbury—"

"Monstrous!" interrupted the abbot, with a groan of horror, "did ever Christian king hold such plunder in his grasp before?"

"Holy father," cried the king. "I perceive that my physician, Septimus Fitz-Leech, hath fled the chamber; by which token, I know that mine end is approaching."

"Therefore, my son, the more urgent is thy need of appeasing the wrath of Heaven, by casting from thee the unhallowed fruits of sacrilege;" replied Anselm.

"Father," said the king, "I will make thee Archbishop of Canterbury, because I see thou art a holy man, and no respecter of persons. The bishopric of Lincoln I will bestow on Robert Bloet, on condition of his returning to the church, and living as doth become the priesthood; and, peradventure, his prayers may benefit my soul, for we have been partakers together of many evil deeds. The other mitres I will bestow on those five monks who followed you into the chamber, and on whom

I have kept mine eye during the whole of this godly conference; and have observed that they have not ceased to employ themselves in supplications for the good of my soul."

"Thou hast well disposed of part of thine unlawful spoil, my son," said the new Archbishop of Canterbury, "and now what doest thou with the twelve rich abbeys?"

"Oh, I am sick unto death!" exclaimed the king, "trouble me no more, in the hour of my departure, respecting them, but give me speedy shrift, for I repent me of all mine evil deeds, and do abhor my past life."

"There is a crime of thine that bids fair to bar thine entrance into paradise," said a pious Saxon bishop, who had just then entered the royal chamber.

"Name it, holy father, that I may repent me of it, ere it be too late," said the king.

"You must also make amends, if you hope for pardon," replied the bishop.

"Alas!" said the king, "if all the sins that I have committed were to be brought to memory this day, and I called upon to provide a remedy for each and every one, though mine age were to be lengthened out beyond that of Sir Methuselah, yet should I lack time for the task. Howbeit, speak on."

"It is of thy heinous and abominable conduct in laying waste so large a portion of the country of South Hamptonshire, destroying thirty towns and villages in the fertile hundred of Ytew, in order to plant a forest for savage beasts, wherein thou mightest pursue the godless diversion of the chace!" returned the bishop.

"Nay, good father," interposed the king, with some vivacity, "twit me not, I pray thee, with another man's realms who planted the New Forest and chace whereof thou speakest. Certes, I have sins enow upon my head, without being called on to confess those of my own sire."

"Son," replied the Saxon bishop, "was it not at thy request, and to pleasure thee, that thy sire (himself a man of a violence, a lawless) oppressor did cause that mighty wrong to be committed, whereby twenty thousand families were rendered homeless in one day?"

"Holy father, pursue me not so hardly with mine iniquity—I acknowledge that I was the instigator of my father's sin, touching the matter of the New Forest. I do repent me of the same."

"That doth not suffice," responded the Saxon bishop Wulstan; "you must repair the wrong."

"Father, I will leave it in my will that my successor shall do so."

"But how if it shall please Heaven to lengthen thy days?"

"By the holy rood," cried the king feeling a lively fit of gratitude for the suggestion of a possibility that neither he nor any one about him had ventured to hope, "if it is as you prophesy, my good father, I will dispark forest and chase, restore the land to the rightful owners, or their heirs, and rebuild, withal, towns, villages, and churches; making just amends for all that the sufferers have lost; and if I do not all this, may I meet my death therein."

Anselm and the Saxon bishop, being now perfectly satisfied with their penitent, received his confession, and administered to him all the rites prescribed by holy mother church, and so devoutly did William demean himself on this occasion, that Anselm predicted in a transport of catholic enthusiasm, "That if the days of the royal penitent were prolonged, he would be certainly added to the glorious company of the saints and confessors of the Romish calendar."

Now it is more than probable that if the Red King had died at this juncture, his death-bed sanctity would have procured him the honor of canonisation, or, at least, that his memory would have been preserved from the evil odor in which it is held by posterity. Be this as it may, those about him were exceedingly edified by the strict manner in which he, for the first time in his life, kept the Lent fast; which unwonted abstinence, most probably, contributed much to his recovery, more, peradventure, than all the masses that were said or sung by the new bishops and archbishops. He abstained from the use of oaths and profane talk, to which he erst had been villanously addicted, in short, he demeaned himself, in all matters, like a true penitent.

A visible amendment also took place in the manners of all those about him. Grantmenil took upon him to learn all the prayers and godly staves that his little Saxon page could teach him. Fitz-Haymon provided himself with a chaplain, and never sat down to meat without hearing grace. Mortimer bought him a rosary, deeming it no longer decent for a noble, belonging to a Christian king's court, to be without one. The Count Eustace de Boulogne went duly to mass every Sunday, and high holiday, and confessed his sins as fast as he committed them. His brother took the cowl, and was shaven a monk in the Abbey of Glastonbury,—and Ufford married his concubine.

Anselm now considered, that the work of reformation in the English court was in hopeful progress, and that little more was required to complete it, than the appointment of twelve discreet and holy abbots, of his nomination, to the twelve fat abbeys which laid vacant,—and the restoration withal, of certain lands and immunities, pertaining to the See of Canterbury, which, owing to some strange accident of forgetfulness, had not been surrendered to him at the time that he was invested with the arch-episcopal mitre.

Not surmising that he should meet with any difficulties regarding these matters, on the part of so pious a prince as William Rufus was now esteemed to be, he took the opportunity of reminding him of his promise concerning the church property, just after both king and court had returned from making a thank-offering at the high altar of Gloucester Cathedral, as an acknowledgment for the monarch's recovery from his late dangerous sickness.

"Twelve abbeys—and rich ones too, say you, Father Anselm?" replied the king, "And, so I had forgotten them, by my fay! yet I find that our late illness has sorely exhausted our treasury. Much gold hath flown in the shape of presents to different shrines, to remind the saints that it was for their interest to bestir themselves heartily for our recovery; and these twelve abbeys will yield a seasonable supply to fill up the vacuum that mother church has created in our coffers."

"Saint John forefend that your grace should relapse so soon into your old sins!" exclaimed the archbishop, with a look of horror, beginning to tremble with apprehension, for the return of his penitent into a state of apostacy. "Did not your highness make a solemn vow, that the goods of the church should, forthwith, be surrendered into worthy hands, if it pleased Heaven to prolong your days."

"By Saint Luke's face!" replied the king, giving way to his former profane habit of exclamation, "I will keep my word. To begin then with the fat abbey of Bermondsey, I am willing to appoint any priest to the same, who is worthy enough to pay me down honestly the sum of five hundred marks."

"That will I right joyfully!" cried Father Jerome, a rich Benedictine monk.

"May it please your grace," interposed the prior of the same house to which belonged Father Jerome, "I am willing, yea, and able, to give you six hundred marks, if you will be pleased to nominate me Abbot of Bermondsey."

“Nay,” returned Father Jerome, “thou jealous prior, it shall not be a hundred marks that shall set thee so far above me: may it like your highness’ grace, I can pay you seven hundred, for your benevolence in advancing me to the said rich abbey, if it be only to spite yon proud prior, who hath busily labored to circumvent me in my promotion.”

“Marry,” quoth the prior, “an’ thou goest to spites, vile Simonist, here will I pay on the nail another hundred, rather than the goodly abbey should fall into the clutch of such a rapacious wolf as thou beest.”

“Simonist in thy teeth, thou false Judas,” retorted Father Jerome, “to prove that I am not a whit inferior to any prior of the order of Saint Benedict, I will incontinently pay down a thousand marks, aye, and fifty over and above, rather than thou shouldst be exalted.”

“Prior,” said the king, who had highly enjoyed their dispute, “canst make it up to eleven hundred?”

“No,” replied the prior, but I can command one thousand and fifty marks, the same as Father Jerome, and I pray your grace to give me the preference in this matter, on account of my superior rank in the church.”

“By Saint Luke’s face!” said the king, “your claims on my preference are so equal, that it would be a most unkingly piece of partiality to favor either to the detriment of the other. Here you, Father Austin! your sermon at the cathedral to-day pleased me well,—what are you willing to bid for the fat abbey of Bermondsey?”

“May it please your grace,” replied Austin, right meekly, “I have made a vow of poverty and humility, therefore I am destitute of money and other mundane goods; having renounced the world and the pomps thereof, I covet not either wealth or dignities,—for which reasons I pray you, pass me by.”

“Not so, by the mass of Saint Michael!” shouted the king, “for we deem you a much more fitting person to rule over the Abbey of Bermondsey, than either of these fat monks, who, having equally with yourself taken upon them vows of poverty and self-denial, are outbidding each other for a rich benefice—till—lo you!—they be black in the face with eager spitefulness! Hey, my lord archbishop! what think you of our royal choice of an abbot?”

“Had your grace made the decision with decent gravity, and refrained from exposing the weakness of the church, by exhibiting the

shameless conduct of two of her sons, it had pleased me better ;” replied Anselm, with an austere frown.

‘Marry,’ said the king, “since you give me no credit for acting in so praise-worthy a manner, as to eschew the temptation of a thousand marks and fifty over and above, when our royal coffers withall be in a state of leanness and exhaustion, I will incontinently sell the other eleven abbacies, to the highest bidders, and all without regard to your opinion, my lord archbishop.”

“Your grace will, belike, nevertheless restore to the See of Canterbury certain immunities of which it is now shorn?” asked the archbishop.

“May I never taste happiness again, if I do,” replied Rufus, sturdily.

“Oh, impious and sacrilegious man ! hast forgotten all the holy resolutions and vow made by thee, when on the bed of sickness ?” exclaimed Anselm.

“Marry, master archbishop,” said the king, adroitly evading the query,—“that same sickness was a brave thing for you, whom it converted from a beggarly Norman monk, into the primate of all England ! but, had I known what a hungry fellow you were, I never, by the mass, would have made archbishop of the like. So rest content with what you have got, for you gain nought more of me !”

“I will appeal to the pope, and his holiness shall excommunicate you,” said the Archbishop Anselm, leaving the court in wrath.

“Let him dare, and I will make him eat his own bull,” retorted Rufus.

At this unlucky juncture, the Bishop Wulstan approached, to remind the monarch of his vow respecting the restoration of the New Forest. William angrily replied that he had altered his mind.

“Your promise, your royal word !” repeated Wulstan.

“Tush !” said Rufus, “think you that a king can keep all his promises ?”

“God, who registered your solemn adjuration, will bear in mind that you wished you might be slain there if you restored not the reft land ! Natheless he will remember both bond and forfeiture !” replied the Saxon Bishop Wulstan, solemnly, and then withdrew for ever from the royal presence.

The Red King rejoiced at being thus ridded of his reverend monitors, for Wulstan betook himself to his see, and Anselm retired in dudgeon to his abbey in Normandy, leaving William in exclusive possession of

the whole of the arch-episcopal revenues, for the stomach of the lofty prelate was too high to touch part of his dues, if he could not have all.

That Easter was spent by William Rufus more riotously than any preceding festival had ever been, out of joy, as he said, for his unhopèd-for recovery. Right speedily he relapsed into all his impieties and wild profligate courses, and some few years after, when he finally met with a violent death in the New Forest, men did not fail to call to mind his promise to the Saxon Bishop Wulstan, and the evil that he had invoked on his own head if he failed in the same.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mild in his aspect, but his sentence sour,
He'll pray it, and he'll preach it by the hour.

Chaucer.

"Son," said the venerable Abbot of Glastonbury with a reproving frown, "thy tale is stark naught, and may be classed among those ribald shafts, which, in these our days, are, wo the while, so frequently directed against the church, and having more wit than wisdom, are to be reprovèd."

"Nay, Father," rejoined the king. "I thought thou wouldst commend me for having exalted so highly the characters of two pious bishops, Anselm and Wulstan, not take me to task for glancing at the evil practices of the corrupt members of the church, whom my tale was partly intended to admonish."

"Son," replied the abbot, "thy tale throughout is blamable and savoreth, not only of the evil signs of the present times, but of the unadvised potations thou has quaffed before thou didst commence it."

"Methinks, under favor, thou art over critical," interposed Wolsey who saw the portentous cloud gathering on the brow of his imperious master, and dreaded an explosion of his irascible temper. "The tale is founded on historical facts, wittily and pleasantly woven into a

story, which bears a striking moral, not only on the pernicious effects of gluttony, and the ignorance, superstition, and folly of the eleventh century,—but also points to the awful retribution which followed the Red King's relapse into guilt and sensuality, and the punishment of his broken vow."

"Thou art, I see, skilled in making the best of a bad cause, son," replied the abbot, "but I wish to certify, that it is not the circumstances of the tale to which I object, but the levity with which yonder witty but indiscreet pilgrim hath described the horrors of remorse in a guilty tyrant, when the grim King of Terrors held his dart suspended over his feverish couch, which is not a subject to be trifled with, or lightly regarded.—But what I most chiefly object to, is the introduction of scripture texts, in the vulgar tongue, and allusion to sacred things and holy names, in the converse of the tale, not to mention the contempt of the kingly character and office, so evidently entertained by the profane relater thereof,—for which I shall deem it my pastoral duty, to enjoin him to perform a severe penance, before he presume to approach the holy shrine of our blessed Lady Walsingham."

"I cry you mercy, holy father!" said the king, "I meant no offence to either church or king by my tale; which I will maintain, in spite of your censure, to be a moral and edifying story, and more than that, I defy you to relate a better."

"Son," rejoined the abbot, "I had not purposed relating my tale till the conclusion of the morrow's journey, because as it is of so serious and holy a character, I opined that it would prepare the minds of some of the pilgrims for the performance of their devotions at the shrine of our blessed Lady of Walsingham,—but since thou hast used such words, I deem it incumbent on me to reprove thy rashness, by entertaining this company with a tale meet for Christians to hear, and which, I hope, will, in some measure prove an antidote to the ribald style of thine."

The venerable ecclesiastic then related the story of "The Christian Gladiators."

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHRISTIAN GLADIATORS.

Crudelitas vostra, gloria est nostra.
Tertullian.

In the commencement of the memorable struggle for national independence which the Dacians maintained with Rome, the wife of Isichus, the brother of Decebalus, the warlike monarch of that people, having, according to the custom of the females of ancient Germany, attended her husband through the perils and hardships of the campaign, expired in giving birth to an infant son named Marcomanus. This babe was consigned to the fostering care of Varinia, the widow of a valiant Dacian chief, who, supplying to him the place of the parent whom he had lost, nourished him at her maternal bosom with her own son Adminius. She had no other child, but divided her cares and endearments equally between the young prince and Adminius, who mutually regarded each other with the most tender and brotherly affection.

Varinia cultivated the lands of her deceased husband, in that part of Dacia now known by the name of Moldavia, and the two boys, who were reared by her in the simple pastoral habits of the Dacian youth before they were called upon to embrace the martial life, kept her flocks and tended her herds on the banks of the Danube, or hunted the wolf and the wild boar in the primeval forests of Germany.

They were early distinguished among their young companions by their strength and courage, and the skill and activity which they displayed in all athletic games and exercises. Both were also remarka-

ble for the beauty of their persons, though in this particular Adminius greatly excelled his royal foster-brother. He was of a loftier stature, and possessed a more noble line of features than Marcomanus, and the expression of his countenance was infinitely more attractive. In disposition his superiority was also manifest; but the amiable meekness of Adminius rendered him a more agreeable associate to the haughty and imperious Marcomanus than a person more nearly resembling him in character.

Marcomanus loved Adminius because his companionship was both pleasing and necessary to him, and because Adminius paid him at all times the respect due both to his princely birth and shining talents. Adminius never failed to resent the wrongs of Marcomanus, to rejoice in his joys, and to mourn for his distresses, with generous, unasked sympathy.

The father of Marcomanus had married again soon after the death of his wife, and having become the father of a numerous offspring, had, in the cares and endearments of a second family, forgotten the claims of his first-born.

Marcomanus resented this neglect with all the passionate displeasure of a proud spirit, and reflected with indignation that he was permitted to waste his time and talents in the inglorious obscurity of a shepherd's life, when so many Dacian youths, infinitely beneath him in birth and natural endowments, were receiving the advantages of a military education in the royal city.

The pursuits that had hitherto given him pleasure became irksome and insipid. He forsook the flocks of Varinia; his favorite amusement of the chase ceased to interest or excite him, and he felt like a listless, joyless prisoner, in the extended plains and far spread forests of Moldavia, because they were neither camps nor cities.

About this period it happened, that a weary female pilgrim, attended by her daughter, a beautiful girl of fourteen, presented herself one evening at Varinia's door, and requested food and shelter for the night. The Dacian widow, with that untaught benevolence which is generally a distinguishing trait among an uncivilised but generous race, bade the wayworn strangers enter, and hastened to fetch water for their feet, and then busied herself in assisting her household slaves to prepare a plentiful meal for their refreshment. Before the guests of Varinia partook of these things, they rose up, and with uplifted hands, invoked a blessing both on the food and its kind provider, from some Deity whose

name was unknown to the simple Dacians ; and when the meal was ended, they returned thanks after the same fashion.

The wonder of Varinia and her household was excited by these observances, and Tryphena, the elder female of the twain, informed them in reply to their questions, that they were Christians, worshippers of the only supreme and invisible God, maker of heaven and earth, and Jesus Christ, his only Son, who had lately been manifested in the flesh to suffer death for the redemption of fallen man—and that she was engaged, in common with others of his servants, in travelling into heathen lands, to declare His name to those who ignorantly transferred the devotions due to him alone to idols of wood and stone.

This was a new and strange doctrine to the simple Dacians, but they listened with meekness and singleness of heart to the ambassadress of grace who had brought glad tidings from a far land. She told them she was the widow of a Corinthian convert, who had sealed the profession of his faith with his blood, having been put to death by the Roman governor for refusing to render idolatrous homage to the statues of the Emperor Domitian : and for the same cause herself and her daughter had been stripped of their possessions and driven forth, with bitter mockings and cruel persecutions, from city to city, as friendless exiles.

Varinia listened with affectionate interest to this recital. She too was a widow, and the mother of a fatherless child—she therefore could sympathise with the unfortunate Corinthian, whom she constrained, with kind compulsion, to abide with her for a season ; and they consented the more readily, as she had expressed a wish to hear more on a subject so intimately connected with the eternal happiness of every human being. It was a subject on which her guests were peculiarly willing and able to inform her. Tryphena unfolded, in a clear, concise manner, the leading truths of revelation to her and all her home. Question succeeded question, and so satisfactory were the replies of Tryphena, that even the haughty Marcomanus acquiesced in a doctrine which he boldly avowed was more agreeable to his reason than the childish fables of polytheism. Adminius received the divine words of life in a different spirit, and with the meekness and holiness of purpose agreeable to its dictates. Varinia embraced its promises with faith—her slaves accepted it with joy ; and the whole family received the rite of baptism from Tryphena, who, according to the practice of the infant church, was a deaconess, empowered to administer that sacrament.

A few days after this event, Tryphena was attacked with a mortal sickness, and knowing that the dissolution of her earthly tabernacle was at hand, she took a tender leave of her new converts, whom she exhorted to continue steadfast in the faith; then, turning to her weeping daughter, she said:—

“We were about to travel to more remote lands, Euroine, where, if it had been the will of my Heavenly Father to summon me from this transitory life, I must have left thee among strangers and heathens, my child. My precious one! now He hath but been graciously pleased to provide thee with a Christian mother and brethren, thou mayest, through his blessing, be the means of strengthening in the faith. May He guide and guard thy tender youth, and keep thee from heathen pollutions, and from the temptations of a sinful world, when I am low in the dust.”

The Christian mother expired soon after the utterance of these words, with a sweet smile of holy serenity on her pale lips. Eurione wept, but not like one without hope—she sorrowed, but with a goodly sorrow.

“My mother is fallen asleep,” she said: “we lament, but she rejoices, and her joy no one can take away from her.”

She then took the sacred roll of the scriptures from the cold hand of her departed parent, and read from thence, as well as she could, through the tears that dimmed her radiant dark eyes, those consolatory passages which promise an inheritance of glory to those who die in the Lord.

The Dacian converts gathered around her, and listened with awful reverence to the words of inspiration; and became more persuaded of their truth from observing their soothing influence on the dying mother and recently bereaved daughter, in the first moment of orphan loneliness, among a strange people. That people had, however, become her own; Varinia called her daughter in the same hour that the grave had closed over the cold remains of her who gave her birth; and Eurione, instead of yielding to the indulgence of unavailing grief, took upon herself the active duties which would have devolved upon her had she been by nature that which Varinia had rendered her by adoption. She assisted and directed the female slaves in their various employments of carding, spinning and weaving the fleeces of the flocks, in milking, and preparing the cheese and kneading the oaten cakes; and instructed them in the use of the needle and other valuable handi-

crafts practised by her own polished countrywomen; and, above all, she omitted no opportunity of offering them sweet counsel in the things which belonged to their immortal weal. To both Marcomanus and Adminius she, who had herself been carefully instructed in the learning and accomplishments usual among Greek females of that era, communicated the use of letters and the art of writing, and many branches of useful and elegant information in which she was deeply versed.

The excellent talents of the young Dacians caused them to make a rapid progress under the tuition of their lovely and highly-gifted instructress, whose powers were of that shining and extraordinary nature, that, had she been of heathen parents and continued in her native city, she would have taught in the public schools, and chanted her own verses to the sound of the lyre, like a Corinna; while her eminent beauty, combined with eloquence and the diversified graces of poetry and music, would have won the admiration of philosophers, orators and scholars, and enabled her to acquire, like Aspasia and Hypatia, unbounded influence over the hearts of the most celebrated warriors and statesmen of the age. Eurione desired none of these bright but perilous distinctions; she was satisfied that it had pleased her heavenly Father to remove her from the sphere, where talent was esteemed beyond virtue, and beauty was deified, and where their possession might have proved a snare to lead her heart from Him, and she rejoiced that she was made an humble instrument of performing his will, and extending his kingdom to a heathen land.

From the first day of her entrance into the family of Varinia, the fair Corinthian had been an object of the tenderest interest to Adminius, who loved her before he was aware of the meaning of the word; but as the flower of her youthful beauty expanded, and he became capable of appreciating her natural talents and acquired graces Marcomanus began to regard her as a prize worthy his own possession and eagerly desired to make her his own.

He was conscious of the affection which Adminius entertained for her, and though it had existed long before she had inspired a sentiment of a corresponding nature in his own haughty and selfish bosom, he nevertheless regarded the feelings, which his foster-brother dared to cherish, towards a creature whom he had suddenly resolved to appropriate to himself, with angry displeasure, and watched their intercourse with a wrathful and gloomy scrutiny. He had, however, soon-

ample reason to be satisfied that he had no cause for the alarm, which the superior beauty and present temporal advantages of the wealthy heir of Varinia had excited, for though in every thing so unmeet to be the helpmate of such a being as Eurione, he was himself the secret object of her love. I will not pause to moralize on the strangeness of the fact, such inconsistencies are of too common occurrence for the possibility of this to be questioned. With her moral and intellectual superiority and Christian piety, Eurione possessed not that acute judgment of character which might have enabled her to detect the selfish principles on which the love of Marcomanus, for herself, was founded. She was aware that his disposition was defective, and his temper faulty, but in the spirit of that Christian charity, which taught her to hope all things, and believe all things, where the failings of another were concerned, she attributed these errors to a pagan education, and the perverseness of human nature in its unassisted state; and with the fond confidence of a youthful lover, she trusted that her own influence would have some effect in reforming what she saw amiss in the Dacian prince.

"He is a Christian," she would say to her own heart, "and why then should I doubt of his becoming a new creature?"

Alas! the adoption of the creed of Christianity, alone, produced not the regenerating effects on the character of Marcomanus that Euroine once fondly hoped. His reason had, indeed, acquiesced in the change of faith, but his heart remained untouched, for the good seed had been sown upon a rock; and though it had apparently taken root, the time was at hand when the slightness of its depth would be proved.

The Roman emperor incensed at the successful audacity of the Dacians, had sent so formidable an army to oppose them, that through the influence of superior numbers, Decebalus had been routed and driven back into his ancient boundaries once more, and the victors were preparing to follow up their recent triumphs, with fresh exertions, to subdue the hitherto unvanquished children of Dacia.

Decebalus, on his part, felt himself impelled to the most vigorous efforts for the preservation of the people committed to his care, and his first step was to issue a proclamation, inviting every man, capable of bearing arms, throughout his dominions to present himself before him, to receive a shield and javelin for the preservation of his country.

“I will go!” exclaimed Marcomanus, a terrible brightness flashing from his eyes as he spoke. “I will claim the arms and a post of Dacian prince in the front of danger. Decebalus has no son of age to take the command of the youthful band, which therefore, of right belongs to me. He and my father have forgotten that such a person as Marcomanus exists, but I will bring it to their remembrance.”

“I will go!” said Adminius, “for the arm of a Christian cannot be better employed than in the defence of his country.”

‡ “Ye shall both go, my sons,” said Varinia, rising from her seat, “ye were unworthy of having drawn these breasts, if ye could cherish a thought of inglorious ease and security, in the hour when a call like this is heard in the land. I will present ye both, with a mother’s pride, to Decebalus and his brother; and the latter, Marcomanus, must acknowledge his first-born in the face of the people.”

“He shall,” exclaimed Marcomanus, striking his boar-spear fiercely on the ground, “or of the people themselves will I demand justice.”

“Young man,” said Varinia, gravely, “this is not the tone of either a son or a Christian, but of a rash head-strong youth, incapable of ruling his own intemperate spirit, much less of commanding the young hopes of Dacia.”

Marcomanus bit his lip impatiently, but received the reproof in silence; and the preparations for their journey to the court of Decebalus commenced from that hour. The face of Eurione wore an April aspect, now bright with smiles and blushes at the passionate fondness of her lover, as the hour of parting drew near, and he poured forth vows of unalterable fidelity, and swore that—

“Were the daughter of the Roman emperor, with the sovereignty of the whole world, offered to his acceptance, it should not bribe him to break his plight with her whom he called his betrothed,” now pale with woman’s fears, for the dangers to which, in all probability, he would be exposed, and anon, sad with a lover’s doubts, when she at times observed that ambition was, after all, his master passion, and that he indulged himself in the dreams of victories and triumphs till he was unconscious of her very vicinity.

Not so Adminius; convinced as he was of the hopelessness of his love for Eurione, yet as the hour drew nigh, when he must relinquish the sad pleasure of being near her—of listening to her sweet voice—of gazing upon her beautiful and beloved countenance—and even

of breathing the same air with her,—sorrow oppressed his heart, and he felt as if all the world beside were valueless and empty. But this world was not the goal on which the hopes of Adminius were fixed; he was aware that as a patriot, he had duties, which as a Christian he was bound to fulfil conscientiously yet he thought that he should have felt it a harder trial to obey their dictates, had he been loved of Euri-one like his more favored rival. No evil leaven, however, of anger or jealousy, sullied the brotherly friendship which he entertained for Marcomanus, and he would even have been surprised, had she preferred him to his prince foster-brother, for whose bitter disappointment he would in such case have felt more deeply than for his own, for Marcomanus, in spite of his acknowledged faults of temper and character, was dearer to Adminius than himself.

King Decebalus was seated on a throne of turf, beneath the spreading branches of a giant oak, receiving his new musters, and delivering their weapons to the untried youths, who assembled round their father and their king, when Varinia, with her own and her foster-son, presented herself before him.

“Who are ye?” said the monarch, for an absence of fifteen years had obliterated the features of the noble matron from his memory.

“I am the widow of Mardas,” replied Varinia, “and I have brought you my own son, Adminius, and Marcomanus the son of your brother, Isichus, whom I have reared for Dacian soldiers.”

The eye of Decebalus, and not only of Decebalus, but of Isichus, also rested with admiration on the tall form and noble countenance of Adminius, whose superior height and manly beauty, attracted the attention of both, and Isichus exclaiming,—“My son, my first-born!” would have clasped him to his bosom, in a rapture of maternal pride and tenderness, but the youth modestly drew back, and Varinia, putting Marcomanus forward, said,—

“Not so, my lord, this is the prince, your son.”

Isichus transferred the intended embrace to Marcomanus, but the countenance of the Prince had fallen. He received the carresses of his father and the king very coldly, and murmured something to the former of his long forgetfulness; and, from that hour, regarded Adminius with an unfriendly eye.

In the army of Decebalus there was, according to the custom of the ancient German nations, a band of youthful warriors, who served their novitiate in arms, under the auspices of a prince of the blood royal,

who, like themselves, had only recently been deemed worthy of being entrusted with the weapons of manhood. The daring valor of these young ardent aspirants for martial glory had, more than once, scattered terror through the boldest of the veteran legions of Rome. They were considered by Decebalus as the pride and hope of his army; and their brave chief, his youngest brother, having been slain, after performing many heroic exploits, in a late battle with the Romans, he honored Marcomanus with the command of this distinguished band, to which he added Adminius and many other novices, from among the newly enrolled muster.

This youthful fraternity were deeply pledged, by the most solemn oaths, to maintain the honor and independence of their country to the last drop of their blood. They were united together by engagements of reciprocal fidelity and friendship, and they were attached to their princely commander with a self-devoted generosity which taught them to prefer his glory and his safety to their own. They were, however, exhorted not to be behind hand with him in deeds of high enterprise, while the young leader was assured he should be exposed to the censures of his sovereign, and the contempt of his brave companions, unless he maintained a proud pre-eminence of martial fame over the rest. That desired pre-eminence was obtained by Marcomanus in his first campaign, in which his personal achievements far exceeded those comparative veterans who had learned the art of war under their late valiant commander, his deceased uncle; and in process of time he became so distinguished, both by his daring intrepidity and the extraordinary genius he displayed in all military affairs, that he was termed by Decebalus, "his right-hand of war;" and his enthusiastic followers regarded him as a second Adminius, who would lead them on from victory to victory, till not only Dacia, but the whole of subjugated Germany would assert its independence, and shake off the yoke of Rome.

His name was now heard in the national songs of the bards, and he was greeted with rapturous exclamations from all ranks of people wherever he appeared; but with all this Marcomanus was not satisfied, for the fame of his foster-brother kept pace with his own, and Marcomanus learned to regard him in the light of a dangerous rival, rather than as the generous and faithful friend of his youth, and the devoted fellow-helper in the cause of his country, whose bosom had more than once been opposed as a shield between him and the swords of Rome.

But the evil fires of ambition were kindled in the heart of Marcomanus, and all pure and ennobling feelings were consumed in the devouring vortex of this baleful passion. Patriotism, friendship, virtue, religion, love itself were sacrificed, one by one, on its unhallowed altar.

Adminius contemplated the change in the companion of his childhood with anguish deep but unavailing, and at length ventured to remonstrate with him on the fatal tendency of the course which he was pursuing, with all the stormy energy of his nature. He bade him reflect on the comparative worthlessness of the bright but perishing distinctions of worldly greatness, for which he was madly sacrificing the better hope of a Christian calling, "that eternal weight of glory," which fadeth not away. He reproved him for his sinful compliances with the Idolatrous superstitions of a heathen army, who offered to "dumb idols" that homage which was due to the living God; they ignorantly did so, for to them the day-spring from on high had never dispelled the thick darkness of pagan errors, in which they were born and educated; but he on whom that glorious light had dawned, was sinning against revelation, and offending against the witness of his own conscience. being without excuse before God, in assisting and even countenancing these unholy rites.

These representations were taken in evil part by Marcomanus, who turned haughtily away from his foster-brother, with an expression of angry contempt, not only against him but against that holy religion of which he had himself become a voluntary member, under the powerful conviction of his own unbiassed reason. That reason was still persuaded of its truth, but its profession agreed not with the crooked paths of ambition. It was a check upon his conscience, and he resolved to throw off its restraints, and silence the remonstrances of Adminius in the same moment, by boldly avowing his apostacy. Yet his proud eye sank beneath the steady, searching glance which Adminius, in sorrow rather than in anger, turned upon him in reply. He could harden his heart against the voice of conscience, he could close his ear against the pleadings of friendship and the eloquence of truth; but he knew not how to meet that look, which told him that the base motives of his apostacy were penetrated by his clear-sighted and virtuous friend, who mourned for his fall with the anguish of a brother. He did more; for, disregarding the haughty tone of command in which Marcomanus enjoined him to leave him, he flung himself at his feet, and grasping his garments, besought him not to pull the wrath of God,

upon his head, by persevering in his present perilous course. He reasoned with him with the impassioned eloquence of a friend, the persuasive clearness of a philosopher, and the awful vehemence of a Christian, on life, and death, and on judgment to come; and when he saw that Marcomanus settled his face like marble, that he would not listen to any of those things he uttered, he invoked the name of her, the beloved of both, from whose lips the words of truth had always appeared to prevail with double force, and smiting his breast he exclaimed,—“Oh that Eurione were here, that her voice might be added to mine this day, if, indeed, the cause of the God who gave himself a ransom for sinners can require the aid of a human advocate.”

At the name of Eurione a guilty crimson overspread the conscious cheek of Marcomanus, for neither had he, who had forsaken his God, been faithful to his absent love; and he had that very day consented to become the husband of the royal priestess of Hertha, the eldest daughter of Decebalus; and their nuptials were to be solemnised that evening with splendor befitting both parties. He had hesitated when this marriage was first proposed to him by his father, and pressed by the king; for his heart clove to the lovely object of his first affection. But the struggle was short-lived, ambition was the Moloch to which every good feeling was sacrificed; and his betrothed was abandoned for the daughter of Decebalus. Yet if a poisoned arrow had entered his heart, it could scarcely have inflicted a keener pang than her name thus unexpectedly pronounced by Adminius, whose true love she had rejected for his sake. He writhed for a moment in the intensity of his mental anguish, as her lovely image, in all its charms, returned upon his soul; and thoughts of her fond affection, and reliance on his truth came over him, and almost shook his purpose: but then the flattering prospect of his worthy advancement on the other hand, if he became the son-in-law of the king, presented itself to his mind, and determined him to persevere; and rudely disengaging his garments from the grasp of his friend, he imperiously thrust him from him, and hurried from his presence.

From the upbraidings of his own heart he could not flee,—neither cloud the pomp of his nuptials that evening, the flourish of the music, the inspiring clash of javelins and shields, in the martial dances of his warlike followers, the flattering sound of his own praises, in the songs of the bards, nor the acclamations of the assembled multitudes, drown the still small voice within, that told him of his guilt, when, at the idol of a false deity, he plighted his vows of love and fidelity to his

heathen bride, in the moonlight shades of the consecrated grove of Hertha.

The last words of his nuptial troth died away on his lips, a mortal paleness overspread his face, he staggered, and would have fallen, had not his father lent him the timely support of his arm; for at that moment, when he had pronounced the words—"I swear by the great name of the goddess Hertha, the mother of the Universe, and the divine parent of all created things, to be true and faithful to thee, Brenna," his eye fell on the sad sweet countenance of his Christian love, who stood half concealed amidst the embowering foliage of the blossomed boughs of an acacia, the silent witness of his falsehood to her, and his apostacy to his God. The moonbeams shone on her pale, pure features, and revealed the sorrowful expression of her large dark eyes, as she turned them, with the meek, reproving grace of an angel upon him, as if she grieved not for herself, but for him. Never had she, in the bloom of health and flush of happiness, appeared so lovely in the sight of Marcomanus as at that moment; and wealth and ambition, and worldly grandeur, the empty trifles to which he was in the act of sacrificing her, seemed worthless then in comparison. Uttering a cry that was meant to arrest her flight, he sprang toward the spot where she had stood—but she was already gone. She had vanished like the mind-created phantom of a dream, and the flutter of her white garments, as she plunged into the deep recesses of the Grove of Hertha, was the only evidence afforded to him that it was she in reality, and not a visionary form on which he had gazed. The pageant of his bridal faded before his troubled sight. He was alike unconscious of the conclusion of the ceremony, the congratulations of his friends, or the acclamations of the assembled spectators, till roused from his stupor by a private admonition from his father, who directed him to conduct his semi-barbarous bride to his tent.

Marcomanus had wedded on the eve of a battle, in which he had proudly anticipated fresh laurels and nobler triumphs than had yet graced his victorious arms; but that sun, whose morning beams rose so brightly on the eager aspirant for fame, beheld him, in the evening, defeated, wounded, and a captive to Rome.

That God whom he had forsaken, had now forsaken him: but Marcomanus, far from acknowledging the justice of his punishment, exclaimed against his first reverse of fortune with intemperate fury, and gave himself up to a tempest of rage and despair. These feelings were

aggravated the next day, on learning that Adminius had succeeded to the command of his troops, and obtained a victory over the Romans so splendid, as to console the Dacians for the defeat they had so recently sustained.

Nothing was now heard of, even in the Roman camp, but the fame of this new general of the Dacians. Death would have been more pleasing to Marcomanus than the knowledge that his glory was now eclipsed. His long cherished jealousy of his foster-brother now burst into a flame of the most deadly hatred. He imprecated the most direful curses on his name, and lamented that his fettered arm was restrained from shedding his blood.

The woes of captivity, the loss of princely station, and hopes of future advancement, even the disgrace of a public entry into the imperial city, in chains, and in the train of a haughty conqueror, were nothing comparable in bitterness to his reflections on the superior good fortune of Adminius. He became sullen, fierce, and intractable, the dread of his fellow-captives and the terror even of his guards, who considered him a greater object of alarm than the most furious of the wild beasts in the dens of the amphitheatre.

When the season for the public spectacles arrived, he was brought into the arena to combat with the gladiators trained for that purpose, but so terrible was his arm that no one, who was opposed to him, ever obtained the slightest advantage in the mortal combat. The bravest of the Parthian, Scythian, and British captives were, in turn, opposed to him in vain, for he overthrew every antagonist, but appeared to derive no pleasure from his repeated triumphs. The savage plaudits of the thronging spectators he heard with indifference. It mattered not to him that he had become an object of the most powerful interest with the fair and brave of the imperial city. Other gladiators had experienced strong excitement in their dreadful business, and had learned to thrill with triumph at the shouts that hailed the fall of their opponents: not so Marcomanus; he was wrapped up in imperturbable gloom, from which nothing had power to rouse him, except news from Dacia. Hatred to Rome, was one of the master-passions of his heart, yet the news of the final overthrow of Decebalus, and the ruin of his once dear country, by the victorious arms of Trajan, filled him with a sullen satisfaction; and when he beheld the imperial conqueror enter Rome in triumph, attended by the mournful band of Dacian captives, with disheveled hair and fettered hands, all sympathy with his unhappy

countrymen was swallowed up in that one absorbing idea—"Adminius will no longer lead them forth to victory. The triumphs of my rival are ended," he pursued; "better that Dacia should be the slave of Rome than Adminius should be her deliverer." Yet the praises of Adminius, though a captive loaded with chains, in a Roman dungeon, were whispered on every side by his unfortunate countrymen. They were even echoed by the lips of his foes—such respect does true virtue claim in the darkest reverse that can attend it. This feeling, however, did not operate on the minds of the emperor or people of Rome, so far as to procure for the heroic defender of Dacia an exemption from the fate which generally awaited the bravest of their prisoners—that of being exposed to the gladiatorial combat, in the blood-stained arena.

The unstable and depraved people who had wept for his misfortunes one day, panted, on the next, to behold him opposed, in deadly combat, to the terrible Marcomanus, their favorite gladiator, who had been hitherto pronounced invincible.

It was the last day of the public shows, and therefore a tenfold excitement was felt in the crowded amphitheatre when Marcomanus, unconscious who was to be his antagonist, entered, and was received with a thunder of applause that shook the building to its foundation. The Dacian prince turned haughtily away, with more than his usual air of stern contempt, from the base throng whose plaudits were to him worse than mockery, saying as he did so,

"Why yet do I shed, daily, the blood of the innocent, the brave and the unfortunate, in this place, to furnish sport withal to those who would raise a yet more deafening shout if mine flowed unexpectedly from the successful thrust of some giant barbarian, as at last it must do?"

He folded his arms, as a darker shade of gloom overspread his countenance, and dropping his sword on the earth, he exclaimed,—

"I'll fight no more."

"Oh well resolved, my noble, long lost brother," exclaimed Adminius, who at that moment entered the arena by an opposite portal—and, flinging his own weapon away, advanced toward him with extended arms.

There was a general murmur of disapprobation among the thronged spectators, and they loudly called upon the guards of Adminius to force the gladiators to do their duty.

"It is in vain," cried Adminius, boldly confronting those who is-

sued these barbarous orders. "I am a Christian, and no power shall compel me to engage in this unnatural combat, even if the man to whom you have opposed me were not my countryman and dearest friend."

"Your bitterest foe, detested rival of my dear bought fame!" exclaimed Marcomanus, snatching his weapon from the ground, and rushing upon him with the fury of an awakened tiger.

"Marcomanus," replied Adminius, "whatever delusion may have deprived me of your friendship, there is no consideration that shall induce me to raise my arm against you, and I charge you in the name of that God to whose service we are both sealed by baptism, that you sin not against your own soul by shedding my blood."

"Slay him, Marcomanus! slay him, if he will not defend himself!" vociferated the enraged spectators, in their indignation at the prospect of losing the excitement of the expected combat.

This mandate from his haughty tyrants would have had the effect of arresting the deadly purpose of the Dacian prince, had it been issued a moment before, but his sword had already entered the bosom of his heroic countryman, and the arena was streaming with his guiltless blood.

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, and lay not this sin to his charge, but rather turn his heart by the influence of thy holy Spirit, for with thee all things are possible!" exclaimed Adminius, raising his expiring eyes toward heaven, and then turning them with reproachful tenderness on the face of his ungrateful foster-brother.

The heart of Marcomanus, though he has hardened it to the obduracy of a rock, was pierced by the dying look—the dying prayer of his victim,—the late remorse, the sudden agony of repentance, which forced the scalding gush of tears from those eyes which had never wept before, appeared like a swift answer to that prayer. Regardless of the conflicting groans, and shouts of the divided spectators of this scene, some of whom approved and others execrated the crime he had just perpetrated, he flung himself on the ground beside Adminius, and clasping his bleeding body in his arms, lifted up his voice, and wept aloud, exclaiming—"My brother, oh my brother!" Stern, silent, and inaccessible in his nature, his grief found vent in no other words but these, but when there was a cry among the spectators to remove the body of the Christian gladiator from the arena, he started, and sternly raising his head from the bosom of his murdered friend, he cried with

a loud voice, "I also am a Christian!" A faint pressure from the death cold hand that was still locked in his own, evinced to him that Adminius, in whom he had believed that the vital spark was extinct for ever, was conscious of his confession, and heard it with satisfaction. An angelic smile passed over his pale features, a momentary light illumined the languid eyes of the Christian hero, as he unclosed them once more, but the next instant all was motionless, and fixed in the icy repose of the dead.

The acknowledgment of Marcomanus that he was a Christian, was sufficient, during that stormy period of persecution which disgraced the early part of Trajan's reign, to involve him in a sweeping sentence with a large company of that devoted sect who were doomed to be exposed to the wild beasts on the following day. Even those who had been loudest in their acclamations, on account of his repeated gladiatorial triumphs, raised their voices with the rest in the general cry,— "He is a Christian, away with him to the prison. To-morrow he shall be thrown to the lions."

Marcomanus heard the barbarous sentence with indifference. Fangs sharper than those of the savage beasts to which he was shortly to be exposed, were busy in his heart—the venomed fangs of remorse were there. Scarcely conscious of surrounding objects, or change of time or place, he permitted the soldiers who guarded him to lead him to the prison appropriated to the death-devoted people of whom he had avowed himself one.

The sound of a long unheard, but sweet familiar voice, that pronounced his name in the thrilling accents of the Greek tongue, dispelled the gloomy stupor in which he was plunged on entering this abode of wo; and his eye rested on the lovely features of Eurione, unaltered, save in improved beauty, since he saw her last; though months of sorrow had rolled away since that guilty night of his apostacy in the Grove of Hertha. There too, seated by her side, among the doomed train and rising up in venerable dignity to greet him, he beheld her who had nourished him with maternal love in his orphaned infancy—the mother of the murdered Adminius.

"Away!" he cried, in a voice of horror, avoiding, as he spake, the embrace of Varinia, "touch me not, *his* blood is upon my hands."

"Whose blood, my son?" demanded the Dician matron, in accents of wonder.

"The blood of Adminius!" he returned, in a hoarse hollow voice.

The cheek of Eurione blanched to the most deadly paleness. She essayed to speak, but the words died away on her trembling lip. Varrinia did not lose the self-possession that was natural to her more sternly organized race, but, leaning on her staff, demanded an explanation of his words.

"He was opposed to me, even now, in the arena by our foes, and I slew him," he replied, with gloomy brevity.

"And would Adminius engage in such a contest?" asked Eurione, in faltering, broken accents.

"No, no! Eurione, he would not—he did not—and I—given up by the God whom I had forsaken to my own reprobate mind—became his murderer!"

Eurione heard no more, but exclaiming, "He was my husband, the father of my unborn child," sunk down in a swoon at his feet.

"And have I also murdered thee, Eurione? thou that wert the morning star of my youth, that guided my steps to the pure paths of religion and virtue! Those paths from which I so fearfully and wildly wandered, when removed from thy holy influence and example—my companion, my guide—mine own sweet familiar friend!" cried Marcomanus, gazing with a wild and glaring eye on her pale features and motionless form. Then striking his forehead with his clenched hand he exclaimed—"A curse, heavier and deeper than that of Cain, is upon me, and the everlasting pains of a lost spirit have taken hold of me—my guilt is greater than I can bear."

"Believest thou that the sacrifice of an incarnate God hath power to deliver thee from its burden!" demanded a venerable man, who had been an attentive witness of the scene.

"All things are possible to him," replied Marcomanus, "but he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity like mine."

"Doubt not his mercy, while you tremble at his justice," said the aged Christian; "in his sight all the world stands convicted of sin; he hath provided a remedy for those who trust in his salvation, for he hath said,—'He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' And again—'He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that hath sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.'"

"I believe," replied Marcomanus, "and am ready to witness my belief, to-morrow, by a death of torture, with this holy company of saints

and martyrs ;—yet, can I hope that my sin-stained soul will find pardon, much less acceptance, with God ?”

“Nay, despair not of his grace, my son,” said the venerable man, “though thy sins be as scarlet yet shall they be whiter than snow, if thy penitence and reliance on his atonement be sincere.”

“Pray for me,” said Marcomanus, bursting into tears, “pray that he would impart his saving grace unto me, and forgive the blackness of my sin.”

“Pray for thyself, Marcomanus !” said Eurione unclosing her mournful eyes, “pray for thyself, ‘that He who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live,’ may have mercy upon thee, and forgive thee, even as I forgive thee.”

“Yes,” said Varinia, “let us all join in supplication with him, and for him to the throne of grace.”

“Mother of Adminius,” said Marcomanus, “dost thou forgive the deed that I have done ?”

“As freely as I hope to be forgiven for the many trespasses I have committed against my Heavenly Father,” replied Varinia.

“My beloved has but gone a little while before us,” said Eurione, raising her tearful eyes to Heaven, “to-morrow we shall behold his face again in that blessed place, ‘where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.’”

The captive Christians united with the self-condemned Marcomanus in earnest prayer and supplication till the fatal morning appointed for their martyrdom had dawned. The prisoners then thought it expedient to take an hour’s repose, that exhausted nature might be recruited against the time of trial ; but Marcomanus and Eurione still remained in prayer.

“How is it with thee, Marcomanus,” said she, when, at length, the Dacian prince, arising from his knees, wiped the big drops of moisture from his brow, and gazed intently on the new-born day.

“The struggle is past, and the powers of faith are victorious over those of darkness !” he replied. “This day is the first of my life, for I feel a sweet assurance that my guilt is blotted out, and my penitence accepted.”

The Roman people beheld Marcomanus face the savage beasts in the arena, with the same unshrinking courage that he had evinced when opposed to the gladiators, but it was with a holier, calmer firmness than he had displayed in those unhallowed combats. He fought now in

a better cause, and the bright witness of an approving conscience diffused a divine serenity over his countenance; and the heroism with which he resigned himself to the dreadful death that awaited him astonished even those who had been spectators of his dauntless bearing in the gladiatorial contests.

But if the fearless demeanor of a renowned warrior, under such circumstances, could excite the wonder of the haughty Romans, how great was their admiration when they beheld the heroic courage with which the young and lovely widow, and venerable mother of Adminius, with the rest of their Christian brethren, met a fate so full of terror for female victims, from the bare contemplation of which frail mortality could scarcely forbear from shrinking in horror. Yet they shrank not from enduring its reality; for they were strengthened by an unseen Omnipotence, on whose support they relied under all the terrors of their trial, and who sustained them triumphantly.

C H A P T E R I X .

Tell us a tale—a tale without a flaw!

Chaucer.

“It is plain, father,” observed King Henry, “that thou preferrest weeping to laughter, wherein we, who are no ascetic, differ from thee, and feel ourselves compelled to drown the memory of thy melancholic tale, in a fresh bowl of this worthy substitute for hippocrass, in which we recommend thee to pledge us to the better entertainment of the company in the next tale which we shall be glad to hear from the lips of this worthy lady,” continued the monarch, twitching Queen Catherine’s hood.

“Come, Kate! dry thine eyes, for we have a great aversion to lachrymals, and cheer us with one of thy shrewd Spanish stories; and let it be full of pleasant conceits, to put the abbot’s dismal tragedy of the life and death of Marcomanus, prince of Dacia, out of our heads.”

"I will do my best to content thee, my Henry," replied the queen, smiling affectionately upon her wayward consort; "but in sooth my light and trivial style, albeit you make me proud by commending it, must needs appear to disadvantage after the pathetic eloquence of the sweet and profitable legend, with which the pious abbot of Glastonbury hath edified this good company. For the which I pray him to receive my thanks."

"Tut, tut, tut!" muttered the king, "thou canst tell a tale worth ten, of the like, an' it please thee; and, methinks, we are no incompetent judge of such matters, Kate. So begin at once, sweetheart, and let us have no farther parlance about it."

The queen was too well acquainted with the peculiar temper of her royal lord to trifle with his humorsome impatience; therefore, without delaying, in order to offer either preface or compliment to the rest of her audience, save a gracious inclination of the head, she commenced the tale of "The Gothic Count."

CHAPTER X.

THE GOTHIC COUNT.

—————Twenty winters
I wore the Christian cause upon my sword,
Against all enemies. OLD PLAY.

In the reign of that most worthy son-in-law of the valiant Pelayo Don Alphonso, King of Leon, there lived, or rather vegetated, in the only habitable wing of a black-looking ruinous castle, on the Moorish frontier, a cross old Gothic count, called Don Froila de Toros.

He was the last descendant of an illustrious and once opulent family, but who had paid so severe a penalty for the bad neighborhood in which their demesnes were situated, as to be reduced to comparative indigence.

Don Froila was by nature proud, choleric and penurious, and the reverse of circumstances that had befallen his line, operated to add a deep tinge of caustic misanthropy to these very agreeable characteristics.

He had been born amidst the turmoil and fierce excitement of predatory warfare, and passed his youth in the perils, hardships, and stern vicissitudes of the most unprecedented struggle that ever was maintained by a Christian people against infidel foes, for the noble purpose of asserting the independence of a narrow corner of the once fair and united realm of Spain.

To assist in effecting this glorious object, Don Froila had, in common with others of his gallant countrymen, shed blood, and sacrificed property, and when the heroic achievement of uniting the freed kingdoms of Leon and Asturias, under the patriotic sway of the brave Alphonso, the grandson of Pelayo, was accomplished, he sat down amidst the ruins of his patrimonial castle to enjoy his freedom, with no better prospect for a livelihood than beggary, or the hard resource of literally turning his conquering sword into a ploughshare, and cultivating with his own hands the few barren fields that remained to him of the ample heritage of his forefathers.

Such has been the fate of many a true patriot, and many a self-devoted hero—but our count had very little patriotism and not a particle of self-devotion in his character. He had drawn his sword against the Moors because he hated them, and they had been the means of ruining the fortunes of his family; besides, as his estates were situated on the very scene of action, he could not have avoided taking a part in the conflict even if he had not been pugnaciously inclined.

The Christians got the worst of it in the first instance, and then Don Froila fought with the greater desperation in his own defence, for he knew that the insurgent Goths, especially those of the frontier, must expect no mercy at the hands of the misbelieving villains whom they had exasperated. Truth to tell, he was heartily weary of being a patriot long before he found it was woful work for one who had something to lose, and nothing to gain but hard knocks; yet having entered into the turmoil he was compelled to go through with it—and the

only comfort it afforded him, was the opportunity of indulging his combative inclination by returning the hard knocks with interest. In doing this he acquired a noble reputation, and the esteem of all lovers of liberty.

As for the loss of property he sustained, that was an involuntary misfortune, and deplored by him accordingly; for if he could have avoided it, he would not have contributed a single marvedi to the assistance of his country in the momentous struggle; but what with the plunder of infidel foes, and the exactions of Christian friends, he was left penniless, almost landless, at the triumphant close of the last glorious campaign.

Vanity was not one of our count's besetting sins, yet it was with a tolerably correct estimate of the value of the services he had performed, that he presented himself at the court of the brave Alphonso, to claim a just compensation for his losses, and a proportionate reward for his valorous deeds in the deliverance of his country.

No one could be more fully aware of the worth of these than Don Alphonso—still he had not only an empty treasury, but very limited means of replenishing the royal resources, which had been completely exhausted in the glorious but unprofitable struggle with the Moors.

He knew that the Count de Toros had been one of the most successful champions in the cause of national independence, and having assured him that he so considered him, he bestowed the honor of knighthood upon him before the whole court, and told him that "services like his were above all rewards, and their memory must live forever in the brightest page in the chronicles of Leon," and so he dismissed him.

There was not one among the youthful chivalry of Leon and Asturias, but would have died to obtain such a testimony from the lips of his heroic sovereign. Alas for Don Froila, he was past the age of romance, and knew it would be impossible to exist on such ethereal diet as royal compliments and a barren knighthood, so he returned to make the best he could of an impoverished estate, and to moralise on the folly of those who subject themselves to personal loss and inconveniences for the public good, or expect any gratitude from kings.

Then followed a long season of peace, during which merchants and civilians of all sorts began to flourish, and as a matter of course treated the brave men who had sacrificed so much to obtain safety and security for their country with contempt, now they no longer required

their services. Don Froila was not enough of a philosopher to regard this conduct with indifference; on the contrary, he brooded over it with the bitterest feelings of resentment in the gloomy seclusion of his dilapidated castle.

Having grumbled away his meridian hours of manhood, he began to feel the loneliness of his condition grow wearisome, just as he had unwittingly allowed the proper time to slip when he might have hoped to improve his fortunes by changing it.

It is very possible Don Froila would never have ventured to think of marriage, had he not, to add to his other misfortunes, had the ill-luck to be troubled with a housekeeper, by whom he was treated much as all bachelors of a certain standing are, by the females who serve them in that capacity; till at length, for very weariness of her tyranny, he grew desperate, and resolved to take a wife.

Don Froila, though on the shady side of forty, was still a fine man. In his youth he had been eminently handsome. He was of very high descent, of unimpeachable honor, and had acquired, as we have seen, a noble reputation in the service of his country—and as it is not every eye that is possessed of sufficient penetration to look beneath the adventitious gloss and gilding with which picturesque circumstances have sometimes the power to adorn a very defective character, he was regarded with partial interest by a beautiful young lady in the neighborhood, who being a portionless orphan, was doomed to a convent by her hard-hearted uncle.

Now there is no accounting for the strangeness of some ladies' taste. The fair Portia de Merida, it seems, fancied that a peaceful life of cloistered seclusion would be an infinitely less agreeable thing, than becoming the wife of our crusty old count, whom she had, in the generous romance of a young and inexperienced heart, exalted into a perfect Amadis de Gaul, *sans reproche*. In her eyes his gloom was grandeur, and his misanthropic humor a dignified contempt of an evil world and the vanity thereof. She regarded him as one of the heroic defenders of her native land, one who had fought to preserve the daughters of Leon from the vile yoke of Moorish tyrants, and she esteemed herself honored in receiving a word, a look, or a passing attention from him. Poor girl! she had scarcely seen any other man, and she thought him very charming in his outward appearance too. Even his black, tumble-down castle came in for a share of her admiration, for it belonged to him.

She hated all dogs, but a great ugly ill-conditioned cur without a tail that was wont to follow Don Froila, and with this beast she sedulously cultivated an acquaintance, and took every opportunity of patting his head, though at the imminent risk of having her pretty white fingers snapped off, in return for her civility. In short, there was for her a charm in everything pertaining to the mature hero of her youthful fancy.

Don Froila was now regularly on the look-out for a wife, and was not slow in perceiving that the fair Portia de Merida was endeavouring to attract his attention in a thousand ways, direct and indirect. The circumstance alarmed him at first, for the bachelors of nearly half a century's standing are, generally speaking, the most cautious people in the world; but a few contumelious speeches from his housekeeper, who was stretching her prerogatives rather too far, had the salutary effect of impelling him to seek refuge in matrimony from her vulgar tyranny.

"At present," thought he, "I am subjected to the imperious will of a kitchen virago, who spoils my dinner out of revenge, if I venture to contradict her, mends my linen tolerably when she pleases, or leaves it in rags, according to her own convenience—not mine; who robs me, poor as I am, before my face, and, if I dare to remonstrate, overwhelms me with such a torrent of vituperation, that I am fain to flee from my own castle, to get out of the noise she raises.—Now if I marry, my wife will be bound to obey me, and for her own sake will be a thrifty and prudent manager. She will serve me without wages both in sickness and health, and esteem herself amply repaid, for all her pains, if I occasionally bestow a smile or compliment upon her. By Saint Jago! I have been the most besotted of all fools, to remain so many years a slave, at the discretion of my abominable housekeeper, whom I have paid a yearly sum for tormenting me, when I might have been the master of a quiet, loving and dutiful wife, who would have cost me nothing but her board."

At the conclusion of this soliloquy, the Count de Toros took the triangular fraction of one of his broken mirrors of a corner cupboard, set it up in an advantageous light against the window frame, produced a comb and a pair of scissors, out of a leathern pouch in which he kept his rosary and his small stock of ready money, and after trimming his hair, beard and mustachios, and arranging them in the most becoming fashion, put on his best cloak and plumed hat, and gravely walked forth to seek his fair neighbor. By the way, Don Froila experienced a few

qualms of spirit on the subject of Portia de Merida's absolute deficiency in that qualification his covetous disposition had taught him to consider so indispensably necessary in a wife, namely—a dowry—but then he wisely reflected once more, that when a man is irrevocably turned of forty-and-odd years, he cannot reasonably expect much in that way, but ought to feel very grateful to any woman, not absolutely old and ugly, who will condescend to take him for better or worse.

So when he arrived at the dwelling of Portia's uncle, and found her, happily, alone, he with some degree of alarm, lest so young and lovely a creature should marvel at his presumption, in asking her to become his wife, put the important question to her, in the humble terms of whether she would consider a marriage with him a more agreeable alternative than professing herself a nun, contrary to her own inclinations.

Portia, the thoughtless Portia, pronounced a rapturous affirmative. A hasty wedding followed this brief wooing. Don Froila's housekeeper threw up her place in a huff, leaving her master to cook the nuptial dinner himself, or to put the culinary accomplishments of his young bride in requisition, the very first day of her marriage; which the lovely Portia, when informed of her lord's dilemma, actually exerted on the occasion, there being no guest to entertain but her uncle—and the bridal cheer consisting simply of an omelet and an olio, she was enabled to perform her task with ease and credit, while the amiable manner in which she undertook this unexpected duty, agreeably demonstrated to her delighted bridegroom the difference between a wife and a housekeeper.

In spite of his constitutional testiness, and acquired misanthropy, Don Froila was now a happy man, as the husband of one of the sweetest tempered, and most loving of all wives, who in due time made him the father of a lovely girl. Don Froila was not fond of children, yet he had felt that desire of paternity which nature has implanted within the breast of every man. He was the last of a race whose names were proudly written in the chronicles of his native land, and notwithstanding his poverty, he had experienced something like a wish that a son of his might be the means of reviving its ancient glory, and carrying down the memory of his own achievements to posterity.

He had won in the struggle with the Moors a reputation more than equal to that of the most distinguished of his ancestors, but he had not valued it till he found he was likely to become a father, and

then his cold heart for the first time glowed with the proud consciousness that his name was registered in the annals of Leon, as one of the most distinguished of those, whose valor had assisted in delivering her from a foreign yoke, and establishing her as a free Christian land, amidst surrounding slavery and heathen superstition.

Oh! it is an ennobling thing to any man, when he becomes a husband and a father, and ceases to make selfish and perhaps criminal gratifications the sole business of his useless, barren existence. Even Don Froila felt the sweet influences of domestic ties and virtuous affections operating to expand the narrow sphere of his pleasures. He no longer existed for himself alone, and roused, as he now was, to the performance of active duties, for the sake of those whose welfare was so intimately connected with his own, as to become a positive amalgamation with his weal or wo, he found that social happiness was but a more diffusive and delightful medium of self-gratification. Poverty was lighter, when shared by a cheerful and cheering partner, like the fond and faithful wife with whom Heaven had blessed him, and in short, Don Froila felt much as men ought to feel, during the first halcyon months after they have exchanged the gloomy monotony of a forlorn life of solitary bachelorhood, for the bliss of wedlock.

The sex of the first-born child was the first cause of regret that he had experienced since his marriage. He had wished for a boy—for one boy only, and no other offspring; for, as I said before, he was not fond of children, yet was desirous of his race being perpetuated and his name continued—this could only be done through the medium of a son, and his wife had borne him a daughter; a daughter who would be troublesome to rear and difficult to maintain, and who must eventually be either portioned to a husband or a convent. Thus did the old leaven of selfishness that pervaded Don Froila's system begin to ferment, when first informed of this event; yet when he stood beside his lovely young wife, over whom the shadow of death had so recently impended, and beheld in the sweet babe, whom she, with tearful fondness, offered to his paternal embrace, a renewal, as it were, of their mingled existences, the strong voice of nature asserted its mysterious but all-powerful influence. Claspings the unconscious innocent to his bosom, he bedewed its placid features with the first tears of tenderness he had ever shed; and, as he gently replaced it on its mother's bosom, he whispered—

“Let her be called Aurora, for her birth is the dawn of a holier and better era in my existence. I am now a father !”

And as Don Froila pronounced these words, he felt the full dignity and importance of the sentence—“I am now a father.”

He repeated it to himself, as he walked through the desolate ruins of his old castle. In fancy, he saw the prostrate pillars rise from the dust, the broken arches erecting themselves once more in feudal grandeur, and heard the deserted halls and darkened galleries, where the owl now hooted, and the spider wove her web, echoing with the long forgotten sounds of revelry and music, and above all, enlivened with the gay voice of infant mirth, and childhood’s jocund shouts. Then the triumphant notes of the clarion, and the trampling of the war-steeds resounded in the courts below, and he beheld a stately train of youthful warriors of his proud line, returning in all the flush of victory, laden with Moorish spoils, and each, as he sprang from his foaming steed, bent a reverential knee before him, and hailing him by the honored name of “Father !” begged a blessing.

The enraptured count was in the very act of extending his hands to bestow it, when he stumbled into the midst of a bed of gigantic nettles that were growing under the principal gateway of his dilapidated castle, and having stung his legs severely, uttered a peevish ejaculation at the pain, and gazing ruefully at the utter desolation of the stern realities by which he was surrounded, gave a fruitless sigh to the recollection of the brilliant vision that he had been conjured up by the birth of one poor, feeble little girl, not an hour old.

CHAPTER XI.

She may be well compared,
 Unto the Phœnia kinde,
 Whose like was never seen nor hearde,
 That any man can finde.

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

The birth of the infant Aurora de Toros was followed, in less than a twelvemonth, by that of a sister, whom Don Froila considered somewhat as a supernumerary in the family; but as the excellent management of his amiable wife had prevented him from feeling the first as any additional trouble or expense, he had the decency to keep this opinion to himself. The only drop of the inward acerbity that he allowed to ooze out on the occasion, was on being requested to name the child, when he said in a tone of peculiar causticity—

“Let her be called Blanche—for her fortune is likely to be *carte blanche*, without filling up.”

The best management in the world, on the part of the mother, cannot prevent the existence of a second child being felt as a serious inconvenience in a house, where one was more than enough; but on the birth of a third girl, before the second could run alone, the poor countess was compelled to hire a nurse, and she was more trouble and expense than the three infants together.

Seraphina, for so the new-comer was named, was, to use the waspish language of her unloving father, the most shrewish imp in Spain, or, according to the nurse's version, the very moral of the old count himself.

She was very tetchy all the time her mother suckled her, broke the rest of every one in the castle with her fractious impatience during the period of dentition, and took her weaning in such dudgeon, that her perpetual squalling after that which she did not appear to value in the least, while it was at her own especial service, made her father almost wish that some Moorish Herod would give her a quietus.

In short, Don Froila did nothing but grumble about the crossness of his third daughter, and the trouble and expense of his two first, till informed of the birth of a fourth fair girl.

A fourth fair girl! The old count smote his breast in an ecstasy of despair at the announcement, and gnashing his huge white teeth on the affrighted nurse who brought him the unwelcome news, exclaimed—"Diablos; another girl! How in the name of Hecate and the three furies does my wife think I am to clothe and feed these damsels, till they arrive at that plaguey time when they will be roaring aloud for marriage portions? I would the Moors had them all! Four girls, forsooth! in less than three years and a half from the birth of the eldest, to fall to the lot of a nobleman, who is compelled by dire necessity to keep three fast days more, in every week, than either holy mother church enjoins, or the good of his soul requires, is enough to convert the best saint in Christendom into a reprobate swearer—St. Jage assoile me for the thought!—but truly I am the most unlucky, middle-aged gentleman that ever committed the folly of wedding a young wife, to fill a quiet house with noisy brats. Pray Heaven this squalling *senorita*, who has just added her shrill treble to the roaring bass, and tenor-and counter-tenor of the piping trio, whom I hear exalting their voices in full concert below, may be the last!"

"Not by half a dozen, if I have any skill in divination, and the disposition of the grotts, at the bottom of the caudle-cup tells true," replied the indignant matron, who had revealed to him the happy intelligence, as she considered it, of the safety of his wife, and this addition to his family.

"Out of my sight, thou ill-omened witch!" roared the infuriated count, before whose mental vision the perspective of ten goodly branches, spreading around his scantily-provisioned board, conjured up no such glorious pageants as those which had cheated his fancy at the birth of his first-born.

"Ill-omened witch, forsooth!" retorted the angry sybil; "is that all the guerdon I get for bringing an ugly, ill-favored old fellow the news,

what the fair young wife who hath been fool enough to wed him, hath just borne him another lovely girl,—not a bit like himself, but as beautiful as an angel? I know many a man, ten years younger than you, Sir Count, who would have bestowed a chain of solid gold upon me for tidings of the birth of one child, to say nothing of the promise of six more.”

Don Froila, notwithstanding his constitutional testiness, was no match for a veteran vixen of a nurse, when the terrors of her tongue were fairly unloosed by anything like a professional affront.

Dame Griffinda considered herself as the legitimate protector and champion of ladies and their young babies, whose prerogative it was, she asserted, to be treated with peculiar reverence and respect, by men during the first month at any rate. So she administered such a lecture to the astonished count, on the turpitude of his malcontent reception of her joyful intelligence, as wholly stunned and silenced him, not only on the present occasion, but it had the good effect of teaching him the propriety of listening, with apparent satisfaction, to her malicious congratulations year after year, on the birth of another and another daughter, till the unprecedented number of ten was completed.

Although Don Froila had been fairly awed into outward resignation to this extensive calamity, I should certainly shock this gentle assembly were I to repeat all his inward murmurings and pathetic soliloquies on the occasion; but to do him justice, the burden of his paternal lamentations appeared to spring from the painful question which he was ever proposing to himself,—how such a family was to be maintained on his means.

Means, do I say? Poor man, he had none, at least none comparatively speaking, wherewith to meet the increasing wants and exigencies of a progeny so numerous and helpless.

“Happy are those parents who breed babes for Paradise,” he was accustomed to say: but his babes were too evidently of the busy and bustling kind, who are destined to assist in making up the portion of the active denizens of this work-day world of toil and care.

If, from any accidental cause, one or two of the half-score maidens looked a little paler than ordinary, or stinted in her usually voracious appetite for lentil pottage and chestnut bread, the only viands on which this nursery was fed, and the fond mother expressed the slightest degree of uneasiness lest circumstances so unwonted should proceed from some incipient malady in the dear child, the count was sure to reply

that "he was ready to resign any member of his family of which it might be the will of heaven to deprive him."

In saying this Don Froila spoke truly, and yet less than the truth, for he was not only ready, but eager to resign not one only, but even the whole of the embarrassing progeny by which he was now surrounded.

"Had they been boys," he said one day to his anxious wife, "that would have been bad enough considering our scantiness of means—but then we could have made soldiers of them, priests, bandits, hewers of wood and drawers of water, or sent them forth into the world to seek their own fortune—but ten good-for-nothing useless girls! what can we do with them? In the name of St. Ursula and the forty thousand virgins, what do you think is to become of them all?"

"They all promise to become beauties, I think," replied the Countess de Toros, casting a glance of maternal pride on the lovely train, who were at play under the spreading chestnut trees that grew in the court of the dilapidated old castle.

"So much the worse," muttered Don Froila, "they will soon be craving for all sorts of unprocurable finery, to set themselves off to the best advantage—and what, I should like to know, would be the use of beauty to them?"

"It will enable them to form advantageous marriages, Don Froila," replied the lady.

"No such thing, Donna Portia—it will only make them consider themselves entitled to such, and then they will be disappointed. I never knew beauty help a dowerless damsel to a husband worth having."

"I had no dowry," replied the Countess de Toros, casting a more affectionate glance on her testy old lord than he deserved.

"No dowry, but a very considerable share of beauty, my love," said the count, pressing the fair hand which she had fondly laid on his, to her lips, "and what was the result? You had the ill luck to obtain, in consequence, a husband—but what sort of a husband, I trow? Verily, one of the poorest and proudest old fellows in Leon, with a pedigree that has never been of any use to him,—a temper none of the best by nature, and soured by circumstances beyond the sufferance of any earthly creature but yourself—and a body almost as much battered and dilapidated in the Moorish wars, as this old tumble-down castle, that has not half the conveniences of a cottage; and with this hus-

band you have wasted the best years of your life in gloomy and unbroken solitude, in the endurance of every species of privation, care, and toil. Tell me, Portia, truly, if a life of celibacy would not have been far better than such a lot as this?"

"The lot was of mine own choosing," replied the lady, "and I have found no privation hard to bear which I have shared with thee, my husband; for thou wert, and art the first, the last, the only object of my love, save these dear children, who, because they are thine, are as precious in my sight, as for my sake they ought to be in thine. And if ever my marriage with thee has been productive of a moment's sorrow or regret, it is when I have heard thee speak in so unpaternal a spirit of the hopeful progeny with which our union has been crowned."

She turned away to conceal the starting tears, as she concluded. Don Froila looked as he really felt—heartily ashamed of himself; for the tender manner of his gentle wife's reproach cut him to the heart.

"I am a despicable fellow!" thought he, and he was going to say so, as the preface to a penitential speech, in which his conscience prompted him to make full acknowledgment of the impiousness of his ingratitude to Heaven, who had blessed him with such a wife, and bestowed upon him the loveliest and most promising family in all Leon, in the possession of which any other man would have been proud and happy, in spite of fortune, when, unluckily, a provoking mosquito stung him so sharply on the nose, that, instead of giving utterance to anything of a tender nature, he exclaimed, in his most petulant tone:—

"Diablos! they are perfect blood-suckers, commissioned I verily believe, for my especial torment. They make this castle a complete purgatory to me, by day and by night; and if they continue to tease me thus, I shall be compelled to live in some other country to escape from them, I suppose."

"Notwithstanding thou hast distinguished thyself so nobly in battle-fields, as a soldier of the cross, Don Froila, thou art one of the most unchristianlike knights, in thy ejaculations and manner of discourse, I ever knew," observed Donna Portia, who was deeply hurt at this speech, which she considered applicable to the children.

"It is all very true, my dear, and if this be the first time thou didst ever discover it, thou hast been strangely blind to my faults," rejoined Don Froila.

“Is it not one of the characteristics of true love to be so ?” said the lady, tenderly.

The rough rude nature of the ascetic count was not proof against the winning softness of this reply, and folding his still lovely partner to his bosom, while his eyes moistened with unwonted tears, he besought her forgiveness for the pains his misanthropic humor had inflicted upon her, that but for the charms she had lent to his existence, he should have drowned himself in his muddy moat, a dozen years ago, for very weariness of himself, and all about him.

After a lapse of seven years, there was a probability that the Countess de Toros would again add to her numerous family.

The count, to whom her devoted love and tender forbearance with his defects of temper, had endeared her more during those years than in any period of their wedded life, received the intelligence not only with resignation, but with an absolute show of complacency and even went so far as to express a wish that she would present him with a son at last.

In fact, with the usual inconsistency of mankind, from the moment his wife had apparently ceased from bearing children, his desire for a male child had returned, and he had not unfrequently indulged in secret repinings, that the illustrious house of Toros was without an heir.

Neither friends nor foes could imagine why he was so unreasonably anxious on this point, seeing that he had so often lamented that there was no inheritance for his daughters, yet so it was.

The moment, the anxiously anticipated moment, at length arrived.—The Countess de Toros had, contrary to custom, tedious and difficult travail. Don Froila’s solicitude was extreme, but it was all confined to the one sole point, that had latterly become the master-passion of his soul, his desire of a son. Selfish in all things, the protracted sufferings of his wife made little impression on him, except as they tended to increase his solicitude respecting the sex of the unborn infant.

A visible shade of uneasiness, however, appeared to pervade every one in the castle but himself, toward the close of the second day of Donna Portia’s indisposition. The females walked about on tip-toe, with tearful eyes and portentous countenances. The elder children wept, and gathered together in a sorrowful group. Even the little ones had suspended their usual noisy games, and seemed, without knowing

why, to partake the general gloom, and went moping about, and from time to time piteously demanded—"Why did they not see their mother?"

At last he, who ought to have been the first to feel it, became infected with the universal depression and expressed a fear—"That something was wrong, and after all he should be tantalised with a dead, instead of a living son, or perhaps—another girl."

Hour after hour passed away, and still Donna Portia's sufferings were protracted, and the anxiously expected announcement of the heir of De Toros was delayed. The poor neglected little ones, who sadly missed the maternal tenderness and care, had crept away to their bed supperless, and sobbed themselves to sleep. Not a sound was heard in the castle, save the owl hooting from the broken battlements, the flapping of some dismantled casement, and now and then a suppressed moan from the apartment of Donna Portia.

Don Froila began to think matters wore rather a dismal aspect, and just as the midnight hour was proclaimed from the gray tower of a neighboring convent, a feeling of undefined apprehension of impending evil stole over his mind, not unmixed with superstitious terror. A chilly tremor crept through his veins, his heart fluttered with convulsive vehemence one moment, and the pulse of life appeared suspended the next. A confusion of gray shadowy forms seemed dancing before his eyes, in the twilight vacuum of the deserted apartment,—for it was one of those moonless midsummer-nights in which there is never thorough darkness, and he was sitting without a light. Suddenly he heard a low sigh—so near him that it appeared almost breathed upon his face, the tattered tapestry-hangings flapped on the mouldering walls, and the old black cur, in the court-yard, raised a long and doleful howl just under the window.

"Blessed Evangelists! what may this portend?" ejaculated Don Froila, flinging himself on his knees. "*Ora pro nobis, sancta Maria,*" he continued, drawing forth his rosary, and endeavoring for the first time in his life, to seek consolation and help from above; but the words died away on his trembling lips, and he remained kneeling it is true, but fixed and speechless as a sepulchral figure, listening to the next sound that might break the death-like silence that now reigned around.

That awful, that agonising pause, was at length broken by the first thrilling cry of a new-born infant.

"Not the shrill-staved treble of a poor puling girl this time, but the

strong, deep voice of a male infant, by all that's manly and hopeful!" exclaimed Don Froila, starting from his devotional posture, and casting away the rosary in a transport of exultation.

The next moment the door was slowly opened, and Dame Griffinda, holding in her bony palsied hand an expiring lamp, whose fitful uncertain flashes threw a sort of spectral glare over her livid complexion, and revealed the ghastly expression of horror in which her harsh features were fixed, stood before him, and in a hoarse broken voice, said,—

"Count de Toros, I bring you news of the birth of a son."

"The saints be praised!" replied the count, "I have an heir at last."

"You have," rejoined the sybil, with a bitter smile.

"He was a long while before he made his appearance, and now he is come, I know not what there is to welcome him," pursued Don Froila, whose whole faculties appeared so absorbed in this important event as to render him insensible to every thing on earth beside. "However, I will go and embrace him, and bestow my blessing upon him," added he, advancing toward the next chamber.

"Saints and angels preserve us!" screamed Dame Griffinda, "you would not go there, Don Froila! At least not yet," added she, stepping between him and the door.

"Is the woman distraught, to bar my entrance into my wife's chamber? when it is my duty to see her, and thank her for having borne me an heir to the ancient house of Toros," said the count, angrily putting Dame Griffinda aside, and entering the apartment.

The first object for which he looked was the precious boy, whom he had coveted with a desire strong as death. It was lying on the lap of a lay-sister from the neighbouring convent to Santa Clare, who was swathing it; and albeit, a new-born infant is, generally speaking, only beautiful in the eyes of fond parents, the young heir of Toros might be called, per courtesy, an uncommonly lovely babe; at any rate Don Froila so considered him, and clasping him to his bosom, almost smothered him with kisses, and overwhelmed him with blessings.

He then resigned him to the arms of his silent, solemn attendant, and approached the bed of Donna Portia, at the foot of which knelt two nuns, with lighted tapers.

"Sanctissima!" said he, crossing himself,—“Thou hast been in danger, then, my beloved wife; but it is over, praise be to the holy Virgin, mother and maid! And thou hast made me the father of a living son, the desire of mine eyes, and the joy of my heart.”

“Aye! prize him dearly, Count de Toros,” said Dame Criffinda, “for dearly has he been purchased, e’en at the precious cost of his mother’s life!”

Don Froila started back and glanced in mingled perplexity and alarm, from the ill-omened sybil to the motionless extended form before him; when one of the nuns silently removed the white lawn that covered the face of the dead, and the other raising her wax taper, threw its pale light full on the paler features of Donna Portia, now composed for ever in the serenity of death.

The desire of Don Froila had been accomplished, but it had left his house unto him desolate, and the residue of his life a joyless blank.

With a groan, more piercing than his lost wife had uttered at the parting of soul and body, he dashed himself upon the ground and bewailed his irreparable calamity as well he might, for the sunshine of his existence had set for ever, and utter darkness had thrown its unbroken shade over the dial of his wintry days.

The son, whom he had so sinfully coveted, had been granted to him in an evil hour, and he had no joy that a man-child was born into the world: for what to him was a wailing, motherless babe, that could neither understand his joys nor enter into his griefs, in comparison with her who had been the only help-mate for him, the faithful partner of his cares, whose gentle hand had been accustomed to mingle the oil and honey of consolation into the cup of bitterness, which his own unhappy temper, no less than the evil influence of adverse circumstances, had caused to overflow?

CHAPTER XII.

The lion, in his rage, is not so sterne
As royal Henry in his wrathful spleene.—OLD PLAY.

A deep silence of some minutes continuance followed the melancholy conclusion of the queen's tale, to the merits of which the company offered their best tribute, in the tears which they gave to the untimely death of the amiable Donna Portia.

Even the cross old count, with all his faults, came in for a share of their sympathies, though every one had laughed most heartily, in the first instance, at his perplexities and embarrassments, both as a bachelor and a married man, but there were not lacking those among the gentlemen, especially the unwedded ones, who ventured to make excuses for him of various kinds, and one or two strangers, who had been unexpectedly added to the auditors, and suspected not the quality of the royal *raconteuse*, boldly insinuated that Don Froila de Toros was by no means indebted to the lenity of his fair historian whom they censured as over severe on the foibles of the other sex.

"I have not had the honour of seeing her face," said a grave sergeant-at-law, who appeared more critically disposed than the rest of the company, "but I would venture my coil against a penny fee, that the worthy gentlewoman who hath exercised her wit so sharply against mankind in general, and middle-aged men, of solitary estate, in particular, is either a sad and ancient spinster, or, peradventure, the

sorrowful wife of some hard-to-please cot-queen, whom she figureth under the feigned style and title of Don Froila, count de Toros."

Catherine warmly defended herself from the latter charge, not without some alarm, lest a similar construction should be put on her story by her royal spouse, against whom, her own conscience told her, she had pointed the moral of the tale, as far as related to Don Froila's unreasonable desire of a son, and the tragic consequences that were coupled with its gratification.

Wolsey, whose ready tact, and intimate acquaintance with Henry's peculiarities, suggested to him the probability of dissension arising if this already jarring chord, between the royal pair, were harped on a moment longer, endeavoured to divert the king's attention by demanding the fair Boleyn's opinion of the tale, feeling assured she was too well versed in the art of a courtier to be over critical in her comments.

Anne Boleyn was not sorry to embrace so favourable an opportunity of conciliating the queen, by bestowing the most unqualified praise on her story, and concluded by expressing a passionate desire to know what became of the ten fair young ladies, when left without a mother in the desolate old castle.

The nuns, who attended on the Abbess of Ely, were even yet more solicitous respecting the fate of the infant heir of Toros; while the Squire of Granta Grange, who had in spite of himself been so mightily interested in the tale, that he had actually procured a joint stool, for the purpose of edging nearer to the royal *raconteuse*, now very seriously begged her to inform him, "Whether Don Froila got a new housekeeper after the decease of the worthy gentlewoman, his wife? and if she were of a more obliging disposition than the first who served him in that capacity?"

"A new housekeeper, forsooth, squire?" cried mine hostess of St. Christopher's Oar, who, with open mouth and arms a-kimbo, had planted herself opposite the queen, during the course of the narrative, which she, with a strong asseveration, pronounced to be the most comfortable and edifying history that had been yet related. "A new housekeeper, forsooth! there's a question to ask the good gentlewoman. Don't you think, Master Goggs, the eldest young lady, who must have been over and above her sixteen years, at the time of her blessed mother's pitiful death, was quite old enough to be trusted with

the keys? More especially as poor dear Master Fryler had nothing worth speaking of to lock up."

"My good woman," replied the squire, gravely, "I was not thinking so much about the keys in particular, as the washing and cooking, to say nothing of the care of the young children, all which matters are very hampersome to single gentlemen and widowers. I speak feelingly, for vixen as my housekeeper is, and vilely as she entreateth me at times, yea, and all the men in the house with me, I am enforced, albeit it goeth against the grain, to put up with all her perversities and cozenings, lest she should abandon me and my merry men to our own devices—but, in sooth, my masters, she leadeth me a weary life."

"My good sir," said Abigail Trudgett, the pack-woman, "it's all your own fault."

"Mine own fault! what meanest thou by saying that, Mistress Malapert?" returned the squire, sharply. "Because thou art one of the same perverse and silly gender, (for womankind all hang together,) thou thinkest, belike, that a gentleman of my consequence and reckoning in the county of Cambridgeshire, ought reasonably to be subjected to the injurious henpeckings of his housekeeper."

"Aye, my good sir, an' he have no more discretion than to put up with such misrule and contemptuous usage from a saucy serving woman, instead of taking him a wife, as the outlandish old don was forced to do at last, to keep all things tight and right about his house," rejoined the good woman.

"There is some sense in what you say, Goody Trudgett," observed the squire, "and I would follow your good counsel, only I wot well that in choosing a wife, one is something in the case of the man in the fable, who put his hand into a bag of vipers, in the hope of catching one eel which chanced to be among them—and that consideration it is that keepeth me a bachelor."

"For the sake of the luckless woman, who might otherwise be plagued with such a yoke-fellow, I hope you will continue so unto your life's end, and under the kirtle dominion of your housekeeper withal!" said the fair Boleyn, who, somehow or other, took peculiar umbrage at the squire's parable.

"Young gentlewoman!" he retorted, "notwithstanding thy bright eyes, and outward comeliness, I trow that whoever weddeth thee will have reason to remember the bag of serpents in the fable, and also to think, verily, that he hath not succeeded in catching the eel."

The bright eyes flashed unutterable scorn on the rude speaker, and turning haughtily away, she replied,

“In the proverbs of Solomon are written these words—‘Answer not a fool according to his folly!’ and though I might condescend to spend my wit in playful trifling with gentlemen of birth and breeding, yet were I worse than bereft of understanding to cast pearls before swine.”

“Marry come up!” rejoined the squire, “who should have thought of Matthew Goggs, Esquire, of Granta Grange, Cambridgeshire, being likened unto a beast that eateth husks and acorns, and that by a sort of errant damsel, whom no one knoweth aught about, save that she weareth pilgrim’s weeds, and hath indifferently bright eyes—but so hath a serpent—yea, and a toad also, which I opine to be a worsèr beast than a swine.”

The insulted beauty cast an appealing glance from her coarse adversary to the king and Wyatt, as if she expected to find a champion in one or other of these her evident admirers. There was a sullen cloud on the brow of the former, by whom her coquettish freedoms with the Granta Grange Squire had been viewed with marked disapprobation, and who was therefore secretly pleased at the rebuke she had received; but Wyatt, though equally shocked and offended at the levity of her behavior, had too much of the chevalier about him to see the lady of his heart, however in fault, treated with a shadow of disrespect; and flourishing his riding whip with a menacing gesture, he addressed Matthew Goggs in these words—

“An’ you keep not a more civil tongue in your head, when parleying with fair ladies, Sir Clown, I shall be enforced to teach you a lesson on manners with my riding rod, or otherwise thrust you forth from this courteous assembly.”

“Sir,” grumbled the squire, “the young gentlewoman began at me first—yea, and that right saucily, as all in presence can witness.”

“She honored you too far in condescending to exchange a single sentence with you,” retorted Wyatt, “but I warn you that she is under my especial protection, and those who treat her not with proper respect must answer it to me.”

“Wyatt,” interposed the king, “what are you making all that bouncing and bravadoing about, ha? Am not I the proper person to interfere if I see aught amiss? Death of my life! I marvel at thy impudence, young man, in raising a riot with any one in my presence. I

wist not what sort of a swaggering braggadocia thou wert before. Vaporing with thy riding rod before me—ha !”

“May it please you—”

“Please me, ha ?” interrupted the king angrily, “thou thinkest much of that, Sir Poetaster ! so that thou canst rhyme or swagger thyself into favor with Mistress Anne, I trow ! But if I see any more such doings, by the girdle of our lady of Walsingham, I’ll have thee taught to know thy place ; and well, mayhap, will it be for thee if thou art not reduced, like thy father, to owe thy life to the charity of a cat.”

The rebel blood mounted to the cheek of the youthful gallant at this undeserved rating, his eye flashed with suppressed wrath, he bit his nether lip, and looked as if nothing but the most violent effort of self-control restrained him from bandying taunt for taunt in reply to his royal rival.

Here the two queens, who greatly compassionated the case of the unfortunate lover, and dreaded lest he should be irritated by his imperious master to some rash word or deed for which he might be doomed to pay a severe penalty, ventured to intercede in his behalf.

“Ye would do well to look to your own concerns, ladies, without troubling yourselves with the affairs of others,” was the gracious reply of the disguised monarch, whose assumed character of a pilgrim alone restrained him from venting his inward choler in language positively indecorous. Fortunately for Wyatt, the current of Henry’s wrath was diverted by this interposition of his sister and his consort, for darting a withering look upon Queen Catherine, the king adverted to the primary cause, from which his ill humor had originated, in these words—

“By my halidom ! Kate, I have a shrewd guess, that the late Don Froila, was of malice prepense, devised by thee for mine own special benefit, and cunningly related, to put me to rebuke and confusion of countenance, before certain in presence, who are aware of my natural desire of a son.”

“Nay, there you wrong mine honored aunt, good uncle,” said the emperor, “since the tale she hath related is no invention of her own, but one of our national romances, founded on chronicle lore ; and to certify the same, for your satisfaction, I will, if it be agreeable to your good pleasure, narrate the sequel or second part of the history of our Gothic Count and his ten daughters, wherein I will venture to promise you goodly entertainment.”

There was a general acclamation of applause from the company at

the emperor's proposition, and he was so eagerly entreated by all present to commence his portion of the tale without delay, that Henry, who had been more deeply interested in the history of Don Froila than he chose to acknowledge, was not sorry to feel himself compelled to yield a sullen assent to Charles's deferential application, for permission to relate the second part of the story of the Gothic Count.

The youthful emperor having no apprehension of his features being recognised in that obscure corner of the English dominions, threw back his pilgrim's hood, assumed a graceful attitude, and courteously entreated the indulgence of the company for his foreign accent, on account of his being a pilgrim from beyond the seas.

"Albeit," added he, "I have made the English language my peculiar study and delight, yet being a Fleming by birth, it is scarcely to be expected I should have acquired that facility in its familiar use, as may enable me to speak it readily before an English audience; yet under favor, I will essay to do my best, for their amusement." Having thus said, he commenced his tale of "Don Froila and his ten daughters."

CHAPTER XIII.

DON FROILA AND HIS TEN DAUGHTERS.

I fear these stubborn lines lack power to move,
 O sweet Maria, empress of my love!
 These numbers will I tear and write in prose.

LOVE'S LABOR LOST.

Long before the expiration of the first year of his bereavement, Don Froila began to think that his wife must have been indebted to the assistance of some friendly fairy, or benevolent domestic sprite, in feeding and clothing her ten girls; for though he had made them observe a Lent of forty weeks instead of forty days, and had refused, *malgre* the per-

tinacious demands and pathetic remonstrances of the fair sisterhood, to bestow so much as a rial among them all, for the purchase of wearing apparel, yet he entertained serious apprehensions, lest he should be compelled to alienate one of his few remaining fields to assist in providing food and clothing for the clamorous train, by whom he was surrounded.

Far be it from me to utter a syllable in disparagement of fair ladies of *any* age, but if there be a period of their existence, when they resemble divinities less than at any other, it is, I humbly opine, when they are half grown girls, divested of the meekness and artlessness of infancy, without having acquired the graces and discretion of womanhood. Such was the era of life of five or six of the young *senoritas* de Toros, when they lost their tender mother, and were abandoned to their own guidance, or the unskilful control of their misanthropic father, and to the duennaship of Dame Griffinda. The natural consequences of a neglected education soon became very apparent; the younger half of this bevy of noble damsels were little better than a troop of noisy ill-clad hoydens; the torment and annoyance of their elder sisters, four or five of whom were growing into beautiful young women, and were becoming fully sensible of all the desolateness of their fortunes and situation.

Donna Aurora, the eldest of the fair sisterhood, had not only arrived at the age of beauty,—but of discretion and reflection. She felt greatly concerned at the state of wretchedness and disarray into which the garments of herself and sisters had fallen since the death of her mother. One day she reminded them that Donna Portia had supplied all her family with respectable clothing, by the embroidery, and other curious works and feminine handicrafts she had performed for the neighboring convent, and that as the elder girls, when under the judicious tuition of that lamented mother, had occasionally assisted in these needlecrafts, and were indifferently well skilled therein, they might employ their time better than paddling in brooks, climbing trees, and flinging stones from the ruinous walls of the castle, at better behaved persons than themselves.

These arguments prevailed on all the damsels de Toros, who had attained feminine stature and feminine pride, to unite with her in an application to the good nuns of Santa Clara, the friends of their mother, to supply them with employment in broideries, and other stitch-work; those pious ladies not only complied with their request, and supplied

them with material, but obliged them with much edifying advice on their future conduct. The maidens of Tores, who listened to the exordiums of the nuns, and the counsels of their fair sister Aurora, were Blanche, Seraphina, and Christina. Vainly did these damsels endeavor to initiate the younger part of the sisterhood in the laudable mysteries of needle-craft; headed by Beatrice and Laura, a pair of female outlaws of about eleven and twelve years of age, Juanna, Adosinda, and Violant, refused all quiet employment, and passed their time as heretofore, in climbing the mulberry and chesnut trees, whenever they were in want of a dinner; wading in the shallow stream that flowed near the castle, in search of river muscels and cry-fish; swinging on the only gate of the castle, that still retained its station, and flinging stones from behind the crumbling battlements, at any luckless stranger whose countenance they did not happen to approve, who passed within reach of their missiles. As a sort of cover to these vagaries, they generally took the precious heir of Toros, the infant Don Felix, with them, and, long before he could speak, laid the blame on his innocent shoulders, of half the mischief that was done; and he being a sort of inviolable person, shielded them successfully from the reproaches of his grim nurse, Dame Griffinda, and his crabbed, but doting father. Notwithstanding the treachery of his associates, the little Don Felix soon learned to shout and clap his hands at the sight of any of them, and much preferred a lawless scamper after mischief, at the risk of many a hard knock and dangerous tumble, to remaining with his nurse, or Don Froila.

Meantime, the elder division of the fair sisterhood daily improved in outward charms and mental graces; they had been enabled by their industrious pursuits, aided by the friendly agency of the good nuns, to obtain for themselves all the diverse appurtenances of array, befitting their rank and age. It wholly passes my bachelor skill to call by name all the garmenture worn by ladies at that, or at any other age; suffice it to say, they wore neither courtpies, surcoats, wimples or hoods, such as are seen in this country, but the black silk basquinas and mantillas that have been the natural dress of the Spanish fair from remote antiquity.

Don Froila absorbed in the melancholy regrets with which he still honored the memory of his angelic partner, saw without heeding, the wonderful change effected in the appearance of his five eldest daughters. Other eyes in the neighborhood were not so unobservant.

Owing to the peculiar seclusion in which the ladies of Toros had been

reared and educated, and their lack of outward adornment and even suitable tiring, they were so utterly devoid of all vanity, that it had never entered into the imagination of either of the ten, that it was possible for them to excite the admiration of men. Indeed supposing that all the masculine half of the creation resembled their father, in manners and temper, they cherished very little desire of being farther acquainted with them.

It was some months since the five elder ladies of Toros had been seen beyond the precincts of their father's shattered castle, during which time they had been so successfully endeavoring to improve not only their dress, but their manners and bearing, and the distinguished personal graces with which nature had singularly endowed them, that when they entered the conventual church of Santa Clara, in all the dignity of the aforesaid new basquinas and mantillas, their improved mien and increased stature struck, with astonishment and admiration, two noble brothers who frequented that church. These gentlemen had often seen them before, in their sordid and wretched attire, without bestowing on them the slightest notice, and were far from recognising these noble-looking ladies, as their female neighbors of the ruinous castle of Toros. Don Marcian thought they must be five Moorish princesses in disguise. Don Antonio was ready to avouch them for the daughters of the Byzantian Emperor at least.

It is here requisite to mention that these two cavaliers were the sons of the Count de Romana, a rich noble of the vicinity, who boasted his descent from the Roman conquerors of the aboriginal inhabitants of Iberia. With this grandee had originated half of Don Froila's misfortunes, for the Moors on the frontier had reft from him one portion of his lands and vassals, and this powerful noble had made a successful legal claim on the rest; so that the old ruinous castle, and a few fields around it, constituted all the demesnes of De Toros—of course there was little enough of good will between the families.

When the high mass was concluded, and the five erratic stars, as the Romanas called them, left the church of Santa Clara, still under the obscuring cloud of their long black mantillas, Don Marcian and Don Antonio followed them at a respectful distance, in order to discover whither they went, since they could not divine from whence they came. The brothers were astonished tracing them to that den of desolation and ill-behavior, the Castle de Toros, where the stately train of unknown fair ones were received with a shout of familiar

welcome that the Romans thought must have shocked them exceedingly

Marcian and Antonio vainly lingered for hours, in the vicinity of the old castle, watching for the regress of the five veiled ladies, and, at nightfall, returned to their father's palace, with heated imaginations, to dream of the adventure.

The next holiday they failed not to post themselves on either side of the church portal to await the arrival of the mysterious beauties. They were a full hour too soon; at last, Don Marcian, under the evil influence of Sathanas no doubt, twitched Don Antonio's cloak to notify to him the approach of the five terrestrial objects of their adoration; and as each lady entered, the brothers offered her the holy water with a profound reverence. Now, albeit, this is still, in Spain, a very usual piece of gallantry, and was, in those days, one of the most orthodox modes whereby a cavalier could introduce himself to any lady whom he wished to serve, and also afforded a very fitting opportunity for the fair one to put aside her mantilla, for an instant, without compromising that lofty reserve which has ever been prescribed to Spanish ladies; yet our Gothic damsels were so unskilled in the code of courtesy that instead of curtesying and smiling in acknowledgment of the compliment, they not only rejected the blessed water itself, and entered the church uncrossed, but threw back their mantillas, for the purpose of directing the angry artillery of very disdainful looks at two of the handsomest cavaliers they had ever seen. This temporary glance, however, revealed to the disconcerted gallants who their mysterious charmers really were. Marcian and Antonio de Romana hardly knew how to credit their own eyes,—this constellation of stately ladies was composed of no other than their well-known and heretofore despised neighbors, the maidens of Toros.

“Ha, ha,” said Don Antonio to his brother, as they sauntered toward home, “who would have thought of our following such false meteors, as far as their old tumbledown castle, through a lane a league long, and nearly ankle deep in sand!”

“I never knew before they were so well worth following,” replied Marcian, “but they will not catch me offering them holy water again.”

Nevertheless, before the sweet spring season passed by and brought midsummer in its train, the two enamored cavaliers had not only offered the holy water at the church door once, but again and again, in spite of all discouragement, till their pertinacity was at length rewarded

by the smiles of two of the damsels—the lovely Aurora and her sprightly sister Seraphina, who growing weary of always acting the inexorable, condescended one morning simultaneously to unglove and dip the tips of their taper fingers into the consecrated vessel, and putting back their mantillas crossed their polished brows with an air that had rather more of coquetry than devotion in it, I trow.

From that hour Marcian and Antonio spared themselves the unnecessary trouble of offering holy water to the other three sisters, considering that two in one family were enough to attend to, in an honorable way; besides which they wished to particularise the objects of their regard, with whom they were, of course, very desirous of improving their acquaintance.

Aurora and Seraphina ceased to revile men even in their private hours, got into a habit of sighing, poor things! avoided the noisy company of the other girls and children, affected each other's society and talked a good deal about sermons and saints' days. Dame Griffinda was in hopes they were growing pious, for they seemed to think of nothing but going to church.

Marcian and Antonio finding they made no farther progress in silent courtship, which, at the rate they proceeded, might have lasted till the day of doom, new strung their citterns, one fine moon-light night, and sallied forth with the design of treating their *queridas* (which is the Spanish word signifying lady-loves, or fair paramours) with a serenade. When they arrived at the dismal old ruin, and thought of the grim dragons, Don Froila and Dame Griffinda, by whom the ladies of their life were guarded, their courage failed them for a while, but having, with infinite mental travail to them both, to say nothing of the assistance they had received from a learned and poetical monk, their confessor, composed and adapted a suitable *seguidilla*, they were of course very loth that so precious a compound should be lost. So they chose what they considered an advantageous station beneath the most promising looking window, in the only habitable wing of the castle, and after a great deal of tuning and preluding, and some loss of time in pitching the proper key, they sang the following ditty.

SERENADE—SONG.

The moon hath risen serene and fair,
 The fire-fly lights the grove ;
 And all is calm in earth and air,
 Save hearts that sigh for love.

There's joy in every conscious star
 That shines on such a night ;
 And eyes, whose beams are brighter far,
 Should bless us with their light !

The evening flowers their fragrance yield,
 To each enamored breeze,
 That sweeps along the blossom'd field,
 And waves the orange trees.

The dew has fallen an hour ago,
 And now 'tis sweet to rove
 With those, whose faithful hearts we know,
 Beat high with mutual love !

Then waken, waken, ladies bright !
 And like the stars above,
 Shine forth revealed in beauty's light,
 To gladden hearts that love !

At the conclusion of these tender stanzas, the casement above was unclosed. The enamored minstrels, in a tumult of rapturous expection, raised their eyes, and beheld, not the beauteous countenances of the fair Aurora and sparkling Seraphina, smiling an eloquent approval of their loving lay, but the harsh features of the crusty old count, their father, in his night-cap, who, in return for their music, saluted them with a volley of vituperation, bitterly reviling them for breaking his rest, and assuring them that he had a strong inclination to throw them into the moat.

The disconcerted lovers discovered, to their infinite mortification, that they had stationed themselves under Don Froila's chamber window, to sing the amorous ditty, which had cost them such pains to compound, and they withdrew, anathematising their own folly, and his want of manners in receiving so elegant a tribute to his daughters' charms thus uncourteously.

They would, doubtless, have been greatly consoled had they been aware that their verses and singing had been also heard and duly appreciated by all the maidens or Toros, every one of whom down to the *senorita* Volante, a damsel of ten years old, placed them to her own particular account.

The next step our cavaliers took was to indite a love-letter a piece to the ladies of their hearts, declaring their passion and soliciting an interview. To do this they were fain to have recourse, once more, to Father Stefanos, who, for the consideration of a golden *sol*, covenanted to write the epistles, each on a fair piece of virgin vellum (that had never been written on before,) in goodly characters, setting forth, in sweet and passionate language, cunningly devised for the purpose, and somewhat differing in words from each other, the love of Marcian and Antonio de Romana for Aurora and Seraphina de Toros, and soliciting the pity of the said Aurora and Seraphina. The letters to be separately rolled, sealed and endorsed, and secured with a fair skein of floise silk or a goodly riband, and conveyed by a trustworthy messenger to the hands of the damsels to whom they were superscribed, and none others. All this Father Stefanos not only engaged to do, but faithfully performed in the course of a few days.

When the letters were delivered to the young ladies, by one of the lay-sisters of the convent, they, who had never seen, much less received, such things before, very innocently asked what they were.

"They are letters," replied sister Bertha.

"And what are we to do with them,?" asked Aurora, turning hers about with a look of great perplexity.

"You are to read them," responded sister Bertha.

"To read them!" echoed Seraphina in astonishment; "Oh saints and angels! how should we do that, when there is not one among us who knoweth her own name when she seeth it?"

"Then you must get some one to read them for you, *senorita*," said the messenger.

"Cannot you do us that kindness, sister Bertha?" asked Aurora.

"Who, I? Sanctissima! I leave such matters to abbesses and prioresses, I have no clerkly skill, heaven help me; how should I, when I am kept on the trot from morning till night upon one errand or another?"

"Shall we take them to my father?" asked Aurora.

"A pretty way that would be to come to the knowledge of their contents," replied Seraphina, "I dare say he has little more learning than we have, and if he could read them, he would never tell us the tidings they contained, but would bitterly chide us for having such things sent to us. No, no!" pursued she, thrusting her scroll into her bosom. "I will keep mine close at any rate, and I would advise you to do the same."

But Aurora's eager desire to learn the contents of her letter was so overpowering, that she incontinently carried it to the count, her father, and asked him to read it to her.

"Ha! what?" cried Don Froila, "a letter do you say? From whom does it come?"

"That is what I want you to tell me, father," said the damsel, blushing.

"It is for me," exclaimed the count, pointing to the name of Toros on the superscription, which truth to tell, was the only word he could read, for his clerkly skill did not extend beyond the accomplishment of signing his name, wherein he outdid the mighty Charlemagne, who, if we may credit the testimony of his learned secretary Eginhart, was incapable of performing this feat.

"No, no, *padre mios*," said the anxious maiden, "I know very well the letter is for me, by this token, that it was given to me by sister Bertha, and I pray you to make me acquainted with its contents."

"A likely story, forsooth," retorted the count, "that I am going to gratify your curiosity by reading *my* letter to you! I marvel at your assurance in asking such a thing."

"Nay, but the letter *is* mine," protested Aurora, extending her hand in a beseeching manner.

"Yours, hussy! Who should send you a thing of such rare importance as a letter, I marvel?" exclaimed her father, holding it above his head.

"Nay, but it is mine," sobbed the damsel, "and I know not yet one word of its contents, nor from whom it comes."

"It is not fit you should," said her father, "I make no doubt but it comes from the new king, Don Aurelio, whose life I once had the misfortune to save, for which I got no thanks from Don Alphonso, his father, a world of ill-will from his brothers, and a monstrous cut across the wrist from a Moorish scimitar, of which I feel the painful effects to this day."

"Do you think he wants *me* to be his queen, then?" asked Aurora, with great simplicity.

"Oh doubtless! the report of your charms must have reached the king of Leon, and it was he I suppose who thought proper to deprive all decent people of their rest by serenading you last night; but by St. Jago, a tom cat is a better minstrel! My service to your majesty! I hope you will bestow some little place in your court upon your poor old father, Donna Aurora, when you are queen of Leon."

"But I don't want to be queen of Leon," sobbed Aurora, "and I won't marry Don Aurelio, even if he have written this letter to ask your consent."

"Oh you are mighty positive, but we shall see," said Don Froila, sturdily bestowing the letter in his pouch, and walking off with it, in spite of all his daughter's expostulations and protestations against this violation of her right to be the first person made acquainted with the contents of her own letter. She returned in tears to her sister Seraphina.

"Well," exclaimed the latter, who was all impatience to learn the purport of Aurora's letter, which she shrewdly suspected would enable her to form a probable guess of the nature of hers.

"Well, Aurora, what was your letter about?"

"Alas, Seraphina! I am still ignorant."

"How is that? Could not my father read it?"

"I suspect not, nevertheless he insists that it belongs to him."

"To him! how ridiculous! who should think of sending a love-letter to him?"

"And he asked who should think of sending a letter to me."

"I can guess," observed Seraphina, "from whom *my* letter comes, although I have not skill enow to read a single word of it, but I would rather go to my grave in ignorance of its contents, than play the fool as you have done about yours."

Aurora wept.

"Ah dear letter! pretty letter!" continued Seraphina, holding up the vellum scroll exultingly, "you are mine own, to have and to hold, and no cross father shall deprive me of my treasure; I would," continued she, "that he who inscribed you with such fair mysteries, had also commissioned some little bird to come and expound the same to me, in intelligible language."

"But Seraphina," said Aurora, "my father said my letter came from

the new king of Leon, and as yours was brought by the same messenger, doubtless it is from Don Aurelio also."

"Don Aurelio! ridiculous! why should he write to such poor obscure maidens as we be? And how should my father know if it were from him, as he could not read the letter?"

"He read the name of Toros on the superscription."

"Doubtless, for Toros is our name as well as his. How could you be so witless as to let him have your letter, Aurora?"

"Nay, he vowed it was his, and kept it perforce."

"All your own fault for letting him see it,—but he shall never see mine."

"But how will you learn its contents, Seraphina?"

"I will go to the priest this very evening, and confess having received a letter."

"Do you think you will show more wisdom in doing so, than I did in carrying mine to my father?"

"Certainly, for the priest will be able to read the letter, which our honored sire is not, and what is more, he will read it to me, in the hope of my obliging him with farther particulars."

"Go then, dear Seraphina, but return as quickly as you can, for the substance of your letter will afford me a tolerable clue to the contents of mine."

The superiority of Seraphina's judgment was manifested by the result; for the person to whom she made her confession was not only equal to the task of reading, but perfectly willing to make the contents of the letter known to his fair penitent, since he was the individual Father Stefano, who had earned a golden sol of Don Antonio de Romano and his brother, for writing that, and one, that was pretty nearly its duplicate, addressed to Donna Aurora.

Seraphina returned to her sister with sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks, having acquired more information and advice on the subject of courtship than she had ever dreamed of before, and declaring that a letter was the sweetest thing in the world.

"That was the reason my father was guilty of appropriating mine to himself, I suppose," sighed Aurora.

"But as it is all full of Marcian Romano's passion for you, it will be of no use to him," said Seraphina.

"And is that what my letter is about?" cried Aurora, smiling through her tears, "but how do you know that, Seraphina?"

"Oh, Father Stefanos told me so, and said how wrong you were to let your father see it."

"I will go and tell the count, my father, whom it came from, and beg him to let me have it again—and then I will confess having received it, to Father Stefanos, and get him to read it to me," said Aurora.

"You will be a great simpleton to do any thing of the kind," replied her sister. "It is lucky for you that our worthy father has not enough clerly skill to decipher the letter himself, therefore there is a chance of his remaining in ignorance of the writer—for are you not aware that the Count de Romana and he are mortal foes?"

"I never heard him mention the Count de Romana's name," said Aurora.

"Very likely not, but once upon a time, when I was a little child, and they thought I was sound asleep, I heard him tell my poor mother that the Count de Romana and he were hereditary enemies, and that Don Alphonso acted unjustly in awarding lands to the count to which our family had a better right. My mother replied, that she had heard the country people say, 'That these lands belonged to the Romana family before the Gothic conquest despoiled them of their inheritance,' on which he swore bitterly, that he cared not for right or wrong, but would be revenged on the Romanas, root and branch, if ever opportunity served—whereupon she prayed him to tell his beads and eschew evil thoughts."

"Is it not strange, then, that the young Romanas should wish to win our love?" said Aurora thoughtfully.

"Oh, not at all," rejoined her sister, "such things often happen, Father Stefanos says, and even dame Griffinda sings very pretty songs about Gothic knights and Roman maids."

"Very true," observed Aurora, "and I wish I had my pretty letter once more."

"But how will you answer it?" asked Seraphina.

"Nay, how can I, when I know nothing of its contents?"

"My dear sister, the most important portion of its substance is, I should fancy, a request from Don Marcian to meet him this evening in the old orchard."

"Saints and angels, why do you think so!"

"Because Antonio has solicited me to meet him there at the hour of nine."

"But surely you will not go."

"Nay, I see no alternative."

"My dear Seraphina, how you talk! You would not, I trust, under any circumstances, act contrary to the becoming reserve of a high born Spanish lady."

"Antonio has informed me in his letter that he shall break his heart if I do not comply with his entreaty."

"Hearts are not so soon broken, Seraphina."

"Oh, but I am almost as desirous of an interview as he is himself, and I have employed that dear kind Father Stefanos to write as pretty a letter from me to Antonio, consenting to meet him; so you see, Aurora, the thing is irrevocable."

"No, it is not."

"I see no remedy."

"Yes there is—you need not go."

"And forfeit my written word withal, whereto I have set my mark, yea, and bitten the wax with my tooth in token that it was my own act and deed; therefore should I be in a manner foresworn if I went not, which I hold to be a worse crime than going."

"Very true," replied Aurora, "and did you make a mark for me also, and bite the wax in my name, in token that I would meet Don Marcian?"

"No, for you did not empower me to act as your proxy in directing Father Stefanos to speed your answer to that cavalier."

"I am glad you did not," said Aurora, "for then should I have been in honor bound to keep the appointment, which now," she added with a sigh, "I am free to decline."

"Poor Marcian," observed Seraphina, "he will be sadly disappointed."

And Aurora was disappointed too, but like many others of her sex, she felt the propriety of putting a constraint on her own inclinations, and appearing unkind, when unkindness was farthest from her heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Master parson, be so good as to read me this letter.”

“But, damosella virgin, was this direct to you?”

“I will overglance the superscript. ‘To the snow-white hand of the beauteous lady Rosaline.’ I will look again on the intellect of the letter, for the nomination of the party writing.”—*LOVE’S LABOR LOST*.

It was neither from a capricious exercise of paternal authority, nor from a desire of gratifying his constitutional causticity of humor, that Don Froila had seized upon his daughter’s love-letter, but from a serious persuasion that it was addressed to himself. Letters in those days were things of the rarest occurrence: he had received but one in the whole course of his life, and that was the copy of a circular addressed by command of the brave Alphonso to him, in common with all the other nobles of Leon, craving his assistance, in the name of the Holy Virgin, for the deliverance of that kingdom, then threatened by the Moorish invaders, with fire and sword—so he concluded that Aurora’s letter must be something of the same kind, and from no less a personage than the reigning sovereign.

Thanks to the fair penmanship of Father Stefanos, he had been able to decipher the name of De Toros—and though he could not exactly make out that of Froila, he concluded the mysterious characters, of which Aurora was formed on the superscription, must be meant to signify his Christian name and title, only differently fashioned from that which he had been accustomed to see and write, or possibly—an unwonted color mantled to his cheek at the supposition—the new king of Leon might, in a tardy acknowledgment of his services, have bestowed some loftier style and title, with a suitable grant of lands upon

him—and the precious document he then grasped was sent to certify the same to him.

No one was less addicted to the delusive pleasure of listening to the syren flatteries of hope, than poor Don Froila, yet on the present occasion she contrived to erect her glowing iris in full perspective before him, on no more solid basis than a love letter, which in his ignorance, and egotistical persuasion that every thing of the kind that came into the hands of one of his family, must be intended for himself, he had torn *vi et armis* from his weeping daughter.

Under the impetus of feeling excited by this idea, Don Froila girded his rapier to his side, and throwing over his threadbare doublet his only produceable cloak, he sallied forth from his desolate den, with a stately step and loftier bearing than he had assumed for the last twenty years of his abode there, and strode to the nearest market-town to seek for an *escribano* or notary, by whom he might get his letter deciphered.

He had in the first instance thought of employing the very person by whom it was written, to perform this service for him; but the recollection that he was the confessor of his enemy, the Count de Romana, unfortunately deterred him, or he would in all probability, have been confirmed in his agreeable error, that the epistle came from his majesty of Leon; for in such a case the ready wit of Father Stefanos, would doubtless have suggested reading some very obliging compliments as from Don Aurelio to the valiant veteran who had done his royal father such notable service, in battling those dark-visaged infidels, the Moors.

"Most illustrious and puissant senor," said the notary, so soon as Don Froila was seated, "I think it only a piece of prudential honesty and discretion, to inform you, that my fee for making a will, is never less than a golden sol."

"Diablos!" responded the count, angrily, "thou art verily the most impudent fellow in Leon to talk to a man in perfect health of so sorrowful a business as making his will, which, certes, no one ever thinks of doing till upon a death bed."

"And then, worthy senor, the priest who comes to confess him, gets the job, and in nine cases out of ten makes it a profitable matter for the church, by putting in such a bequest for his own convent, as leaves the dying man's heir to rue the day that his father employed not an honest escribano to make a just and legal instrument for the

disposition of his worldly goods while he is of sound mind and unerstanding," said the notary.

"Fellow," replied Don Froila, "thy advice may be very good of its kind, but being out of season, thou mayest think thyself well off that I do not tweak thee by the nose for bestowing it unasked."

"Then, senor," rejoined the mortified notary, "may I ask what is your business with me this evening, an' it be not the compounding of your last will and testament, for which needful and pious duty, to judge from your looks, I should say you have small time to lose."

"Hast thou a mind that I should prove the vigorous state of my bodily health and strength, by kicking thee out of thine own booth, in return for thine impertinence, thou parchment-faced varlet?" retorted the count angrily. "Know that I come hither to employ thee to read a letter, which I have just received from his most religious, valiant and gracious majesty, Don Aurelia, king of Leon, whose royal seal, albeit it is not graven with the arms of Leon and Castile, but simply with the quaint device of a heart pierced with an arrow, signifying that the Moor is still a thorn in his side, I choose not to be broken by the plebeian hands of a vile scribe, therefore lend me thy shears, that I may sever the blue ribbon that secures the royal communication—and now, fellow," continued Don Froila, after he had separated the seal from one end of the ribbon, and reverentially unrolled the letter, "see that thou read these presents truly and discreetly, without omissions, mistakes, or pausing to spell any of the words, unless they chance to be outlandish, and therefore difficult to understand, or call by name at first sight."

The notary, who liked not his customer, and was exceedingly offended at this exordium, felt very much disposed to revenge himself by declining the office of reading the letter; but then he reflected that he could levy a fine on Don Froila in return for his ill manners, by extorting an extra fee for the performance of that service; so, clearing his throat with three impressive and sonorous hems, he commenced as follows—

"To the sovereign lady of my heart."

"Ha, thou false knave!" interrupted Don Froila, fiercely, "hast thou the hardihood to mock a nobleman and a knight with a vilanous fiction, instead of reading the veritable words of the royal epistle?"

"Will you be pleased to look upon the sentence and judge for yourself, sir count, if I have not read it truly?" said the hapless notary

who felt as much bewildered as a man who dreams of being required to read a letter, of which he vainly endeavors to decipher the sense and meaning.

"Villain," replied Don Froila, "thou art well aware there is not a nobleman in Spain who is capable of reading other writing than his own sign manual, and very few who are clerkly enough to do that, nevertheless mine own sense telleth me that Don Aurelio would never begin a letter to one of the bravest captains in Leon with so absurd an address."

"Then belike the royal secretary hath played the king false, for here be the words as plain as holy writ, and I will be judged by any monk in Christendom, who knoweth how to read in any book besides his own breviary, if it be not as I say," said the notary.

"They will all lie when it suits them, as well as thou, I am aware," responded Don Froila; "however, proceed."

"To what purpose, sir count, since you so injuriously doubt me?" said the notary, putting down the letter.

"Fellow!" exclaimed the count, "an' thou proceedest not with all despatch to read the letter to the conclusion, I will make thee swallow my rapier."

The poor notary, in a terrible fright, took up the letter, and in a quivering voice resumed—

"The brightness of thy beauty, O most celestial of all earthly charmers, in which thou dost exceed not only the rosy fingered spouse of Tithonous, but even the divine mother of love, celebrated by the learned heathen poets of yore, in their pagan poesies, under the adorable name of Venus,—has ravished my heart."

"In the name of all the furies," interrupted Don Froila, "what is all this stuff about, master notary?"

"Beshrew me, sir count, if I know what to make of it," replied our poor scribe, whose accomplishments did not extend to a knowledge of heathen mythology, "I never met with such terms in any Christian-like will, contract or conveyance, in all my practice, and I do suspect it to be full of sinful heresy," he pursued, crossing himself.

"I always thought Don Aurelia was a confounded coxcomb," muttered Don Froila, "but I never suspected he would turn out so very an ass as this letter proclaims him: however, master notary, as you are not answerable for his follies, proceed with this farrago of imper-

tinence, if you please, that we may come to his meaning, if meaning he hath."

"Although those brilliant eyes of yours," continued the notary, "most lovely and cruel nymph——"

"Nymph!" ejaculated Don Froila indignantly, "does not that mean something of a girl, master notary?"

"Being in the feminine gender, I opine it doth, sir count," replied the notary, "moreover, I begin to suspect that this letter is not intended for you, but in all probability," added he, lowering his voice to a mysterious whisper, "was addressed by the King of Leon's royal command, to his fair leman, or it may be to some illustrious princess, with whom he is desirous of entering into contract of marriage."

"How came it directed to me, then, in the name of St. Jose?" demanded Don Froila.

"*Per error*, undoubtedly," replied the notary, "but will your lordship permit me to look at the superscription?"

"Why, aye!" he continued, "this is to Donna Aurora de Toros, sir count, and was never intended for you; neither is it written by the king of Leon, nor even by his secretary, for it is signed Marcian de Romana, I see; who goeth on after much heathenish language, to request the illustrious senorita to meet him this evening in a certain orchard, near the castle of Toros."

"And hath any dog of the accursed name of Romana dared to write so audacious a request to a daughter of mine?" exclaimed Don Froila, half drawing his rapier from the sheath.

"The saints preserve your lordship, no!" replied the notary. "There is not a Romana in Spain that hath it in him, to write such an able piece of penmanship as this, which I will warrant to be the work of a skilful and learned clerk. Aye! my master, and one who hath not done his work without a fitting guerdon, I'll warrant him; as wherefore should any one, since both law and prophets do affirm the workman to be worthy of his hire, Amen! Sir count, you are indebted to me five silver sols, for reading this dainty epistle, so please you, and I never give credit for reading, or writing letters."

"Hey! what is the fellow talking about?" cried Don Froila, who was not master of so many *deniers*, as the unconscionable notary demand silver *sols*.

"Five silver sols, your worship," repeated the notary, "is my regu-

lar fee for reading a letter, and I should take it as a special favor if you would disburse the same, forthwith."

"You may regard it as a much greater, that I do not break your knave's pate, for making so impudent a demand of a knight and a nobleman," rejoined Don Froila, angrily; "five sols, forsooth, for reading your farrago of folly! Do you take me for the fool who wrote it, I pray?"

"Senor, I took you for a gentleman, who would not resist a lawful demand," replied the notary, "or I would not have read your letter to you."

"A lawful demand, d'ye call it? villain!" exclaimed the count.—"Are there not twelve *deniers* in one *sol*, and can ye not buy four and twenty pounds of white bread for one *denier*, and are there not sixty *deniers*, in these five *sols*, which thou hast impudently attempted to extort from me, as thy fee, for reading a letter which hath not cost thee so much as a *maravedi*?"

"Sir count, it hath cost me the best years of my life, to acquire the power of unraveling those mysteries couched in the form of letters; and it is not fair that ignorance should avail itself of the excellence of that power, and then grudge the reward."

"Fellow," retorted the count, "an' thou hadst remained civil, it was mine intention to reward thee with this *maravedi*; but since thou hast presumed to talk of ignorance to a nobleman, I will give thee nought, but the letter, which, if it be of any use to thee, thou art welcome to keep for thy pains." So saying, he strode out of the stall of the astonished notary, grasping his rapier, with such a terrible look over his shoulder, that the luckless scribe was glad to get quit of his queer customer.

CHAPTER XV.

We bid those Pagan fiends "Avaunt!"
Mahomet and Termagaunt.

Warton.

So enraptured was the fair Seraphina de Toros, at having, for the first time in her life, a love affair on her hands, that she could think of nothing else, although she was not what might be styled, seriously in love; for truth to tell, she was by no means certain which of the young Romanas *was* Antonio; and there was a considerable difference in the outward similitude of the brothers, inasmuch as Antonio was tall, fair, and of a gentle demeanor, whereas, Marcian was dark, sun-burned, and somewhat fierce, with bright black eyes, and a profusion of rich chestnut hair, and his form was rather indicative of strength and manliness, than remarkable for elegance. Marcian was decidedly the object of Aurora's preference, and she suffered some alarm, lest he should have fixed his regard on Seraphina. As for Seraphina, she considered both the brothers vastly agreeable, and though she rather affected Antonio the most, she would have been well pleased with either, in the capacity of a lover.

The flight of time that day, bearing no proportion to her impatience, she fancied it must be nine o'clock, even before the *angelus* bell rang, and when it was but eight she proceeded to the place of rendezvous, whither Antonio's gallant desire to be punctual, in like measure antici-

pating the appointed hour, brought him at the same moment. He advanced to greet her with all the romantic ardor of a Spanish lover.

"The saint be praised!" she exclaimed, with infinite vivacity, "it is, then, the one whom I liked best."

Antonio knew not what to make of this enigmatical reply to his raptures, but when he ventured to question her, as to the meaning of her ejaculation, she frankly replied:

"I had no certain means of assuring myself which of the twain was Antonio, and I was half afraid it was your dark-browed brother."

"And did you actually consent to meet the writer of the letter, while in that uncertainty?"

"*Buen senor*, yes! it was the only means I had of ascertaining the point, of which of ye was my *querido*."

"But suppose you had found my brother."

"I should have told him my sister liked him passing well, and commended him to her."

"But what if I had loved your sister?"

"Certes, *amigo*, I should have considered you a person of marvellous good taste, and thought no more of you, I hope."

"But directed your attention to Marcian, I suppose."

"Or to some one else."

"Oh your humble servant, *senorita*, your love is of infinite value, I perceive!" replied Antonio greatly piqued.

"Noble *senor*, you do not rate my love so lightly I hope, as to flatter yourself that I have fixed it on one whom I have seen about twenty times, and with whom I have scarcely exchanged half-a-dozen words."

I cannot comprehend your reason for granting a private interview to one whom you do not regard with the tenderest emotions of the soul."

"You are a strange young man," replied Seraphina, "to expect any damsel so to regard you, before she is convinced of your meriting such sentiments."

"Then I am to understand that I am an object of indifference to you, Seraphina."

"On the contrary, I consider you very agreeable, and if you would only behave half as amiably as you look, I am persuaded I should like you excessively."

Antonio was so unreasonable, as to feel more dissatisfied with Seraphina, for her plain dealing, than his brother was with Aurora for her

cruelty in not granting him the interview he had solicited. Instead of studying to render himself as agreeable to her as he could, Antonio wasted the precious moments in exhibiting so much sullenness and irascibility, that Seraphina considered him only one degree less intolerable than her father, but as she had no experience in the ways and manners of men, she supposed they were all alike, and never having been taught the expediency of disguising her feelings, she very coolly assured her malcontent lover, "if that was what he called courtship, it was anything but a pleasant mode of spending time."

"I shall never trouble you in that way again, be assured, *senorita*," replied the indignant enamorado, in a transport of anger, and so they parted in wrath, precisely a quarter of an hour before the appointed time at which they had agreed to meet.

Don Froila, armed with a stout cudgel, with which he had provided himself for the benefit of Marcian de Romana, repaired to the orchard exactly at nine, but Marcian having been met on the way by Antonio, and advertised by him of the ill-success of his adventure with Seraphina, and having also learned from Father Stefanos the mishap of this letter, did not deem it expedient to keep the appointment that evening; and Don Froila after working himself up into the proper humor, for bestowing a most unmerciful castigation on the son of his foe, was excessively disappointed, at remaining in undisturbed possession of the orchard, which he continued to pace, till an hour after midnight, in the vain expectation of pouncing upon his anticipated victim. After this adventure, the count resolved to keep a sharper look-out on his womankind, than he had hitherto done, and never allowed them to go forth, under any pretence, without the attendance of Dame Griffinda, whom he now regularly invested with the authority of *duenna* to the damsels of Toros,

One superannuated old woman to look after ten young and hand some ones; merey upon her! If she had been possessed of the vigilance of Cerberus, and all the eyes of Argus, they would have contrived to out-wit her, had they been so inclined; but our maidens were better guarded by the seven-fold shield of native pride and modesty from the rash attempts of audacious suitors, that if defended from their approach by all the dragons that were ever conjured up, by surly enchanters, to keep adventurous knights at bay.

It must, however, be confessed, that some matters were going on both within and without the castle of Toros, which were interpreted

by the maliciously disposed, in the neighborhood, greatly to the disadvantage of the ten fair daughters of Don Froila.

It happened one morning that Laura and Beatrice, who were always up betimes, had privily made an appointment with a farmer's daughter of their own age, to gather oranges in a neighboring grove. As the whole study of their lives was to out-wit dame Griffinda, they rose at early dawn, and slipped through a breach in the wall, in a deserted quarter of the ruined castle, and having long since thrown fragments of granite into the moat, sufficient to serve for stepping stones, they crossed its wasted muddy waters, without difficulty, and, unseen by any one, were proceeding to the place of assignation, when their attention was suddenly attracted by a deep groan which appeared to proceed from a woody dingle only a few paces' distance from the castle. Being naturally very curious and of fearless dispositions withal, our young truants instead of making a hasty retreat, felt much more disposed to search into the cause of a sound so unusual, and approaching the spot whence it proceeded, discovered a wounded gentleman, whose complexion no less than his green caftan and turban, proclaimed him a Moor. At the sight of one of these detested infidels, whom all Spanish maidens and orthodox Christians are religiously taught to hold in abhorrence, both the damsels uttered a loud cry, and fled precipitately to the shelter of the paternal castle, expecting to find themselves pursued by the terrible Aben Alfage, the Emir Chief of Saragossa, and a whole army of misbelievers.

It was not till after they had crossed the moat, that they summoned courage to look behind them, when, to their great surprise, perceiving no one following them, they paused to recover breath, and hold a consultation as to what course they ought to take.

"I think," said Beatrice, "we had better tell my father, that he may bring a sword to kill this dreadful pagan."

"That would be very cruel," observed Laura, "because I fancy some one hath slain him already, and my father would gain no glory by killing even a Moor over again."

"Very true," said Beatrice, "but then how foolish we were to run away in such a desperate fright; suppose we go back, and see what has become of him."

"With all my heart," returned Laura, and cautiously retracing their steps to the spot where they first caught sight of the Moor, they found him still extended on the grass, with the hilt of his broken

scymitar firmly grasped in his hand, whereat they crossed themselves, and retreated some paces, but soon perceived, by the marble rigidity of his features, that they had no cause for alarm, for he was desperately wounded, and had fainted from loss of blood.

There is, in the female heart, from earliest childhood, an innate feeling of compassion for the unfortunate, which prompts them to succor objects of distress, without pausing to weigh the circumstances that may have rendered them so.

The wild, untameable spirits of our young truants were chastened to unwonted seriousness and softness by the piteous sight before them ; and though the unhappy stranger was one of the hated race who had trampled on the laws, liberties, and Religion of Spain, they remembered not, at that moment, either the injuries of the church, or the wrongs of their oppressed country ; they only beheld the sufferings of a fellow-creature, in mortal extremity, and thought of nothing but how they were to procure that assistance for him without which it was evident he must shortly perish.

To apply to either Dame Griffinda or their father, would be, they were well aware, the inevitable death-doom of the wretched man, who, although a Moor, and a misbeliever, was young, handsome, and apparently, to judge from the richness of his dress, a person of considerable rank in his own country. So, after some deliberation, they resolved to communicate the circumstance to their sister Christina, first exacting a solemn promise of secrecy from that damsel.

Donna Christina was esteemed not only the most amiable, but the most serious and sensible of all the maidens of Toros ; and our giddy mad-caps, Beatrice and Laura, had not unfrequently benefited by her sage advice, in extricating them from some of the scrapes into which their wild spirits were always leading them.

This young lady, who, in addition to all her other good qualities, was very pious, was engaged in performing her morning devotions, alone, in a ruinous little oratory in one of the deserted towers of the old castle, as was her invariable custom ; when Laura and Beatrice broke in upon her, in the very midst of an ave, exclaiming—

“Christy, Christy, should you like to see a Moor?”

“Sanctissima!” replied the fair devotee, crossing herself, “how can you be so profane as to name anything so monstrous as a heathen Moor, in the chapel dedicated to the blessed Santa Mavia, ye godless

maidens?—Of course I should scream and faint away at such a hideous sight.”

“I do not believe you would do any such thing, sister mine,” said Beatrice, “for a Moor is nothing so ugly as you may think.”

“How should you know, silly child?” said Christina; “and why do you, and your incorrigible partner in all iniquities, Laura, come hither to disturb my matins with such unseasonable follies? Moors, i’faith! what should have put that fancy into your heads? I hope Heaven will be mercifully pleased to keep all such bloody-minded pagans far from Leon, and Castle Toros in particular.”

Laura looked very blank at this ejaculation, and signed to Beatrice not to say another word on the subject; but Beatrice, being a sad, heedless thing, without paying the least regard to her confederate’s hint, exclaimed in reply,—

“What should put such fancies into our heads, do you say, sister Christina!—I wish you could give us as good a reason for every idle word of yours. Know, then,—but first promise, and vow by your blessed patroness and holy lady, Santa Mavia, and the Virgin to boot, that you will not tell my father, Dame Griffinda, nor any other living creature, the secret we are going to confide to you.”

“Well, well!—I promise, and you know I never break my word,” said Christina; “and now what is this mighty mystery of yours?”

“You must know, then,—but I dare say you will not believe it,—that Laura and I have got a captive Moor, hard by” replied Beatrice.

“A captive Moor!—yes, I suppose a puppet, that some shepherd-boy has assisted you both in fashioning out of the bark of an old cork tree,” exclaimed Christina, contemptuously: I wonder you are not both ashamed of disturbing me at my devotions about such trifles.”

“But it is no trifle; and our Moor is a real living Moor, (if he be not dead by this time, for we left him in a mortal swoon, with the blood welling from his side like a fountain spring,)” said the two girls, earnestly. “Pray come and see him, Christina; perhaps you may be the means of persuading him to renounce Mahound, and defy the calaph, before he dies,” they pursued, hanging upon her arm, persuasively.

The color brightened in Christina’s fair cheek at this suggestion. The girls, finding they had hit on the only inducement that was likely to prevail, artfully enlarged on the glory she would gain by making such a convert; so much so, that Christina consented to accompany them to the thicket where they had seen the wounded Moor.

He remained apparently in a state of utter insensibility, with closed eyes and ghastly countenance. Christina, in compliance with the urgent entreaties of her two sisters, to look at him, at length summoned sufficient courage to peep through the branches of a thicket from behind an ilex tree, at the terrible infidel, but it was with extreme caution and trepidation, and not till she had thrice made the sign of the cross, and devoutly commended herself to the protection of the blessed Virgin and Santa Mavia, that she ventured a glance at him, and then she started back in great amaze, and after crossing herself again, exclaimed —

“Sanctissima ! how very like he is to a Christian !”

“And not half so ugly as Dame Griffinda. Is he, sister ?” said Laura.

“His dress is very heathenish, I think,” observed Christina, who saw nothing else to find fault with, in a form and face of perfect symmetry ; “no one but a vile heretic would wear such a strange fold of muslin about his head,” she added, approaching nearer ; “were it not for that, Laura, I could fancy he was some outlandish Christian knight, for surely no Moorish misbeliever ever looked so amiably, either in life or death—but do you think he still lives ?” she continued, placing her hand upon his heart.

“Fear not,” said Laura, “I saw his long black eyelashes move, just now, and the bright orbs below shining through their shadowy fringes—and lo you now ! his lip quivers, and his dark cheek flushes.”

“And woe the while, the life-blood oozes afresh from that ghastly wound in his side,—what shall we do to staunch it, gentle sister mine ?” cried Christina, essaying to stop the deadly effusion with her veil.

Laura, with ready presence of mind, tore the linen of the Moor’s turban into bandages, with which the fair Christina bound up his wounds with great tenderness.

When she had performed this charitable office, the Moor, who was perfectly conscious of all that was passing, though with the characteristic subtlety of his nation, he had feigned a swoon, on the near approach of the young Christian maidens, heaved a prodigious sigh, and unclosed a pair of the largest and most languishing dark eyes in the world, which he raised to the face of Christina, with a glance so expressive of admiration and surprise, that it covered her with blushes, and she retreated a few paces from his side in confusion.

The Moor then pointed significantly to his wound, and entreated her compassion by joining his hands together in a supplicating attitude.

Christina made the sign of the cross, and motioned for him to do the same, as a sort of indispensable preliminary to the silent treaty into which they were about to enter; but the Moor being a desperate heretic and declared foe to the true faith, uttered a deep groan and feigned a second swoon, to avoid performing this holy rite.

When Christina observed the effect the sign of the cross produced on him, she was much disturbed, considering it an indubitable token of his being a servant of Sathanas and the false prophet. She hesitated whether she ought to render any assistance to one of his abhorrent race and creed, but what was to be done?—to abandon him, in his present hopeless condition, would be, she felt, almost as barbarous as if she were to betray him to her father, whose hatred of the Moors would, doubtless, prompt him to plunge his poniard into the heart of the unfortunate young man. In the midst of her deliberations, he uttered a piteous moan, and again unclosing his dark eyes, raised them to hers with such a glance of pathetic entreaty for sympathy, that she thought her heart must have been harder than adamant, had she denied it. She approached him timidly,—drew back on his attempting to move,—then advanced nearer, and at last actually knelt down on the turf beside him, and raising his languid head, supported it on her bosom, while she gave him water, which Laura had brought in a shell from a fountain hard by. He drank eagerly, and Christina bathed his face, and washing away the clotted blood that had oozed from a slight wound just above his temple, she was struck with the singular beauty of his features, and the luxuriance of the glossy raven hair that curled profusely round his expansive brow.

“He does not appear so very heathenish without his turban,” said Laura.

“And though his complexion and beard are a little of the darkest; perhaps he would be as proper a gentleman as Marcian de Romana provided he were dressed like a Christian,” observed Beatrice.

“What are we to do with this unfortunate, sisters mine?” asked Christina, looking down in some confusion, for her patient had testified his gratitude for the kind office she was rendering him a little too boldly, by pressing her fair hands passionately to his lips, as she passed them across his face while engaged in washing away the blood. She endeavored to withdraw them, but he pertinaciously detained them till she was enforced to signify her displeasure, and awe him into submission by a frown. He then supplicated her forgiveness by holding up

his clasped hands, sighing deeply, and assuming looks indicative of his penitence, for having given her cause of offence.

"Do you think we could remove him into yon little oratory, Christina?" said Beatrice; "he would be quite safe there, as no one ever enters it but yourself, or comes near that side of the castle."

Christina, though hopeless of being understood by him, asked the Moor "if he thought he could walk so far?" and to her utter surprise he replied, partly by signs, and partly in imperfect but intelligible Spanish, "that if it were not very far, he thought with her assistance, he should be perfectly equal to the effort."

On hearing the Moor speak in their own language, the younger damsels uttered a loud cry, and Christina would have fled precipitately—but he detained her by grasping her garments, while he whispered in a voice of the most insinuating softness

"Alas, lovely Christian, wherefore such alarm? What cause of fear can you have from one who is doubly your captive? Last night I was overpowered by the swords of two of your countrymen, who attacked me as I was peaceably journeying toward the city of Leon, on a mission from the mighty Aben Alfaje to Don Aurelio, your caliph, and left me half dead; and this day am I slain outright by the splendor of your fatal beauty."

"How is it that you, being a Moor, and a misbeliever," said Christina, crossing herself, "speak the language of Spaniards and true Christians?"

"My father's favorite wife is a native of Leon, and it was her pleasure to instruct me in her native tongue, in which she oftentimes delighteth to discourse," replied the Moor.

"His favorite wife!" exclaimed Christina, "and has he then more than one!"

"Our holy prophet permits a true believer to have four wives, and as many slaves as he can afford to maintain," replied the Moor, looking down and smiling.

"I have always been told that the Moors were the wickedest people in the world," said Christina, and now I hear it confirmed by the lips of one of their own people. Four wives for one man—Santa Maria how monstrous!—and will you pretend, Sir Pagan, that any Spanish lady hath condescended, not only to wed a Moor, but to share her husband with three infidel wives!"

"Beauteous maiden," replied the Moor, "my father's love for my

fair step-mother was so great, that he dismissed all his other wives and concubines for her sake, and she is the sole mistress of his harem, and the sovereign of his heart; and I swear by Alla, and the head of the prophet, that I would do the same for the love of thee, thou fairest among the daughters of beauty, if thou wouldst deign to become my wife."

"I become the wife of a Moor, and an infidel!" exclaimed Christina, in a tone of horror; "the saints preserve me from such wickedness—and if, Sir Infidel, thou dost presume on the charity I have rendered thee, to make so audacious a proposal, know that I only assist thee in thy sore distress from motives of compassion, and in obedience to the precepts of our blessed Redeemer, who hath commanded his followers to do good to their enemies, to feed them when hungry, to give them drink when thirsty, and to comfort them when they are afflicted. It is this consideration, and this alone, which prompts me to conceal thee from those who would assuredly slay thee, but if thou dost again address me in language unbecoming of a Christian maid to hear from pagan lips, I will abandon thee to the care of thy false prophet, and Sathanas his master."

The Moor was visibly disconcerted at this repulse, and secretly blaming his precipitate folly in suffering himself to be prematurely betrayed into an acknowledgment of his admiration of the lovely Christina, which, he had heard enough of the manners of her countrywomen to be aware, would not be acceptable on so brief an acquaintance from one against whom not only her national prejudices, but her religious principles, would be set in formidable array.

The Mussulman customs, joined to the high rank and graceful person of Abdaliz, for that was the name of our young Moor, had lent him too many facilities as a lover, and he had been so much caressed from childhood by the ladies of his father's harem, that he scarcely knew how to preserve his temper on being treated with any degree of slight—and had he not been accustomed to witness occasional fits of haughtiness on the part of his father's Spanish wife, he would scarcely have brooked the disdain with which his flattering proposal had been rejected by a young Christian damsel, whom, from the simplicity of her dress, he did not imagine to be a person of consideration.

Notwithstanding his professions of contrition for the offence he had given, his brow was cloudy and sullen, and the melodious softness of his voice was changed to tones that were hoarse and untunable; and,

from certain slight but indubitable tokens of look and manner, it was plain to Christina that this insinuating young pagan could be as cross and humorsome on occasion, if he dared, as the testy old count, her father; but then her father was always cross, and could not be soft and engaging for the life of him. Not one of his daughters believed it was in his power to say an agreeable word to any one; but this Moor had, on only half an hour's acquaintance, and with a very imperfect knowledge of the Spanish language, poured forth the most passionate eloquence Christina had ever heard; and then his looks—it was better not to encounter them, she thought, for the future; for his eyes had more fascination in them than those of a serpent, and there was something about him that alarmed her, and reminded her of the legends she had heard of evil spirits assuming beautiful mortal forms to beguile pious saints and anchorites.

She again deliberated within herself as to the propriety of introducing so perilous a creature, even supposing him to be nothing worse than a Moor and misbeliever, into her father's castle, unknown to any of her family except the two giddy, thoughtless damsels, her younger sisters. At last she frankly told them her situation, and her reluctance to do any thing which not only her parent, but her spiritual director, Father Stefanos, might disapprove.

“Go, then, cruel maid, and leave me to perish, if you deem it so inconsistent with your duty and Christian principles, to assist an unhappy stranger in his distress, after having been well nigh murdered by your countrymen.”

Christina blushed, for she felt this would be indeed to act in direct opposition to the precepts of her heavenly Master, according to her recent explanation of them to the Moor, and fixing her clear blue eyes stedfastly upon him, she said,

“I am both ready and willing, albeit at no slight peril of maiden fame, to afford you shelter and succor in this your sore need; but as I have already explained to you, it must be on condition of your demeaning yourself meekly and discreetly, and abstaining both from insidious flatteries and unhallowed license of look and word; also, you must promise me not to profane a Christian oratory by any pagan prayers and adjurations to your false Prophet Mahound.”

The handsome Moor promised every thing, and then she took her crucifix from her bosom, and holding it up, said,

“You must swear upon this sacred symble not to violate your promise.”

“I will swear by the fair hand that holds it, if you will,” replied the Moor, with one of his eloquent glances.

“Nay, but you must kiss the cross itself in token that you will keep your vow, or else you will not go with me,” said the damsel, holding the crucifix to the very lips of the bold infidel, who, thus urged, scrupled not to kiss the blessed image of the Redeemer, whom he denied, for the sake of touching, at the same time, the virgin fingers by which it was presented.

Christina was now perfectly satisfied, and the simple Laura and Beatrice stood amazed at the miracle she had effected, in compelling a Moor to perform what they considered a wonderful act of faith, and looked upon the conversion of the Moor to the Christian religion as already in happy progress.

With the aid of these compassionate damsels, Abdaliz was enabled to rise, but before he had walked many paces, he found himself so enfeebled, from fasting and loss of blood, that even with the tender support afforded by Christina and Laura, he was incapable of proceeding so far as the Castle of Toros.

It was then agreed that he should return to the little copse, and concealing himself as well as he could among the fern and blossoming thicket of low growing myrtle, wait till the cool of the evening before he attempted to cross the moat; Christina, in the mean time, engaging to bring him some goat's milk and bread, and if she could, by feigning herself sick, obtain it, a strengthening cordial water from the neighboring convent.”

For a farther precaution, lest the Moor, who had now become an object of the deepest interest to all three of the damsels, should be discovered in his lair, they covered him with leaves of the fan-palm and branches of the carob-tree, and of the shrubby jessamine, which they gathered for the purpose; and after commending him to the care of God, and beseeching him to supplicate the protection of the blessed Virgin, and defy Mahomed and all his ill angels, they left him to his meditations.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Lo the moon is down, the crickets chirp, the screech-owl
Calls in the dawn——so which way now ?

WIT AT SEVERAL WEAPONS.

The fair Christina practised her first lesson in deceit, by procuring from the good nuns of Santa Clara, (under pretence of being very seriously indisposed,) wine, broth, and a cake of fine wheaten bread ; with which refection she stealthily visited her Moorish patient in his sylvan covert, thrice in the course of that day.

Abdaliz, though infinitely revived by this needful supply of nourishing viands, affected increased bodily weakness, that he might enjoy the pleasure of being supported and fed by the lovely hands of his compassionate benefactress ; and was more than once, on the very brink of violating the conditions he had promised, nay sworn, to observe, by expressing passionate commendations of her beauty, if not by the commission of greater rashness : however, as he was aware that all future intercourse with the beautiful Christian damsel must depend on his good behaviour, he conducted himself with becoming discretion, and even affected the deepest melancholy, when his heart was fluttering with delight.

The timid Christina was reassured by the gravity of his deportment ; and when midnight had closed its sable canopy over the gloomy towers of Castle Toros, and every living creature within its walls, save

herself, Laura and Beatrice, was fast locked in the arms of sleep, she stole forth, accompanied by the two latter, to conduct him to the oratory of Santa Mavia. The night was moonless, and our damsels, having to cross the moat, thought it expedient to carry a rush taper, for which Beatrice had exerted her skill and ingenuity in constructing a sort of lanthorn, out of a hollowed gourd, to defend it from the currents of air they might encounter among the ruinous passages of the castle, to say nothing of the damp air from the stagnant moat.

Christina, who had never been engaged in any thing like a clandestine adventure before, trembled at the rustling of every leaf, when she found herself abroad, without leave, at the solemn hour of midnight; she started at every shadow, and clung to her two young sisters for protection, and had they not been of a very fearless disposition, would undoubtedly have infected them both with terrors. In spite of the powerful desire she felt to preserve the handsome infidel from prowling wolves and robbers, she was herself so terribly alarmed, lest she should encounter either, that it was not till she had told her beads thrice over, and vowed a pilgrimage to the chapel of Santa Mavia, among the mountains of Cavadonga, if she should be so happy as to return in safety, that she ventured a foot beyond the walls of the castle, much less attempted any thing so perilous as crossing the moat, by the stepping-stones, over which the light-footed Laura and Beatrice were accustomed to skip, without so much as wetting the soles of their shoes, half a dozen times at least, in the course of every day.

These adventurous damsels reminded Christina that she had herself safely crossed, with no better bridge, several times that very day.

"But that," she replied, "was a very different matter from doing so in the dark, or by the uncertain glimmering of a rush taper, which was liable to be suddenly extinguished before she was half over."

At length, however, reassured by the representations of the courageous Laura, who preceded her with the pumpkin lanthorn, and armed with a long stick to aid her in discovering the stepping-stones, in the event of the rush taper failing them at their utmost need, she ventured on the first step, "the only one that costs us much to take," as the wise French proverb truly observes. A second and a third were successfully performed; and now the timorous Christina began to feel a little more confidence, when, just as she had gained the very middle of the moat, the accident which she had so piteously anticipated, as the worst misfortune that could befall them, actually occurred; and the treacher-

ous rush taper, without the slightest warning, or even the paltry excuse of a puff of wind violating the sanctuary of the gourd lanthorn, thought proper to give up the ghost ; in other words, to pop out all of a sudden, leaving our hapless damsels in utter darkness, in the midst of a black muddy moat.

A doleful situation, in sooth, it seemed to the boldest of the trio. They could see nothing but the reflection of their own figures in the dark dismal waters below, in which they entertained a childish fear of being engulfed, although they ought to have been aware, from the circumstance of their being able to cross it by means of the stepping-stones, that the moat must be very shallow at that spot. But fancy is always very busy in the midnight hour, especially when young maidens are engaged in rambling without leave.

“ Alack,” exclaimed the weeping Christina, “ what will become of us now ?”

“ We shall be drowned in this terrible moat, which I dare say is as deep as the castle is high, just here,” sobbed Beatrice.

“ Ah ! this comes of having anything to do with Moors and misbelievers,” rejoined Christina again. “ Did you observe the evil brightness of his large black eyes, Laura ?”

“ Oh yes,—but don’t talk of them now or I shall fancy I see them staring at us like malignant stars through the darkness,” responded Laura.

“ Had we not better try to make the best of our way back to the castle ?” said Beatrice.

“ No,” said Christina, who appeared suddenly inspired with an unwonted degree of courage, “ as we are half over the moat, I think our best plan will be to repeat an Ave, and proceed, or that unhappy Moor may perish in his sins unbaptized—and as he has actually kissed my crucifix, he cannot be an evil spirit, in a beautiful earthly form, sent to tempt us.”

“ And yet he swooned away for very spite, when first you made the sign of the cross, and required him to do the same,” observed Laura.

“ Very true,” rejoined Christina, “ he was then in the very gall of heathen bitterness and contumacy, and no better could be expected of him at first, but he hath shown some hopeful symptoms of grace since ; and, I trust, with the assistance of our blessed lady, to be the means of bringing him into the bosom of the church ; therefore let us proceed

to render him what succor we may. 'Twere a pity if so goodly a creature were eternally lost, for want of Christian charity on our part."

Laura, who was familiar enough with the passes of the moat to cross it blindfold, preceded the other two; Christina whispering Aves and Pater Nosters, guided herself from stone to stone by the aid of the long stick, and Beatrice bringing up the rear, they safely gained the opposite bank, and without any other mishap than a few scratches from uncivil branches in the dark, arrived at the thicket, where they had left the wounded Moor. A few stars having now a little brightened the intense gloom of the dusky firmament, and the eyes of our damsels, being by this time familiar enough with the darkness to discern objects, they perceived Abdaliz, couching like a recumbent tiger, in the brake, apparently ready, notwithstanding his bodily weakness, to strangle any foe who might venture within his reach. His bright eyes glittering like those of a basilisk, were watchfully bent upon them with such fierce scrutiny as filled them with terror.

"Jesu Maria, speed and defend us!" they cried, and turned hastily to flee from the spot.

"Tarry, sweet maidens! what should ye fear," exclaimed the Moor, in a voice of such persuasive softness that it arrested their footsteps like a charm.

"Truly, Sir Moor," replied Christina, "we have encountered so many and divers perils in coming hither to seek thee, that when at length we perceived thee, our faculties being bewildered by our fears, we were startled and affrighted at the bright fierceness of thine eyes which visibly glanced and glittered in the thicket like those of some terrible basilisk."

"By Ala and the prophet," exclaimed Abdaliz "I am the most unlucky fellow in the world, to possess a pair of eyes which are so ugly as to frighten fair ladies even in the dark."

"It was not their ugliness at which we were so sore afraid, but their strange brightness," said Christina, very innocently; "I think we could almost see to cross the moat by their light," continued she. But now another difficulty arose; the handsome Moor, who appeared determined to give those obliging damsels all the trouble he could, out of revenge, I suppose, for the affront they had indirectly put on the beauty of his eyes, declared himself incapable of accompanying them to the castle. It was to no purpose they besought him to make the attempt; he pro-

tested that he was so cramped and chilled by the heavy dews, and cold night air, that he could not so much as rise from the ground.

It was in vain that our damsels offered their united services to assist him, he was obstinate in his purpose, and whenever, in compliance with their urgent entreaties, he attempted to arise, he groaned in the most piteous manner, and shrinking back, apparently in mortal agony, exclaimed—

“My wounds, my wounds! Alas! they are opening afresh, and I shall bleed to death.”

“Then we must return to the castle without you, I suppose,” said Laura.

“And the sooner the better,” observed Christina, “for I am dreadfully afraid some mischief will befall us for having left it. We were very wrong to do so, and if we should be missed by Dame Griffinda, what would become of us?”

“You think nothing of leaving me to die alone, cruel maid,” said Abdaliz.

“What shall we do?” cried Christina.

“Only tarry till day-break,” said Abdaliz, in his most eloquent tone of entreaty.

“To what purpose?” she asked, half peevishly.

“Perhaps I may then be able to cross your dangerous moat, which, in the darkness, and unacquainted as I am with the situation of the place, I could not venture to do in my present feeble state,” he replied; “in the mean time, you will all be safe with me.”

“But you are a Moor, and may possibly take the opportunity of murdering us,” said the damsels.

“Bid me rather plunge a poniard into my own bosom!” returned the Moor passionately. “Hark,” he continued, “do not you hear, by the barking of the shepherd’s dogs, that the wolves are abroad? They will certainly devour you all three if you attempt to leave me.”

“Oh heaven, the wolves!” exclaimed Christina, involuntarily pressing nearer to the artful Moor, for protection. “I think I hear their dismal howling,—do not you, Laura?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Laura; “it seems quite close, I am afraid they will come and devour us here.”

“Fear nothing,” said Abdaliz, “I will protect you all; there is not a wolf in Spain that dare attack a Moor, so you will be perfectly safe with me.”

It is astonishing what strange intimacies have been cemented if not caused by fear. These three damsels who not many hours ago would have regarded a Moor as the most terrific monster in creation, and far more to be dreaded than a whole pack of wolves, now on the very apocryphal alarm of a distant howl from one of those comparatively harmless animals, seated themselves on the turf by Abdaliz, and more than once simultaneously clung to him for protection, when they heard the hollow moan of the wind sighing among the adjacent ruins, or sweeping through the branches of the trees. As for Abdaliz, he was emboldened by these circumstances to declare, that notwithstanding the pain of his wounds, and the bodily weakness to which he was reduced, in consequence of the great loss of blood he had suffered, he had never passed a more enchanting night than in their sweet company, and passionately regretted the too early appearance of the dawn, in the eastern horizon, which deprived him of the plausible excuse under which he had contrived to detain his fair friends in the myrtle thicket.

Christina's alarm and uneasiness, during the agitating hours of darkness she had been reluctantly compelled to pass in such strange lodging and unwonted company, had been extreme, and when Abdaliz would fain have exercised his guileful devices to obtain another and another moment of precious delay, she resolutely told him that unless he availed himself of the present opportunity of endeavoring to take sanctuary in the little oratory among the ruins of her father's castle, she must abandon him to his fate. It was not, however, till she prepared to depart with the two young demoiselles, her sisters, that Abdaliz, perceiving that she was no longer to be trifled with, made an attempt to rise, and then, though perfectly equal to the effort, he affected disability and supplicated her assistance so piteously, that the simple Christina returned and afforded him all the help in her power, which was a great deal more than he needed, and only extorted by this subtle infidel for the pleasure of being tenderly supported by a Christian damsel, who would otherwise have esteemed it deadly sin to touch him with the tip of her finger at arm's length. Christina, all frankness and truth herself, suspected none of the deceptive arts which Abdaliz practised to obtain her sympathy, and excite her interest more powerfully in his favor, and she suffered considerable alarm, lest he should expire from exhaustion before she had conducted him to a place of comparative security. Laura and Beatrice were surprised at the apparent ease with which he achieved the most difficult part of the undertaking, namely, crossing

the moat, where it was impossible to receive assistance from their sister; but he strode from one stepping stone to another, without so much as staggering or pausing for breath, as sturdily as Marcian de Romana himself could have done, had he been permitted to avail himself of the pass. Likewise he exhibited considerable activity in scrambling through the breach in the castle wall, which was not a very easy feat even for themselves to perform, in returning to the castle, although it afforded facility enough as a means of egress.

Christina observed not these inconsistencies in the conduct of the handsome Moor, who, now in his turn, offered to assist his fair conductors in ascending to this aperture, and descending from it into one of the desolate, grass-grown, courts that led to the deserted wing of the castle, where the oratory of Santa Mavia was situated. It was however, at some distance from this spot, and long before they had threaded half the winding passages, staircases, and intricacies leading thereto, that Abdalix was in reality thoroughly exhausted, and compelled to lean heavily on his lovely guide, Christina, for support. Even the younger damsels were now alarmed at the mortal paleness of his countenance, and the dimness of his heavy eyes, and besought him to rally his strength sufficiently to gain the little chapel, where they had arranged matters as well as they could for his accommodation. He smiled faintly, and staggered forward, and, just as they reached the oratory, he sunk down in the very entrance, in a deadly swoon.

"Oh, he is dead!" cried Christina, wringing her hands.

"Dead!" repeated Laura, beginning to chafe his wrists, "not he indeed: this might have been expected, from his choosing to remain awake all night, for the sake of talking all sorts of flatteries to us."

"To us!" echoed Beatrice, "I don't think he troubled any one, but Christina, with his fine speeches."

"I am sure he called me a beautiful maid twice, and said, 'our loveliness was more radiant than the stars, and supplied the place of moonlight,' " said Laura, "whereat, I thought I must have laughed outright."

"Laura, you the most barbarous girl in the world, I think," exclaimed Christina, angrily, "to talk in that way, when this unfortunate gentleman, who, although he is a Moor, is extremely amiable, appears in so dangerous a state."

"Don't alarm yourself, Christina, he will do very well," returned Laura, "and were he not so pale, I should suspect this swoon to be one

of his devices, like the trick he played us about the wolves, which I verily believe was only a false pretence of his own to keep us in the thicket with him all night, that he might lean his head on your arm, and hold your hand unreprieved."

"It is a vile calumny, Laura," said Christina, indignantly, a flood of crimson suffusing her fair cheek, at the same time, as the idea that Laura's suspicion was probably not wholly unfounded, flashed upon her mind; "you said you heard the wolves yourself, and I am sure I did."

"Nothing in the world but the wind howling among the broken arches, and ruinous passages of the old castle hard by," responded Laura, "but he saw we were three simple, credulous maidens, ready to believe anything, and so, like a false infidel that he was, played upon our fears, which, sooth to say, seconded him well in his deceitful purposes."

All this while Christina seated on the ground, was supporting the head of Abdaliz on her lap, and bathing his cold temples with vinegar, which Beatrice brought to her from a little table in the oratory, where they had previously collected such restoratives and cordials as they had been able to procure. At length a wandering streak of color revisited his cheek, his bosom heaved convulsively, and once more unclosing his long-veiled lids, he murmured—

"My life, my soul, are you then near me?"

Christina, blushing deeply at this apostrophe, entreated him to swallow a few spoonfuls of a cordial restorative, which she held to his lips.

"It is wine," he observed, "which no true Mussulman ought to taste, forbidden as it is by our holy prophet; but were it the deadly juice of the nightshade itself, I could not refuse it from thy hand, thou fairest of the daughters of her who beguiled our first father into the sin of disobedience;" he then eagerly drained the cup, and, in conclusion, pressed his lips passionately to the fair hand by which it was offered.

"This cannot be permitted," said Christina, gravely, extricating her fingers from his grasp. "You remind me, Sir Moor, only too much of that evil serpent, by whom our general mother was tempted to the sin, of which she afterward persuaded Adam to become partaker."

"And he, for the love of her, consented voluntarily to forfeit Paradise," returned Abdaliz, "for Adam was not deceived, but the woman tempted him, and he did eat; which was a lesser crime than mine, in

not only drinking the forbidden juice of the grape at thy bidding, but rendering homage yesterday at a false god, by kissing the idol image, which thou didst offer to my lips, fair Christian."

"If your conscience disapproved of either of those actions, why did you not say so, and refuse to perform them?" said Christina.

"Because thou didst enjoin them—and I could deny thee nothing, light of mine eyes!" he rejoined.

The holy serenity of Christina's mind was strangely disturbed by the passionate wooing of this perilous lover, who had been so singularly thrown upon her charity.

Inexperienced as she was in the ways of men, she saw that he was no less artful than impassioned; and while she acknowledged all his graces of person and manners, she felt that there was a danger in his fascination, and resolved to abstain from the intoxicating pleasure of listening to his flattering eloquence; and in short, to dismiss him from the castle of Toros, as soon as he should be sufficiently recovered from his wounds, to quit it with safety to himself.

Of that there appeared no present probability. His wounds were severe, though not dangerous, and the loss of blood, and subsequent watching and fatigue, had produced excessive exhaustion, which was succeeded by a slow fever; and for some nays he remained in a state of almost infantile debility, requiring all the care and tenderness of his gentle nurse.

Christina had provided a bed of the softest moss for his accommodation, in the oratory, and endowed him with her own sheets and pillow, and all the little comforts she could by any device procure for his use.

Every moment that she could steal from other duties unobserved, she spent in the sanctuary, where she had bestowed this contraband treasure, over whom she watched with the most anxious solicitude during the hours that she abstracted both from slumber and exercise, while every member of the family, except Laura and Beatrice, thought she was engaged in her devotions, at the shrine of Santa Mavia.

CHAPTER XVII.

“I will spend my days in prayer,
Love and and all his laws defy!”

Old Spanish Ballad.

A few days after that on which the Moor Abdaliz was introduced into the castle of Toros, Don Froila, who had been out to assist his only domestic in gathering in the scattered gleanings of his scanty vintage, returned home leading a beautiful black barb by the bridle. A circumstance so unwonted of course elicited the most lively exclamations of surprise and admiration from the young ladies his daughters, who surrounded him with clamorous enquiries “how he became possessed of his noble and richly-caparisoned steed?”

“Be silent, ye noisy baggages,” replied Don Froila, “how d’ye expect a man, who hath but one organ of speech, is to reply to so many impertinent questions at once?”

“But you have got a fine horse, and we want so much to know whence he came?” responded the damsels.

“You had better ask him,” replied Don Froila, “for I know about as much of that matter as yourselves, and should be very glad of any information you can extract from him on the subject.”

“But how did you come by him, *padre mio*?” asked Aurora, coaxingly.

“Neither in the way of spoil nor purchase, *senorita*,” replied the count, “but finding him solacing himself in the maize field, without leave, I took him fairly prisoner, which I had the juster right to do seeing he is a Barbary steed, and hath some accursed infidel of a Moor for his master, whom, if I could only catch marauding on my territo-

ries," he pursued, grasping his rapier, "I would dispatch to the dominions of Sathanas his master, without shrift or baptism."

Christina trembled and turned deadly pale, at this awful denunciation against the owner of the steed, who she doubted not was Abdaliz. Her sisters demanded of their father by what token he knew the horse to be the property of a Moor.

"By many tokens," replied Don Froila; "in the first place, by the abominable length of the bridle, which is single withal, serving the purpose both of whip and rein; in a most heathenish fashion, as all Christian knights and good horsemen will allow. Secondly, the heretical shortness of the stirrup leathers show that the pagan cavalier rides with bent; likewise, the stirrups be gilded, and made so as to cover the whole feet; fie upon them! meet only for the use of a female rider and lastly, by the villanous high, sharp peak of the pommel of the saddle, which is, moreover, covered with rich crimson satin, of Damascus, fringed and bordered with gold, as you may see. By which signs ye shall ever know the trappings of a Moorish horseman. May the foul fiend confounded them all, say I. Amen."

"And what will you do with the beautiful creature?" asked the damsels, eagerly, "Will you not ride him to mass and to market?"

"Humph," said the count, "it is long since I have bestridden a war-horse, yet I doubt me not I could handle him as fairly now as I did my fiery charger, in days long past, when I broke the Moorish line in that last battle, which secured the freedom of Leon, where I was almost hoarse bawling,—'Close Spain!—Toros for Leon and Alphonso!' Mighty good I did for myself by all that bravadoing! My milk-white jennet was slain under me, by a misbelieving dog, and I have been enforced to go on feet, yea, well nigh barefoot, ever since; and now fortune hath sent me (the first favor by the way, she hath ever done) a barb that an emperor might be proud of riding, beshrew me, if half a dozen rials in the world to buy me a pair of boots and riding hose; therefore shall I be compelled to sell the goodly beast to pay me for the mischief he hath done, in trampling down my maize crop."

Christina took the earliest opportunity of informing Abdaliz of the capture of the black barb, and the predicament in which it stood.

The Moor was sensibly touched at the news.

"It is Zegris, my father's favorite steed," he exclaimed. "By Alla, I took him without leave for this unlucky expedition, which hath cost me so dear! If I return without him to Sansuenna, woe will betide

me!—And doth your dog of a father talk of selling the matchless beast to pay for the damage he hath done to a paltry corn-field, not worth a sequin? In the name of the prophet, fair maid, take this jewelled bracelet, which is worth half the Lordship of Leon, and tell him I send it in ransom for my father's steed."

Christina, with equal disdain, informed the astonished Moor, "that he might perform his own errands to the valiant Count de Toros, her father, whom he had had the insolence to style a dog," she indignantly pursued, "one whose bark had scared the boldest infidels in the vanquished armies of Abdelrahman, the caliph's vicegerent in Spain. Witness the Christian victories at Astorgas, Leon, Saldagna, Montes de Oca, Amava, and Alava, and many a fierce conflict beside, where the mountain streams ran red with Moorish blood, and the recreant survivors called on their false prophet in despair, and fled before the terrible arm of Don Froila de Toros, and his invincible master, Don Alphonso, the deliverer of Leon and Asturias."

"Aye," replied Abdaliz, his brow darkening as he spoke. "I admit that, according to the immutable decrees which Alla has written against his people in the great book of fate, Abdelrahman, and the troops of the prophet got the worst of it in those days. But what I pray you were those puny battles, whereof the Christians boast themselves so highly, in comparison with the conquests of the faithful under the royal Muza, where your impious monarch Roderic was slain, and the whole Spanish race and name subjugated to the Moorish yoke? Aye, and with the exception of a few paltry insurgent mountaineers, whom for the present we permit to exist in Leon and Asturias; the whole of the people are our slaves to this hour, and we will prove them so ere long, by taking the goodliest of their sons for our hewers of wood and drawers of water, and the fairest of their daughters for the women of our harems."

The indignant and astonished Christina replied to this burst of pagan insolence, with the haughty disdain of a high-spirited Spanish lady. She was too generous to reproach Abdaliz, Moor and unbeliever though he was, with the services she had rendered him in preserving his life, and cherishing him during his sickness; but she gave him to understand, "that as a Christian maiden, and a daughter of Leon, she must hereafter regard him as the declared foe of her country and her God.

It was in vain that Abdaliz cursed his own intemperate rashness of

speech, and tendered the humblest submissions to the offended fair one; he perceived that he had sinned beyond all hope of forgiveness, and that conviction provoked him to farther sallies of wrathful contumacy against the free Christian people of Spain; resentful retorts followed, and those who had a few hours before, in spite of national prejudices and jarring creeds and opinions, appeared only to exist for each other, parted in fierce anger, with mutual expressions of rage and scorn.

Christina returned to her chamber that night with a swelling heart, thoroughly persuaded that of all people on the face of the earth, she hated this ungrateful Moor the worst. She called him traitor, misbeliever, in short, every opprobrious epithet she could apply to him, vowed she would profess herself a nun to be revenged on him, and then fearing it would inflict no pain upon him to lose her, she sobbed herself to sleep.

The next morning she found, though her dreams had been anything but agreeable, that she had overslept herself, for the sun was high in the horizon, and she heard her little brother and younger sisters laughing and talking in the court-yard below.

"This insolent Moor," said she rubbing her eyes, which were heavy and swollen with weeping, "will doubtless think that I mean to punish him by forgetting his breakfast; but no! evilly as he hath demeaned himself in return for my kindness, he shall not lack aught for his comfort that is in my poor power to bestow, so long as his bodily weakness compelleth him to bide here. The saints are my witnesses, that I have well nigh starved myself, that I might save the larger part of every meal for him, but this morning he may even take the whole, for I have little appetite for breakfast."

She then rose, and I know not why, bestowed unwonted care in dressing and arranging her beautiful fair hair in the most becoming order. Having completed her simple toilet, though certainly not much to her own satisfaction, for she found it impossible wholly to obliterate the traces of tears from her countenance, she took the porringer of goat's milk, a slice of Chesnut bread, and a small quantity of honeycomb, to the oratory of Santa Mavia for the morning refection of Abdalíz. She walked slowly and pensively thither, revolving in her own mind how she should demean herself with sufficient statefulness to indicate her displeasure without wholly driving the offender to despair. At length, finding it impossible to devise a suitable address wherewith

to greet him, she determined to place the viands on the table before Abdaliz without a single word, and then retire instantly, unless he prevented her by throwing himself at her feet, and supplicating her forgiveness with tears, which if even thus solicited, she felt she ought not to grant to him, who had made so insolent an avowal of his intentions toward her country.

"It will be a painful struggle, no doubt," sighed she, "but duty requires me to tear him from my heart, though the heart break for it. Alas! how have I been blinded and misled by fatal passion, ever to admit an idea so unmeet for a Christian maiden, as love for a vile infidel; and, albeit, I have resisted his subtle temptations, I have permitted him I fear to perceive my weak fondness, and he hath presumed upon it, or he durst not have treated me as he did last night. But I will teach him the difference between the soul-degraded females of a Moorish harem, and a high-born Spanish lady."

With lofty resolve upon her very lips, Christina entered the oratory, placing the provision of which she had deprived herself upon the table with an air of dignity that might have beseeemed an empress; she turned haughtily about to depart, directing, as she did so, a furtive glance as if by accident, toward the rustic couch where Abdaliz generally reposed—it was vacant! Christina started, and in spite of all her stern resolves of coldness and indifference toward the object of her displeasure, paused and scanned, with eager looks, the narrow limits of the apartment, but he was gone. "Abdaliz!" she cried aloud, but the hollow echoes of deserted chambers and ruinous corridors alone replied by repeating, as if in mockery, the startling Moorish name, and she listened in vain for an answer in the soft familiar tones of that too well-beloved voice.

"I wist not," she murmured in surprise, "that he was able to rise without assistance, but I suppose his evil temper hath conquered bodily weakness, and he hath donned his heathendish gaberdine betimes, and concealed himself among some of the desolate apartments in this ruinous quarter of the castle, in hopes of vexing me by his absence; but I am not vexed," she pursued, bursting into a flood of tears; "and if I were wholly quit of him, I should deem it fortunate, only I were loath that any mischief should befall him in consequence of this freak, where-with he hath thought proper to amuse himself. Jesu Maria! if he should meet my father, who is always talking in the most barbarous manner about murdering Moors, I know he would be carbonadoed."

In the hope of averting such a calamity, Christina sought for her ungrateful truant through every room, passage, nook, niche and recess, in that quarter of the castle, but in vain ; she then, with equal ill success, looked for him in other parts of the building. He was no where to be found ; at length with a boding heart, Christina proceeded to join the rest of the family, not hoping, but dreading to hear tidings of Abdalíz from them ; long ere she reached the place where they were congregated together, she was alarmed by a clamorous confusion of tongues, evidently discussing some matter of more than ordinary import, and with terror she distinguished the harsh tones of her father's voice exalting itself above them all in its most furious key. Her knees smote against each other with apprehension, her breath grew short, and she was compelled to lean against the wall for support. After a pause she crept nearer, and listened, in hopes of catching the purport of what was going on, and presently heard Don Froila exclaim—

“ He is gone, I tell you—clean gone ! He was worth a hundred sequins of Moorish money, to say nothing of his rich trappings, which I safely bestowed in a separate place, meaning to sell them all this morning, as Father Stephanus told me he could help me to a good customer, both for the horse and his furniture, and, lo ! when I proceeded to the stable this morning, he was gone !—but it was utterly impossible that any one could have stolen him without the connivance and assistance of some person in the castle, to unbar the gates, which I fastened with mine own hands yester even, before darkfall.”

Then Dame Griffinda, who considered herself pointed out by this remark, screamed forth a fierce rejoinder, in a more than usually shrill tone of vixenish wrath, “ that she was neither a thief nor a confederate of thieves, and would not have her character attacked by such vile insinuations ; and if the horse were gone, Don Froila could have no right to raise a storm in every one's ears, touching the loss of it, since it was no property of his ; and concluded by expressing a provoking hope that the rightful owner, honest man ! had gotten his own again.”

“ I doubt he has,” sighed Christina to herself, “ but it was a very mean way of recovering his right ! Ah Abdalíz ! you have demeaned yourself more like a robber Arab of the desert, than a gentle knight. I ought to esteem myself as fortunate, that you are gone ; for you were a perilous guest to dwell in a lady's bower : and yet methinks, my tender care of you merited some kind of leave-taking, though it had been never so formal. Surely, too, your thanks were due to me, and ought

to have been rendered, even had they been of the coldest ; but Moors and misbelievers are not bound, I suppose, to observe the laws of courtesies, any more than those of gratitude."

And here her eyes overflowed afresh, and she retreated to the oratory of Santa Mavia, that had so lately afforded a refuge to the faithless Abdaliz, to vent her conflicting feelings in undisturbed privacy.

It was not long, however, before she was joined by her two confederates, Laura and Beatrice, who came to tell her of the wonderful disappearance of Zegriz and his trappings.

"I know it," she replied, "and more than that, Abdaliz, his master, hath also fled from the castle."

"Fled!" they exclaimed in surprise ; "when did he go?"

"Of that I am ignorant," she replied ; "all I know is, that he is gone."

"Nay, Christina, that is incredible," they rejoined—"he loved you too well to hide his purpose from you; and it is very unkind of you not to trust us; seeing we have kept your secret so faithfully."

"It was *your* secret, if I mistake not, sister mine, of which, in an evil hour for my peace, you made me partaker," said Christina, mournfully smiling.

The touching sadness of her looks and tones, went to the hearts of the thoughtless pair; they flung their arms about her neck, and tenderly kissing her, begged her to take comfort, and not waste her sorrow after a vile Moor and misbeliever, "for you know, Christina," added they, "you could not have wedded him, had he been ever so true-hearted, unless he renounced the false prophet, and enlisted under the lion banners of Asturias and Leon, to fight against his wicked countrymen, whom all good Christians are bound to hate and defy; and there was too much pride and haughtiness in his soul for that."

"Alas! yes," replied Christina. "Would I had never seen him."

"Then you must try to forget him as soon as possible" observed the youthful damsels.

Christina knew this was sensible advice, and labored hard to follow it; but I believe it is not so easy for maidens, who live much in solitude, to forget even an undeserving object, whom they have once loved in single-hearted sincerity.

The tender bloom of youth and health faded from Christina's delicate cheek, her long fair ringlets hung neglected; her once gay laugh and merry song were no longer heard, and she passed her whole time

in the oratory, where she was perpetually haunted by the image of the earthly idol that had so lately tenanted that hallowed spot. Yet she felt that it was well for her eternal weal that the tempter had departed from her ; and she strove to turn her thoughts from the sorrow of this world that worketh death, to heavenward contemplations and heavenward hopes. She had been tried, and fiercely tried—though not with the fires of persecution, with which the faith of the early saints and martyrs had been proved ; but she had withstood with equal firmness, and perhaps not less heroism, the subtle persuasions of the too fascinating master of her young heart, to exchange her present gloomy lot of hardship and privation, for his beloved society, in a home of princely splendor ; the luxuries and pleasures of which he had painted in glowing and seductive colors, and that not once ; for it was the constant theme of his discourse to her, whenever they were alone. Her spirit was indeed saddened, and the gay hopes of youth had for ever departed from her ; but she could still draw nigh to her heavenly Father with a pure conscience, seeking consolation, where only for her it might be found.

The peaceful shade of a convent appeared to Christina, as perhaps it hath done to many a love-lorn damsel as well as her, a desirable haven of rest from the turmoil of profitless hopes and fears, where a havenly spouse graciously deigns to accept the rejected and despised affections that have been vainly lavished on an ungrateful earthly object. It was the desire of her heart to enter upon her noviciate among the nuns of Santa Clara, but as it was not in Don Froila's power to pay the small sum that was required by the rules of the house for admission, she remained desolate and lonely among the rest of her sisters, like a flower that has faded prematurely amidst the joyous blossoms of spring.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"This valiant knight was Lord of Clairmount,
Duke Ammons' son, as you shall understand,
Who having lost his horse of good account,
That by mishap was slipt out of his hand ;
He followed him in hopes once more to mount."

SIR JOHN HARRINGTON'S ARIOSTO

Don Froila did not submit to the loss of the Moorish steed with any thing like the resignation with which his lovely daughter bore that of its master. He was pertinacious in his enquiries, and unwearied in his search after it, and any thing but courteous in his rejoinders to those among his neighbours who assured him "they knew nothing about the horse, nor did they believe such an animal as he described had ever been seen in that part of the country." Thus the poor count reaped no other fruits from his capture of the finest barb in Spain, than the honour of stabling and feeding him for one night, and the satisfaction of involving himself in a dozen quarrels with the obliging people of the vicinity ; "But that to be sure," said Dame Griffinda, "however annoying it might be to them, was nuts and almonds to her testy master, who always appeared very dull and melancholic in a state of peace and quiet."

Don Froila, after puzzling his brains for many hours with vain surmises, as to the parties who had been concerned in the abduction of

the horse, recollected that Father Stephanos was the only person out of his own family to whom he had confided the secret of his being in possession of such a beast, and he was more than half disposed to accuse the holy man of having had recourse either to magic, or to tampering with some of the weaker vessels of his garrison to obtain this valuable animal without money or cost. No sooner had Don Froila taken this idea into his head, than he felt the most irresistible inclination to "go and have the matter out with Father Stephanos" as he called it; in other words, to accuse that holy and learned Father, in the bitterest language he could devise for the purpose, of having practised the black art of sorcery in order to rob him of his horse.

Dame Griffinda, with whom, for want of a wife, he was wont to discuss most of his affairs, when he confided this intention to her, exclaimed in a tone of horror :

"Accuse a pious monk of horse-stealing and sorcery? the saints preserve us, Don Froila, any one that had a mind to be charitable, would swear you were stark mad, to think of such a thing as attacking the church in one of her members. Better submit to the loss of a thousand horses, than thrust your hand into such a burning fiery furnace. I tell you, Sir count, all the losses and misfortunes that have befallen you from your birth, up to this very hour, would be as nothing in comparison to you giving cause of offence to the church."

"But if the cowed villain have robbed me of a horse, which he said only yesterday was worth a hundred sequins, surely I am not to be the loser tamely," said Don Froila.

"My good master," responded the dame, "it is scarcely likely that a stray horse that came to you so strangely, that it almost seems as though he dropped from the moon, should be worth so large a sum."

"Have I not told thee that Father Stephanos, when he had fully examined all the points, and seen me try the paces of the animal, nay, tried them himself, prized him at that sum; and thou art worse than a heretic, an' thou callest in question a monk's judgment in horse-flesh; besides, he did not want him for himself, but for another—a nobleman, he said."

"Then that must be the Count de Romana, I trow," responded Dame Griffinda, "whose confessor Father Stephanos is; moreover he serves him also in the capacity of a secretary and steward."

"Then doubtless Count de Romana is the villain who hath stolen my horse to avoid paying me for him," exclaimed Don Froila.

"Certes," said the dame, "there is circumstantial evidence tending to prove the fact, since not only the count, but his two tall sons, Marcian and Antonio, were on the prowel near the castle last night."

"How knowest thou that, old woman?" asked Don Froila.

"May it please you Sir Count, I saw Marcian and Antonio in the chestnut grove, at the bottom of the meadow, with mine own eyes."

"And what impertinence were they engaged in on my premises, I prythee?"

"Discoursing with my young ladies, Aurora and Seraphina, so please your lordship."

"Ha! what?" cried the count, grasping his rapier; "by the blood of all my ancestors, both before and after the flood, I will have vengeance on the villains for daring to put such an affront upon my house. I see now, as plain as if the fact were emblazoned in letters of gold on Leon cathedral, which way my horse went. Yon shameless jades must have unbarred the castle gates, after dark, to assist their dainty *queridos* in stealing that goodly steed of mine, which their robber sire coveted to possess without the ceremony of lawful payment. And as for you, ye, ill-favored old crone! how durst you keep such slack guard over noble damsels entrusted to your special care, as to suffer them to rambling beyond bounds after night-fall, with idle young fellows, and they the sons of my born foe withal?"

"Ill-favored old crone, i'faith!" echoed the insulted dame; "I am sure, Sir Count, it doth not become one, who, for a Christian, may be accounted one of the ugliest knights in Spain, to talk of comelier people than himself being ill-favored forsooth! All my wonder is, how any body could ever find it in her heart to wed with the like—but poverty is fain to shut both eyes and ears on occasion. How durst I suffer the ladies Aurora and Seraphina to ramble beyond bounds, quotha? Do you think, Sir Count, I can do the work of ten duennas, in my simple person? I am sure every daughter of yours, except Donna Christina, needs one to her own share to look after her. How could I be looking after the doings of the Senoritas Aurora and Seraphina, in the chestnut grove, when I was employed in keeping guard over Blanche and Orelia, to prevent their meeting Periz Silva, the handsome young farmer, and his cousin Gaston Alvarez, the rich vintner's son, who have been making love to them in dumb show for the last six months.

"Diablos!" cried Don Froila, in a transport of fury, forgetting even the loss of the inestimable steed whose mysterious disappearance had

so ruffled him, in his indignation and surprise at hearing of the pranks that wicked little sprite Cupid was playing up among the fair damsels his daughters. "A vintner's son, and a farmer, dost thou say, woman? St. Jago, what would all the counts of Toros, my ancestors, say to such a degradation? It is enough to raise the illustrious ghosts of every prince and peer in my pedigree to protest against it."

"They would be bigger fools than I take them for, Sir Count, an' they rejoiced not in the prospect of such comfortable substantial matches for two out of ten portionless damsels, their descendants," observed Dame Griffinda; "vintners and farmers are mighty good sort of people, and keep more plentiful tables than some of your starving gentry, who hold their heads as high as Haman, without a spare maravedi in their pouches all the while. Pedigree forsooth! what good did a pedigree ever do for man or woman, except to puff them up with sinful pride, and make them averse to folks who get a good living by an honest calling? If I had my will, I would never let my lord Don Felix know that the family are worth a pedigree. It would be a good action to fling it into the fire, before it does any more mischief, say I."

"Thou art a profane old fool, whose sayings are only like the crackling of thorns under a pot, or the lissing of a shrewish goose, which no one thinks of sufficient importance to silence," replied Don Froila, "otherwise I had not permitted thee to go on so long unchecked: but if thou darest to infuse thy vulgar notions into the heads of any of my daughters, so as to encourage them in wedding plebeian husbands, I will assuredly tie a stone about thy neck, and fling thee into the moat."

"I'll warrant me, now," pursued Dame Griffinda, in no wise intimidated by this threat, "that thou wouldst prefer seeing thy daughters wedded to misbelieving Moorish robbers, to giving them in marriage to honest Christian merchants, or substantial followers of some reputable craft."

"Merchants and craftsmen!" exclaimed the indignant count, "I would rather see daughters of mine wedded to—"

The conclusion of the sentence was doubtful; nevertheless Dame Griffinda crossed herself, groaned aloud, and would most certainly have commenced a very edifying sermon of reproof to her master, for the profane alternative she suspected him of preferring, but he had quitted her presence, and was already proceeding toward the village with huge strides.

His purpose was to pay a domiciliary visit to the rich vintner, Mar-

tin Alvariz, and to call him to account for the insult his son and nephew had put upon his family, in aspiring to become the husbands of two of his daughters; but on the way, he chanced to encounter the Count de Romana, mounted on a very handsome mule, and attended by two black servants.

“Ha!” cried Don Froila, flourishing out his rapier, and placing himself in an attitude of offence—“Ha! thou base spoiler, what hast thou done with my property?”

“Thy property, vile Goth?” retorted the Count de Romana, who supposed Don Froila alluded to the lands that had for so many generations been a bone of contention between the rival houses of Toros and Romana. “I have taken nought but that which was mine own; and that I am ready to defend to the last gasp, for my title is as good as thine, yea, better, and that thou knowest; for the original possessor whoever he was, being slain by one of my family, it was mine by right of conquest;—whereas thou couldst only claim it in the way of robbery.”

“Oh heaven!” cried Don Froila, “to think of the outrageous villany of first stealing my property, and then rebutting the charge of robbery upon me.”

“Only prove that you obtained it either by grant, will, or honest purchase, and I am ready to yield it up to you without another word, albeit I have the power of detaining it with a powerful hand, against all legal proceedings that you may think proper to institute for the recovery of the same,” said the Count de Romana.

Don Froila was a little posed at this, for it was something difficult to prove his legal title to Zegriz, of whom he imagined the Count de Romana as well as himself was talking; nevertheless, being resolved not to resign the precious steed, for want of words, he assumed a more wrathful tone, and evading the indefensible point on which he fancied he had been so shrewdly pressed, exclaimed, “Thou mightest have been content, insatiable spoiler, with depriving me of mine inheritance, without meanly robbing me of my horse.”

“Thy horse, Don Froila!” echoed the Count de Romana, contemptuously, “thou art dreaming, sure, or mad, to talk of thy horse, when to my certain knowledge thou hast not been worth such a thing for the last thirty years.”

• “Villain, thou liest!” exclaimed Don Froila, passionately; “last night thou or thy sons, but belike all three, were concerned in the trans-

action, entered mine own stable, and robbed me of the noblest black barb in Christendom."

"An' a sane man had uttered the wordes thou hast spoken, they had been his last," returned the Count de Romana, sternly, laying his hand on his sword, "but thou art under the influence of some crack-brain fantasy, therefore I heed not thy folly."

"Is it a crack-brain fantasy of mine own, that thou wert seen on my territory last night, without leave or license, Sir Count?" demanded Don Froila, fiercely, "and since thou hast not the hardihood to deny the fact, I ask thee what was thy business there?"

"My business there, Count de Toros, if indeed thou art a stranger to it, was to call my two worthless sons to account for their folly, in dangleing after two of the penniless damsels thy daughters, who I find have been cunning enough to entangle the unwary boys in the meshes of their enchantments, whether with thy sanction or otherwise, I know not."

"Then let this token of my affection for the family of Romana decide the problem," exclaimed Don Froila, fiercely springing upon the count, and twisting him out of his saddle. "Know, Count de Romana," he continued, after he had flung his astonished enemy with violence to the ground, "that I would sooner follow the best loved of my children to the grave, yea, see them the wives of Moors and renegades, than permit one drop of the blood of Toros to be mingled with the hated stream that flows through the veins of a Romana."

One of the Count de Romana's servants flew to revenge the insult his lord had just received, the other assisted him to rise, and then all three, without paying the slightest regard to the laws of chivalry, which utterly forbid such unequal combats, attacked Don Froila.

Don Froila was a sturdy champion still, and a perfect master of his weapon, but the odds were so much against him, that in all probability he would have been very roughly handled, had not his good angel sent him an able ally, in the shape of Perez Silva, who was driving a fat bullock to market, and chancing to come in sight at this critical moment, flew to the assistance of Don Froila, exclaiming—

"Three against one, and he an old man too; never let the Moors hear of it, for the honòr of Leon!" he then laid about him to right and left with his bullock-goad, so manfully that the servants of Count Romana were fain to cry for quarter, and humbly to request permission to assist their vanquished lord to remount his mule.

"No, no!" replied Don Froila, I shall take that mule in pledge till your master think proper to restore the matchless black barb, with all its rich furniture, of which either he, or one of his fine sons, thought proper to rob me last night."

"It is a villanous pretext, devised for no other purpose than to deprive me of my good mule," said the Count de Romana, "how shouldst thou come by a matchless black barb, with rich furniture, who art not worth so much as an ass with a pannel?"

"Of that I am not compelled to give an account to thee," retorted Don Froila.

"Sir Count," said Perez Silva, "may I ask if the black barb, whereof you speak, had a white star in the center of his forehead?"

"He had," replied Don Froila, "but wherefore do you ask?"

"Because, my lord, this very morning at peep of dawn, I espied a Moorish cavalier, richly dressed, but without a turban, riding at fiery speed on such a steed as you describe, across the plain to the east of the castle; by the token that I had my bow in my hand, and launched a shaft after him at a venture, thinking to lodge it between his shoulders; but it fell far short of the mark, for he almost outstripped the wind, at the rate at which he rode. Ah, that black barb was a steed meet for St. George to charge the dragon upon, and as for his price, he must be worth a king's ransom."

"Have you any suspicion, young man, that the Moor whom you saw issued from my castle?" said Don Froila.

"My lord, I had every reason to suppose he did," replied Perez, "for the castle gates were open, which is an unusual thing at that early hour; I took the liberty of entering, to assure myself that everything was safe within, which being the case, I did not alarm you,—but the stable door was also open, and I noticed the fresh print of horses' hoofs upon the turf; so not being at all aware, my lord count, that you had a horse of your own, I concluded that one of the vile crew of misbelieving robbers, with whom Heaven, as a punishment for the crimes of Don Roderic, hath afflicted Spain, had been paying your castle a visit of espial, and it was my purpose to wait upon your lordship to advertise you of the same, as soon as I thought it would be convenient for you to receive a visiter."

"A visiter! humph!" muttered Don Froila, scanning his brave preserver from head to foot, as the recollection of Dame Griffinda's information respecting his audacious courtship of one of his daughters flash-

ed upon his mind, and he would undoubtedly have made some ungracious rejoinder in reply to his courteous speech, had he not been interrupted by the Count de Romana, demanding the restitution of his mule and its furniture.

"For," said the count, "you can have no color for attempting to detain him, now you have heard that your Moorish visiter hath departed on his own steed, the noble black barb whereof you boasted yourself so loftily."

Don Froila had no better reply to this inuendo, than laying his hand significantly on his rapier; but at the same time he thought proper to relinquish the bridle rein of the count's mule, and turning sullenly about, began to retrace his steps to his own castle. Perez begged leave to attend him, and resigning the guidance of his fat bullock to a peasant of his acquaintance who was passing that way, he walked respectfully by the side of Don Froila, keeping one step in the rear, lest he should give cause of offence to his haughty neighbor, by appearing to put himself on anything like a footing of equality with him.

"Thou art a brave young fellow, and I am obliged to thee for the assistance thou hast rendered me, friend," said the count, who, though he knew Perez Silva very well, never condescended to remember the names of farmers or mechanics.

"My name is Perez Silva, so please your lordship," said the young man.

"Humph! Perez Silva, is it? And pray, Senor Perez, what business had you in my orchard last night?" said Don Froila.

Perez blushed deeply, but as he was a fine manly fellow, who never engaged in anything that he was ashamed of owning, he frankly confessed his love for the lady Blanche and earnestly supplicated Don Froila to bestow her upon him for a wife.

"Bestow a daughter of mine upon thee for a wife?" echoed the count, haughtily stepping back, and surveying the young man from head to foot, with a glance of superlative contempt. "No, no, Senor Perez, my daughters are noble, and wed not with men who drive fat bullocks to market. Fallen as the fortunes of Toros are, we cannot degrade our high blood with plebeian alliances."

"There be some of the nobles of Leon and Asturias, whose grandfathers boasted no better lineage than myself," replied Perez.

"Aye, aye, friend Perez, but they won their knightly crests and

noble blazonry, for their shields and surcoats, in the defence of their country, under the banners of Pelayo, the deliverer of the Asturias. When thou and thy vintner cousin come as belted knights to ask me for brides, I shall not question your pedigrees, believe me, but receive ye as the founders of a race of true nobility, and meet to be the sons-in-law of the Count de Toros. Natheless, ye shall find it a better calling to till the land, and fatten beeves for market; yea, or to buy wine by the tun, and vend it forth to sots by the measure; than to draw the sword in the cause of an ungrateful country: therefore, good Perez, pursue thine industrious calling, and grow rich by it honestly, if thou canst; but never lift thine eyes so much above thee for the future, as to think of wedding with the daughter of a Gothic count."

Don Froila then turned his back on his gallant preserver, and took the road to his own castle, leaving the young man to meditate on the wholesome advice with which he had favored him, and to marvel at the obliging manner in which the ancient nobility of Leon received proposals of marriage for their daughters from persons of inferior birth.

CHAPTER XIX.

"All my pretty ones?
Did you say what, all?
At one fell swoop——"

SHAKSPEARE.

The Count de Romana was excessively enraged at the affront he had received from Don Froila, and the more so because, when he related the matter to his sons, they did not appear to conceive any particular resentment against Don Froila. Moreover, they listened in profound silence to all their father's angry injunctions for them to

break off all intercourse with the daughters of their impoverished but insolent foe, and it was very evident, from their looks and manners, that they did not mean to do any such thing.

They were, however, visibly uneasy, when the Count de Romana mentioned the circumstance of the black barb, (respecting which Don Froila had raised so extraordinary a rout,) and the Moorish cavalier its master, who their father boldly asserted had been concealed in the castle of Toros.

Now Marcian and Antonio de Romana were the very persons who had in the first instance attacked and wounded Abdalix, in consequences of having encountered him in the vicinity of the castle one evening, when they were preparing to treat the ladies of their hearts with a second serenade, and they were quite certain the noble black barb must have belonged to him. They had vainly searched for his body the following day, but neither finding him nor his horse, they concluded he was not so badly hurt as they had supposed, and had escaped; but, now it was evident that he had found a refuge in the castle of Toros. By whom, then, they asked themselves, had he been concealed? Not by Don Froila, certainly; his hatred to the Moors was too well known, besides he was not a person by any means addicted to the practice of romantic generosity. It must, therefore, have been some of the gentle damsels, to whom the handsome infidel was indebted for shelter and succor, during several days of sojourn in the castle of Toros.

Which of the maidens could it have been? they asked each other, as soon as they were alone; and, like jealous, wrong-headed lovers as they were, they must needs fancy it could only be one or both of the incomparable beauties whom they honored with their regard; who had so far forgotten the decorum and duty of daughters of Leon, and the immaculate propriety to be expected from *queridas* of cavaliers of the noble house of Romana, as to harbor a young Moor, clandestinely. Aye, and to attend upon, and cherish him in his sickness, to play the tender offices of chirurgeons and nurses, to watch over him by night as well as by day, and to soothe and support him whenever it pleased him to require their gentle aid. In short, these two foolish young noblemen tormented themselves into a perfect frenzy, with their groundless suspicions; but the worst of it is jealous lovers are seldom contented with tormenting themselves alone; so the next time they met their fair friends, they demeaned themselves very strangely, and threw out so many injurious hints and dark insinuations, that the maidens, being

very high-spirited, and ten degrees prouder than themselves, took fire, and concluding they behaved in that unaccountably offensive way as a pretext for a quarrel, determined to beforehand with them, and forbade them their presence.

Neither Marcian nor Antonio had dreamed of matters coming to such a conclusion as a final separation, but they were too sullen to offer concessions, and so they parted. Averted looks, or resentful glances, and gestures indicative of disdain, whenever, by chance, they encountered each other, superseded the silent communings of mute eloquence which they were wont mutually to exchange when they met in public, and now they never met otherwise; and their whole study appeared to be, how to render each other miserable.

Seraphina and Aurora believed they were objects not merely of indifference, but hatred to their late lovers, who, for their parts, were firmly persuaded that they had been successfully rivaled by the vile Moor. So inconsistent were they in their jealous fancies, that they also suspected their charmers of injuriously preferring Perez Silva and Gaston Alvarez to them. They kept, in fact, so sedulous a watch upon the movements of these humble lovers, that they were very rarely able to obtain interviews with the real objects of their affection, Blanche and Orelia.

Meanwhile the evening walks and nocturnal perambulations of the two Romanas, in the vicinity of Castle Toros, being observed and duly enlarged upon by village gossips, and repeated with important additions to the count, their father, that prudent nobleman took the alarm; for nothing in the world was so distasteful to him as the idea of a marriage between the daughters of Don Froila, and his two only sons. His was a rising family, that amidst all chances which had befallen the kingdom of Leon had maintained its wealth and importance because the heirs had always married rich wives. He had but two sons, and that they should both have so far departed from the laudable custom of their ancestor, as to contemplate wedding with girls who had neither money nor powerful connection to recommend them, filled the Count de Romana with the most lively indignation.

The young men appeared deaf to all his remonstrances, for, to acknowledge the truth, they were too proud to tell their father they had quarreled with the interdicted damsels; so, one fine morning, the Count de Romana, without giving his sons or servants any previous notice of his intentions, ordered steeds to be saddled, and commanded

the young gentlemen to mount and attend him to the count of Leon ; and gave directions for their servants to follow with their clothes and other baggage on sumpter mules. Marcian looked at Antonio, and Antonio at Marcian ; they offered some faint objections to the journey, which were sternly silenced by the old count, so they had no remedy but submission

When the Count de Romana arrived at the royal city of Leon, and went to pay his respects to the king, with whom he was a mighty favorite, he found his majesty, Don Aurelio, in a great pucker ; for the Moors had suddenly broken the truce that he had patched up with them, when he first came to the throne, crossed the frontier, taken several of his towns, and threatened to lay the whole kingdom of Leon waste, with fire and sword, unless he agreed to the most monstrous and insolent demand that ever was made by infidels to a Christian prince.

“ Your majesty is ill prepared for war,” said the Count de Romana, “ what is their demand ?”

“ Oh, my dear Romana, ask me not,” replied the king, “ for, as I am a sinner, every hair of my head has stood on end, with consternation, ever since the insolent alternative has been proposed to me by the ambassadors of that accursed pagan the Emir Aben Alfaje, who hath had the impudence to assume the title of King of Sansuenna, as he calls our royal city of Saragossa. Would you believe it, nothing will suit his heathen fancy, but a yearly tribute of a hundred of the fairest virgins in Leon ; and how I am to obtain them for him I know not.”

A wicked thought, which doubtless, was a suggestion of the evil one, crossed the mind of the Count de Romana at these words ; and looking significantly at the king, he replied :—

“ If a few damsels are all Aben Alfaje be raising this coil about, ’twere pity but he had them. There be more girls in Leon than can find husbands, I trow. I know a crazy old hidalgo, who has ten of the loveliest daughters that ever eyes looked upon, and scarcely a slice of pannic bread a day to feed them.”

“ Do you think he would contribute one or two of them, to assist in purchasing peace for his unfortunate country ?” asked the king.

“ He is so choleric and contentious, my lord, that I am persuaded he would object to any thing he was asked to do, however reasonable,” replied the wily count ; “ but I am sure if all the damsels were taken by stealth, he would not break his heart about the matter ; for, to my

certain knowledge, he is always lamenting his hard fate in being saddled with so many portionless, useless girls."

"And who is this father of many daughters?" asked the king.

"Don Froila de Toros," returned the count.

"Alack," replied the king, "he saved my life once in battle, I surely ought not to make so evil a return, for that service, as to give his fair daughters to our Moorish enemies."

"May it please your majesty, it would be the greatest favor you could do the crusty old don, for, as I said before, he considers them as a terrible incumbrance, and he has one little son, on whom he doats to absolute folly. So if you take away the girls, you will release him from a great deal of care and trouble," said the Count de Romana.

Now, every one who reads the Chronicles of Spain is aware, that this Don Aurelio was one of the weakest and wickedest of men, as well as the worst of sovereigns; so, after a few faint objections, which he permitted the contemptible sophistry of the artful Romana to overrule, he agreed, that a disgraceful peace for Leon should be purchased by the iniquitous sacrifice, which the licentious infidels had dared to demand of a Christian king.

The daughters of Don Froila were placed at the head of the devoted list of virgin victims. Their brave father, though he had never testified much affection for the damsels, would have defended them with the fury of a tiger, had he been aware of the peril that impended over them; but he was beguiled from his own castle by a forged letter, importing that a wealthy cousin of his, in the sixth degree, who resided at a distant part of the kingdom, had died suddenly, leaving him heir to all his substance.

Poor Don Froila! I will not repeat his sayings on being first made acquainted with this unexpected luck; certain it is, that unwilling as he was to believe in its reality, he had a sort of vague foreboding that it was of a delusive nature, and he kept repeating to himself, "that the news was too good to be true, since nothing but evil ever had befallen him from his youth upward." Nevertheless, he hesitated not to set out on his journey, to take possession of his imaginary wealth; and no sooner was he fairly departed, than the royal authorities entered his domicile, and in spite of entreaties, tears, and cries, carried off the ten noble maidens, his daughters, in the name of the king, to assist in making up the quota of Spanish damsels demanded by the Moors.

The ambassadors of Aben Alfaje had explicitly specified that ten, at

least, of the number should be noble and of Gothic blood, with fair hair and blue eyes, which were, in those days, as characteristic of that illustrious descent, as the peculiar swarthiness of complexion is now considered indicative of the taint of a Moorish ancestry.

The daughters of Don Froila were all fair beauties, but all differing from each other in the color of their hair, which in one was of the palest hue of flaxen, in another of light brown, rich golden, or,—in short, varying through all the shades of amber or auburn. It would have been difficult to find ten beautiful maidens, with complexions of so many grades of fairness, or so likely to please the dark-browed infidels.

The Count de Romana had never been able to ascertain to which of the damsels of Toros Marcian and Antonio had attached themselves, therefore, to preclude the possibility of a mistake, he had urged Don Aurelio to the barbarity of seizing them all. So thoroughly ashamed were all the nobles of Leon and Asturias, of the disgraceful terms of pacification, into which their despicable sovereign had entered, with the Moors, that no one but the Count de Romana would condescend to undertake the base office of delivering the hapless victims into the hands of the cruel infidels. As for the Count de Romana, he was too deeply set on preventing the possibility of a marriage between his sons and the daughters of his foe, to hesitate, on account of the odium he would incur from all good men, in carrying his wicket project through. Wherefore, shutting his ears to the shrieks, reproaches, and lamentations of a hundred of the fairest damsels in Christendom, he conducted them to the Moorish frontier, where, after taking a full and satisfactory receipt for them, from Muley Hassan, the officer appointed to receive the lovely tribute, he resigned them to his tender mercies, and returned to the court of Don Aurelio, exulting in the success of his iniquity.

CHAPTER XX.

“For to be wroth with those we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.”

The lovely sisters of Toros were separated from the rest of the tribute maidens, closely veiled and conveyed in a covered carriage to the royal city of Sarpagossa, or Sansuenna, as it was styled by the Moors, who had recently erected it into a kingdom, under the powerful emir, Aben Alfaje.

It was to no purpose that our unfortunate damsels protested against the wrong that had been perpetrated in tearing them from their paternal home, and enquired for what purpose they were hurried along after such a strange fashion. They were surrounded by those, who neither understood nor heeded their reproaches, and whose language would have been unintelligible to them even had they been disposed to answer them. Unacquainted with aught beyond the narrow confines of their native village, it was evident, even to their inexperienced eyes, from the appearance of mosques and minarets, and, above all, from the dark complexions, turbans, and flowing garments of those by whom they were guarded, that the worst of all possible calamities that could happen to Spanish maidens had befallen them—they were in the hands of the Moors.

The conviction of this terrible fact plunged them into the deepest consternation, and scarcely did the despair of the four whose hearts were given to Spanish lovers exceed the distress of their sisters, at the apprehension of the direful fate that awaited them; from the eldest to the youngest they did nothing but weep and lament themselves. Aurora and Seraphina called on the Romanas—Blanche and Orelia on Perez Silva and his cousin,—Christina thought on Abdalix, and was silent. The sight of a populous and splendid city, like Saragossa, with its marble dome, gilded balconies, and beautiful bazaars, under other circumstances would have excited the most lively feelings of admiration and delight in girls, who had never seen a nobler building than the convent of Santa Clara, and its heavy ill-built little church; or a finer specimen of a square than the old-shaped market-place of their native village; but Saragossa with all its magnificence, was a strong-hold of the infidels, and therefore was regarded by them with horror and aversion.

The castle of Aljaferia, which was the royal residence of Aben Alfaje, was the place of their destination. They were received with great demonstrations of respect, by the black officers of the harem, and conducted to the women's apartments. Female slaves immediately appeared, laden with rich apparel, and offered to lead them to the bath, but the damsels behaved in a very refractory manner, for all they would do was to weep and cling together, positively refusing to bathe, or adorn themselves in the Moorish fashion.

It was to no purpose that the slaves, who knew not what to make of such strange perversity, displayed robes of the most splendid material and graceful pattern, significantly pointing out in dumb show, the contrast between their homely garments and the beautiful caftans and rich shawls, adorned with the most costly embroidery; or held up strings of oriental pearls for the wrist, precious stones for bracelets of the arms, and turbans of gold and silver tissue, glittering with gems of every color; the Christian captives appeared to regard these envied treasures with indifference; nay, worse than that, for when one of the officious attendants obtruded some of the most tempting of these articles, rather too intrusively on the attention of the weeping Seraphina, that damsel actually dashed an armful of finery, which the daughter of an emperor might have envied, on the ground, and contemptuously trampled turbans, jeweled aigrettes, and shawls of Agra and Thibet, under her feet. All the other damsels, except the pale melancholy

Christina followed her example, and, as may be supposed, raised a pretty confusion in the harem. The slaves shrieked in consternation at this sight, and called on Alla and their prophet to defend them from damsels who could treat such invaluable dresses so unkindly. The mutes stamped, and gnashed their huge white teeth, the monkeys chattered and capered about with delight, the paroquets and macaws, screamed, the governante of king Abin Alfajee's women scolded, and Ferrau, the chief officer of the harem, made his appearance with a great stick in his huge black paw, with which he very unjustly belabored monkeys and mussulman slaves, but contented himself with merely shaking it, with a menacing air, at the ten Christian damsels, who had been the cause of the tumult.

The elder damsels were indignant, the younger terrified, but Laura and Beatrice having a keen perception for the ridiculous, burst into an immoderate shout of laughter, and their mirth proved so infectious, that all the sisters at length joined in it, except Christina, who stood with folded arms, sad and silent as a monumental figure, apparently unconscious of anything that was passing. When Ferrau perceived that she neither joined in the defiance, nor entered into the insulting mirth of the other nine, he exclaimed in a very pompous tone,

"Blessed be Allah, and the caliph, there is one dove among all these jer-falcons, whom my lord Aben Alfaje hath wrung from the Christian dog Aurelio, for the confusion of the officers of his harem; but as there is nothing so corrupting as evil company, I shall forthwith separate her from the rest of her sisters, and place her in the pleasantest apartment of the harem, that is not occupied by our sovereign lady the queen."

"You mean the pavilion of mirrors, that looketh into the garden of roses, and pomegranate trees, Ferrau," said his female colleague, Keturah.

Ferrau nodded his head, and pointing to the other nine damsels, said, "They must all be parted, or by the head of the prophet they will make our coffee too hot to drink, if they remain together; but as for this pearl of price, who if she would but raise those humid stars her eyes from the earth, would be the fairest women to look upon in the whole harem, she must be dealt with very gently I perceive, and I shall take her under my especial care:" so saying, he advanced to Christina, and after making the accustomed obeisance, he offered her his hand to lead her to the pavilion of mirrors.

Christina, unacquainted with the forms and ceremonies observed in

a Moorish harem, took it into her head, that this hideous black wretch, who assumed such authoritative airs, must be the terrible Aben Alfaje himself, who was courting her after a heathenish fashion, to become his sultana, uttered a piercing shriek and clung to her sister Seraphina for protection, who, though she rather suspected the same thing, was only restrained, by her reluctance to touch anything so ugly, from cuffing him heartily. As for Laura and Beatrice, they actually flung their new slippers at his head, instead of putting them on, and then fled into the bath-room, to avoid his vengeance.

Ferrau shook his stick with a menacing gesture, which had the effect of frightening the other sisters to seek the same place of refuge. Christina was following them, but Kettura detained her by her garments, and Ferrau immediately cut off all communication with the fugitives, by shutting them into the bath-room, and then directed the female slaves to remove the fair Christina to her new abode. This was not effected without difficulty, for when she found it was the intention of Ferrau and his coadjutors to separate her from her sisters, she shrieked aloud, and offered all the resistance in her feeble power to their design, till at length, exhausted with her ineffectual struggles, she sunk upon the floor in a state of insensibility.

"Oh, Alla!" cried Ferrau, "what is to be done now with the precious damsel?"

"That which we were desirous of doing to be sure," returned Kettura, "and a very good opportunity it will be for removing her, now she is, praise be to Alla! quiet for a little while."

"Good," said Ferrau, taking the unconscious girl in arms, and attended by some of the female slaves, conveyed her to the magnificent apartments devoted to her use. He then left her to the care of an old Spanish slave, named Lorenca, and charged her to see that the fair captive was adorned after the Moorish fashion, in some of the costly and rich ornaments that had been provided for her.

When Christina, on reviving, found herself separated from all her sisters and surrounded by strange faces, she gave way to the most passionate lamentations. Lorenca approached her, and tenderly addressed some soothing expressions to her in the Spanish tongue.

At that dear familiar sound, the fair captive, flinging her arms about Lorenca, exclaimed:—

"I am your countrywoman, save me for the love of the blessed virgin."

But Lorenca was a renegade, and cared nothing for the holy virgin ; all she thought of, was how to gain presents and favor from her Moorish lord ; so she assured Christina that she had nothing to fear, and that it only rested with herself to be the happiest person in the world.

“ Oh Heaven !” cried the weeping damsel, “ how can that be, when I am torn from my own country, separated from my father and my beloved sisters, and betrayed into the hands of the most hideous black infidel in the world ? I believe Sathanas himself to be a more amiable personage than Aben Alfaje, and I would as soon behold him with horns and hoofs and fiery claws, as be compelled to look upon that horrible pagan again.”

“ But, my child, you have not yet even seen our mighty lord, Aben Alfaje, and he is a very handsome man.”

“ Handsome !” echoed Christina, holding up her hands, “ he looked a lovely object, certainly, shaking a great stick at noble damsels, and beating his female slaves ; to say nothing of the poor monkeys and parrots.”

“ Is it possible,” said Lorenca, bursting into an immoderate fit of laughter, “ that you could possibly mistake that frightful creature Ferrau for our mighty lord, Aben Alfaje ? who, although he is not young, is remarkable for his personal advantages ; and were he dressed after the fashion of our country, you would not know him from a dark-complexioned Spanish cavalier.”

“ And is not that dreadful monster, Ferrau, the lord of this place and my master !” asked Christina.

“ He is only the chief officer of Aben Alfaje’s harem, and nothing more than an Ethiop slave ; and if he have displeased you, you have nothing in the world to do, but to behave yourself agreeably to your lord, when he comes to pay you a visit, and you can get him punished for it, with as many strokes of the bastinado as you think proper to demand : and as Ferrau is a very uncourteous fellow, and often beat the female slaves, I think you would be wrong to ask for less than a hundred, which will be a great satisfaction to all the ladies of the harem.”

Sorrowful as Christina was, she could not forbear from smiling at the earnestness, with which Lorenca continued to urge her to exert influence over a person whom she had never seen, for the sake of caus-

ing a severe chastisement to be inflicted on Ferrau, who, she perceived, did not stand very high in her good graces.

Lorenca having persuaded the fair captive to enter the bath, and then, notwithstanding all her reluctance to adopt the fashion of the Moorish women, she, by artfully removing Christina's clothes, compelled her to array herself in the splendid dress provided for her use, though the maiden bitterly reproached her countrywoman all the time she was assisting at her toilet, with the trick played her; and when Lorenca brought her a turban of gold, and azure-coloured gauze, adorned with a plume of feathers, supported by an aigrette of oriental rubies, she positively refused to wear it, because it was so peculiarly a badge of Mussulman costume.

"You are right my child," said Lorenca, carefully arranging Christina's rich flaxen tresses, as she spoke, "you are perfectly right, it would have been in very heathenish taste had you covered these exquisite ringlets with a turban. They are, truly, more ornamental than the richest diadem that ever sparkled on a royal brow.

Christina blushed, and reproved her country-woman for this flattery.

"Flattery!" exclaimed Lorenca, "come to the mirror, and judge for yourself."

Christina, who had scarcely ever beheld her own reflection, save in the watery mirror of a fountain or pastoral brook, absolutely started in surprise and admiration, at the lovely image that met her gaze in one of the polished glass pannels of the saloon. She blushed more deeply than before, and turned away, scarcely believing that it was her own reflection on which she looked; but another and another pannel presented the same graceful figure and enchanting features to her glance, and look whichever way she would, she beheld it multiplied by the numerous mirrors that adorned the magnificent apartment. For the first time in her life, Christina was conscious of her own beauty, and aware of the advantages derived from dress; she fancied it must be the richness of the string of pearls with which they were adorned, that lent the exquisite fairness to her bosom and arms, which she had never before observed; the flowing robe and closely fitting caftan, with their costly broderies and purfling, that set off her tall light form to such peculiar advantage; and she could not help saying, in the simplicity of her heart,—

“How would my pretty sisters look in these things if they become me so well?”

“They would none look like you, my fair mistress,” said Lorenca, “for it is you that become the dress, not the dress you. But hold, these luxuriant tresses, beautiful as they are, must not be permitted to hide the graceful outline of the throat and shoulders.”

She gathered the silken ringlets together, and wreathing them in a knotted cluster on the top of Christina’s head, fastened them with a golden bodkin.

Christina passively submitted to every change her skilful tirewoman thought proper to make in her costume, scarcely conscious of what she was about, for her thoughts were far distant. They had been transported by the mysterious power of association of ideas, from the lovely reflection which the surrounding mirrors presented to her gaze, to the faithless Abdaliz. Indeed, I have been told, that it is the most natural thing in the world for a lady, when she looks in the glass, to think of her lover.

Lorenca having finished her task, glided from the richly carpeted saloon with noiseless steps, as if fearful of disturbing the tender reverie into which her new mistress had fallen. Christina still absorbed in her melancholy musings, remained with her eyes mechanically fixed on her own shadowed resemblance in the mirror opposite to which she stood. It was not from vanity that she continued so steadfastly to regard it; for as I said before, her thoughts were now abstracted from the things that were present to the outward organ of sight. So much was this the case, that when the tenor of her musings at length suffused her soft blue eyes with tears, she started, on observing that the lovely image in the mirror appeared to weep.

Everything around Christina seemed to her excited fancy and inexperienced mind, the work of enchantment, so different was it from the gloom and desolation of the only home she had ever known. When she surveyed the magnificent apartment, with its gilded cornices, crimson draperies and sofas, and almodas covered with the richest satin, wrought in the most elegant patterns of needle-work; tables of ebony, inlaid with ivory and gold, and vases of many colored china, filled with flowers exhaling the most delicious perfumes; she could not help thinking of the smouldering walls, tattered and half-furnished rooms of Castle Toros; and marvelling at the luxuries by which she was surrounded here. The very floors were spread with carpets so

beautiful, that the fair captive, who had never seen anything but rushes used for such a purpose, almost feared to set her foot upon them.

This magnificent apartment opened into another paved with tessellated marble, in the centre of which a fountain of rose-water threw its fantastic showers of cooling fragrance perpetually around.

The weak spirits of Christina were overpowered with this excess of lavish magnificence, and she began at length to fancy herself under the influence of a dream, or in the palace of the fairy Morgana, or the enchantress Urganda, with whose spells the legends of her native land teemed; and then she looked upon her own rich but strange array, till she almost doubted her own identity.

Lorenca presently returned, followed by two other slaves bearing coffee and other refreshments, of which Christina was persuaded to partake. After the slaves had withdrawn, she enquired for her sisters and requested to be restored to their beloved society.

Lorenca shook her head, and assured her that particular orders had been given to separate her from them.

"Ah, that wicked Aben Alfaje!" sobbed Christina, "how unfortunate I have been to attract his regard."

"His regard!—the regard of my lord Aben Alfaje!" said Lorenca. "No, no, my pretty *senorita*, you must not suppose your charms have wrought any such miracle, he is so devoted to Lela Marien, the queen, that he never so much as looks at another woman."

"Why then does he shut up so many unhappy ladies in his harem?" asked Christina in surprise.

"As a matter of state all Mussulman sovereigns must have a harem and so of course Aben Alfaje has; but it is only his nominally, for he lives with his beloved queen (who, by the by, is a Spanish lady) in the pavilion of gardens, and never enters this place, which, in reality, belongs to his eldest son," said Lorenca.

"And this son?" said Christina.

"Though a Moor," pursued Lorenca, "is one of the handsomest princes in the world. He has lately been very ill, and on his recovery became dissatisfied with the ladies of the harem, and requested his father to procure him damsels of Leon; and as Aben Alfaje can refuse him nothing, he extorted a tribute of a hundred beautiful maidens of that country, from Don Aurelio, on account of the precious whim of Prince Abdaliz."

"Abdaliz!" exclaimed Christina, starting from the silken couch, on

which she had only a moment before flung herself, "is it my Abdaliz, whom you mean?"

"Your Abdaliz?" said Lorenca, "aye, Abdaliz, your lord."

She had no time for further explanation, for the folding doors of the apartment were thrown open by Ferrau, who, motioning to Lorenca to withdraw, exclaimed:—

"Our puissant lord, Prince Abdaliz, hath come to visit his fair Christian slave."

Christina's heart fluttered almost to bursting. She threw a terrified yet eager glance of expectation toward the portal, while awaiting the approach of the person who had been so thrillingly announced.

He entered—for it was no other than the very Abdaliz whose image was ever present to her mind—he entered not with the doubtful mein of a penitent lover, who dreads his offended lady's frown, but with the proud step and audacious bearing of a conqueror. His cheek that was so deadly pale when last she looked upon it, was flushed with glowing crimson, and his dark eyes flashed upon her with exulting glances of undisguised triumph.

The roseate blush with which Christina's fair face was suffused, on recognising those unforgotten features, faded when she encountered his first look, and she instinctively receded a step backward.

"My life! my soul!" exclaimed Abdaliz, extending his arms toward her, "I have shaken the throne of Leon to obtain thee, and wouldst thou fly me?"

"Perfidious infidel!" she replied, "foe to my country and my God! how didst thou expect to be received by her whom thou hast cruelly torn from the home of her childhood and her sire?"

"Beloved of the soul of Abdaliz! I expected to be received as the lord of thy destiny and thy love," returned the Moor.

"The Lord of *my* destiny," she replied, "is He, who from the throne of his almighty power beholds us both at this moment, and will judge between me and thee, ungrateful Abdaliz."

"Ha!" he exclaimed, grasping her hands passionately in his, "wouldst thou reproach me with the services thou hast rendered me, proud maid?"

Christina's only reply was a burst of tears.

"By Alla!" continued the Moor, vehemently, "I believe thou dost repent of having saved my life."

My sisters and my countrywomen will have reason to reproach me

for it," she replied, "and well thou knowest that it was in an evil hour for myself, that e'er I saw thee, false Moor!" she continued, weeping.

"Light of mine eyes!" exclaimed Abdaliz, "I charge thee by all our love, to dry up those perverse tears and smile upon me."

"Our love," repeated Christina indignantly, "how darest thou to suppose I love thee, misbeliever?"

"Aye! now you rail, I know it!" said Abdaliz, "for it is the fashion of your countrywomen so to treat their slavish lovers, but I have not been used to brook such usage; I have hitherto wooed as a master, and as such, proud Christian, you must consider me."

"I do," replied Christina, "nay more, as a tyrant and a jailor; but, Abdaliz, as a lover, never! Heaven has made you an instrument of punishment to me for having once regarded you as such,—but that is past."

"Punishment!" said Abdaliz, scornfully. "Wherein have you been punished? Is it in being removed from the gloomy shadow of the black pile of ruins which you called your father's castle, where you fared hardly, and were clothed in garments coarser than I permit the humblest of my slaves to wear in my presence?"

"Insulting pagan, restore them to me, and take back these gilded fetters, wherewith I have permitted myself to be profaned," said Christina, tearing the jewels from her arms and bosom, and casting them at his feet.

Abdaliz was not prepared for such demonstrations of lofty spirit on the part of the soft gentle girl, who had watched his feverish bed with a tenderness such as he had never experienced from woman before. He perceived that he had been guilty of an error in attempting to awe her into submission; and out of humor both with himself and her, though at the same time too haughty to retract or apologise for his injurious treatment, he cast a sullen glance of displeasure upon Christina, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XXI

“Have at you with a night spell then.
 Be thou a ghost that cannot rest,
 Or a shadow of the blessed?”

OLD PLAY—MONSIEUR THOMAS.

When Don Froila reached the city of Oviedo, and proceeded to the residence of Don Hermenric Rodrigo, his sixth cousin, (who was in his way as queer a person as himself,) a well clad and well armed porter enquired his business at the gate.

“Fellow,” said Don Froila, “I am the Count de Toros, heir to your late master, whose soul may God assoilzie ! and I am come to take possession of this house, and all the rest of the effects, which he had most beneficently bequeathed to me, for the which charity, may his taste of purgatory be brief, and his happiness in paradise everlasting—Benedicate !”

“My good senor, you must have mistaken the house,” said the porter, “my master Don Hermenric Rodrigo, praise be to the saints ! is in excellent health, and his soul is in no need of any man’s prayers at this time.”

“Diablos !” cried Don Froila, “do you mean to say that my sixth cousin, whose happy death and testation in my favor, the *Escribana* of this town hath announced to me, by letter, is still living ?”

“Most assuredly, senor,” said the porter, “and if I were my worthy master, I would go to the *Escribana’s* stall, and cudgel¹ him soundly for reporting him as otherwise.”

“Only tell me where the dog abides, and I will do it myself,” cried Don Froila; “by St. Bartholomew! I will strip his skin over his ears, for daring to offer such an affront to a nobleman, and a soldier withal, as to write so base a fiction to him.”

While they were thus discussing the matter, Don Hermenric himself came up to the door, and saluting Don Froila, with some surprise, asked him,—

“To what he owed so unexpected a pleasure, as the sight of him in Oviedo?”

“If it be a pleasure,” groaned Don Froila, “I am sorry to say it is not reciprocal; because, my good cousin, I was brought to Oviedo by a false report of your death.”

“Of my death, i’ faith!” said Hermenric, laughing, “then I am sure, in common courtesy, you ought to be very happy to find me alive and well.”

“On the contrary, I am greatly afflicted; because I was further informed that you had made me your heir, or else, believe me, Don Hermenric, I had never taken the trouble of so long a journey, to say nothing of the expense,” returned Don Froila.

“Don Froila, your candor positively charms me,” said Don Hermenric, “but as you have come so far, I must insist on entertaining you for a few days, during which I hope to lessen your regrets at finding me in the land of the living.”

So saying, he took his malcontent kinsman by the arm, and compelled him to enter his handsome, commodious palace, without paying any attention to the ungracious reluctance testified by him to accept his frank invitation.

Many a long year was it since Don Froila had partaken of such a dinner, or tasted such wines, as were produced for his entertainment that day; but though he ate like a vulture, and drank with the avidity of a fish, he did not seem a whit the merrier, and, at length, fairly told his hospitable relative of many removes,—“that nothing but his speedy decease could console him for the disappointment of finding him alive, after the receipt of that letter.”

“My good cousin,” said Don Hermenric, “I am willing to do any thing in reason to oblige you, but that is rather too much to expect of

me, especially as I am full twenty years younger than yourself; I am in no particular haste to leave this world, where I am indifferently well off in temporal affairs; moreover I have some intention of marrying. Hast thou ever a daughter to bestow upon me?"

"I have ten at your service, my worthy kinsman," returned Don Froila, with some vivacity.

"I thank you heartily for your liberality, but one will content me," replied Don Hermenric, "so, if you will permit me, I will return with you to Castle Toros, and see if I can prevail on one of my fair cousins to take compassion on my bachelor estate."

"I will tell you all their names and ages," said Don Froila, "and then you shall choose which you please; but as for taking you to my castle, that is another story, and unless you are very fond of pannic-bread with no better sauce than a goat's milk cheese so hard that it would serve for a tennis-ball, I would advise you not to come."

"Is that the only bill of fare you can provide for my entertainment?" said Don Hermenric, laughing.

"It is the diet on which Leon feeds those who shed their best blood o free her from the Moorish yoke," returned Don Froila, sternly, "and I can scarcely imagine that *you* are entitled to anything better, Don Hermenric."

That night when Don Hermenric lighted his kinsman to his chamber he begged him to step into his closet with him, when taking from his strong box a leathern bag, he put it into his hands, with these words:—

"This is a small acknowledgment from one of the rich men of Leon, of the debt which is due from all such, to one of the deliverers of their country."

Don Froila dropped the heavy bag on the floor in his astonishment at the generosity of his kinsman.

"No wonder you are a poor man," said Don Hermenric, smiling, "if thus you allow the gifts of fortune to slip through your fingers."

When Don Froila was alone, he opened the bag, and found it contained a hundred golden sols; whereupon he fell upon his knees, and after returning thanks to God for so seasonable a mercy, he invoked from the very bottom of his heart, a blessing on the head of his munificent cousin; then placing the precious bag under his pillow, betook himself to bed.

Now, whether it was the unwonted circumstance of reposing between fine linen sheets on a down bed, that discomposed the Couut de Toros,

or that excellent ragouts, and Xeres sack, of which he had so liberally partaken, were less healthful diet, than the hard fare to which he had been so long accustomed, and might create vapors and megrims, or the cares attendant on the acquisition of money operated to destroy his rest, I know not; but certain it is, he vainly endeavored to compose himself to sleep. His restlessness was not simple and natural, but compound, strange, and horrible, attended with cramp, headache, and difficulty of breathing; and at the same time, a vague visionary dread oppressed him with inexplicable terror.

Don Froila was afraid of nothing but ghosts; but as his conscience acquitted him of ever having done any thing to provoke a supernatural visitation on his own account, he took it into his head, that either his cousin had put him into a haunted chamber, or the money under his pillow had not been fairly come by; and that one or other of these reasons must be the cause of the disquiet he was suffering. As this was any thing but a satisfactory manner of accounting for his uneasiness of mind and body, we may suppose Don Froila's surmises did not greatly tend to compose him to a refreshing slumber; and when at length sleep stole upon him, his dreams were wild, disturbed, and full of perilous warnings of impending evil. Thrice he fancied the voice of his lost wife invoked him, as from the grave, to save her children; and as many times he awoke; bathed in the chilly dews of mortal terror, with the pressure of her death-cold hand upon his breast, and then he thought he heard the wailing of his new-born precious boy, whose birth had been so dearly purchased.

"Visions and dreams of ill avaunt!" exclaimed Don Froila, starting up in the bed, and signing the cross upon his shuddering brow. "Blessed mother of God, why am I thus disquieted?"

A shadowy female form with disheveled hair, now rose before him, tossing her arms and piteously beckoning him toward the door.

"In the name of the blessed Virgin, what art thou?" exclaimed Don Froila, striking at the phantom with his rapier, of which he had possessed himself. His arm was arrested by some invisible power, and he fell backward upon the pillow; and as the melancholy vision faded from his sight, he recognised the pale features of his daughter Christina, but misty and indistinct, and in a Moorish garb; and again the unearthly accents of Donna Portia thrilled upon his ear, "Help for my children, home! home!"

His convulsive groans alarmed the household of Don Hermenric Rod-

rigo ; they entered, and found him with glazed eyes and distorted features, with his rapier clenched in his hand ; and at first he muttered unintelligibly to himself, instead of answering their questions ; but, when, at Don Hermenric's command, they put back the heavy curtains, and opened the window to give him air, he cried with a loud voice :—“ It is past!—the dawn is breaking!—let me go hence ! not all the wealth of Leon could bribe me to stay another hour in this accursed chamber.”

His kinsman endeavored to rally him upon having suffered himself to be scared by a dream, and begged him to compose himself to sleep again, but he continued to repeat “ Home ! home ! home !—I have had this night a message from the grave, to hasten my return to my children, and by Him who made me ! I sleep no more till I have looked upon the dark walls of Castle Toros again.”

He then sprang from the bed, and regardless of the presence of Don Hermenric and his servants, hurried on his clothes, muttering as he did so—

“ These villanous hack-mules,—how will they keep pace with the anxious fears of a father on the road ?”

“ Don Froila, you shall have my best steed, and I will bear you company.” said his kinsman.

Don Froila grasped his hand in reply, with an iron pressure that long left its marks imprinted on his fingers in legible black and blue but word he spoke none at that moment, nor did he voluntarily break his portentous silence till the evening of the second day, when, pointing to a single light glimmering from a narrow casement, in a black massive building, which that light alone made visible in the intense darkness of the night, he exclaimed—

“ Yonder is my castle.”

Don Hermenric felt something like a thrill of terror, when, at the command, rather than request, of his strange kinsman, he alighted from his mule, and followed his darkling steps, crossed the ruinous courts that led into the interior of the building.

“ Ha, what ?” cried Don Froila, “ doors and gates alike all open ! What, ho ! Griffinda !” he shouted, at the top of his voice ; then, without waiting for an answer, he began to ascend the broken staircase three steps at a time. Don Hermenric followed, secretly wishing he had not embarked in any such adventure.

All was dark and silent as the grave, as they proceeded, till Don

Froila, who was perfectly familiar with the geography of his own domicile, threw open a door at the end of a long gallery, and discovered, by the glimmering light of the rush taper that burned dimly within, a spectral-looking old woman, with disheveled gray hair, sitting rocking herself to and fro by the side of a rude bier, on which was stretched the pale form of a lovely child in its grave clothes.

"My boy! my boy! last hope of the line of Toros, art thou there?" exclaimed the sorrow-stricken father, gazing with fixed and tearless eyes upon the marble features of his son; then seizing Dame Griffinda by the arm fiercely he demanded the cause of what he saw.

"Oh, woe the while!" shrieked the unfortunate nurse, "that ever you left us, Sir Count. My little lord, here, died last night, (Heaven rest his gentle soul) for very sorrowing after his ten dear sisters; and he kept aye calling on you, to the last, to bring them back to us again."

"To bring them back!" cried Don Froila, gazing in silent horror, from the face of the dead to her who darkly hinted at darker things; "where are my daughters, woman?"

"Gone! gone!" she replied, wringing her hands as she spoke; "the Count de Romana dragged them hence, for the king hath given them all to the pagan Moors."

"You speak in mockery, woman," returned Don Froila, gripping her shoulder with one of his iron grasps.

"Ah! ah!" she shrieked, "but it is true,—too true. Ask Perez Silva and Gaston Alvarez—who raised a rabblement of the villagers to the rescue, but in vain—if it be not so; but alack, I talk idly, for they are gone to Oviedo to tell you the evil tidings, my lord, and offer you what assistance they might."

Don Froila spoke no word, but he snatched the lifeless remains of his child from the bier, and rushed from the chamber. Dame Griffinda screamed aloud, and Don Hermenric stood petrified with horror at the sight.

The officiating priests of Santa Clara were startled at their midnight mass, by the entrance of the Count de Toros, pale as a spectre, with the shrouded form of his boy in his arms. He strode down by the central aisle with a hurried pace, and placing the corpse of the child on the steps of the altar, he pointed to it, with these words:—

"Bury my dead,"—and before a question could be proposed to him by the astonished monks, he was gone.

Before that hour on the ensuing night, he had scared the revelry of

the guilty Aurelio and his court, by presenting himself an uninvited guest in the royal banquetting room. The fearful sentence which Belshazzar saw inscribed by the mystic hand upon the wall, startled the Babylonian monarch less than the appearance of the bereaved parent did the conscience-stricken king of Leon. Thirty years had passed away since he last beheld the valiant champion to whom he was indebted for the preservation of his life, at that time in the pride and vigor of manly strength and beauty; but now, though gaunt and haggard with the pressure of years of care and disappointment, and agonised with the fierce conflict of rage and grief, that shook his inmost soul, Aurelio recognised him at a glance; and, quailing beneath the terror of his eye, sat like one paralysed, with the uplifted goblet, in which he had just pledged the nobles of Leon, still suspended in his hand.

"My daughters!" vociferated Don Froila, in a tone that shook the vaulted roof of the hall, "my daughters Aurelio!" he repeated drawing his rapier from its sheath, and pressing nearer to the throne as he spoke.

"Treason!" cried the Count de Romana, who read the deadly purpose of Don Froila in his eye; and drawing his sword, threw himself between the vengeful father and his craven lord.

Don Froila sprang upon his hereditary foe with the resistless fury of a tiger. It was too close an encounter for the use of weapons—the one dropped his rapier, the other his sword, and grappled for life or death. The contest was brief, but decisive; for, ere the friends of the Count de Romana could hasten to his assistance, he had expired beneath the vengeful gripe of Don Froila's fingers on his throat. Don Froila flung the blackened corpse of his foe from him with a stern execration, and snatching his rapier from the ground, pressed forward with murderous intention against the majesty of Leon; but Don Aurelio had made a hasty retreat from the hall, while his adacious subject was engaged in mortal conflict with the Count de Romana. The nobles and knights of Leon, meantime, had recovered from their surprise; and drawing their swords, surrounded Don Froila calling upon him to surrender himself.

Don Froila, though he had quite as much courage, was possessed of a little more discretion than is imputed to Amadis de Gaul; so, instead of engaging them *en melee*, he called lustily for a parley, which being granted—for the grandees of Leon were very desirous of hearing what this terrible champion had been raising such a desperate coil about—

he related the tale of his wrongs in such powerful language, that the indignation of all present was stirred against their worthless sovereign, whom they vowed to call to a stern account for his base proceedings. Con Aurelio spared them that trouble, for he died the next day of fright, as was supposed by all those who saw the terror he was in at the deadly determination of the Count de Toros, whose invocation for his soul I will not repeat, although certainly they were somewhat more fervent than those which the monks sung for him in his royal cathedral of Leon.

CHAPTER XXII.

“Fling forth the proud banner of Leon again.”

SPANISH WAR SONG

The successor of the base Aurelio was his nephew, Alphonso the Second, a youthful prince of great hope and promise, whose high sense of honor had been deeply wounded at the disgrace which his uncle's iniquitous tribute to the Moors had cast upon the Spanish name.

Don Froila, being amenable to law, both for the death of the Count de Romana, and his treasonable attempt against the person of the late king, had fled for refuge to the high altar of Leon Cathedral. On the day of Alphonso's coronation, as soon as the young sovereign had taken the oaths before the high altar, the count stood forth, and bending the knee before him, related the story of the wrongs that the late king by the agency of the Count de Romana, had committed against his house, with such impassioned eloquence, that the royal stripping not only accorded him pardon, on the spot, for the offences into which his paternal feelings had hurried him, but swore on the cross-handled sword of Pelayo with which the primate of Leon had just girded him

that he would bestow the highest honors and rewards on such of the youthful chivalry of Leon as should feel generously disposed to make a crusade against the Moors, for the deliverance of the noble maidens of Toros, provided the undertaking were crowned with success.

There was a murmur of approbation among the young nobles, who surrounded the sovereign, at these words; but he who first volunteered to join the crusade was Marcián de Romana, whose example was immediately followed by his brother Antonio. Don Hermeric Rodrigo, who had accompanied his unlucky kinsman to the court, to see what would be the event of the bold enterprise, was the third; and, before sunset, a thousand men, the flower of the Christian chivalry of Spain, had sworn to achieve this valiant adventure, or perish in the attempt. Nothing but the authority of Don Silo, the young king's guardian, restrained Alphonso from undertaking the command of the gallant armament himself; but he was a minor, and therefore compelled to yield obedience to the counsels of his uncle and benefactor, who had protected the friendless youth of Alphonso, and, at the decease of the usurper Aurelio, challenged the kingdom as the right of his ward. In fact, no one was considered so suitable as the valiant and experienced Don Froila de Toros, to conduct an expedition that was undertaken for the deliverance of his daughters out of the hands of the infidels. So ardent was the generous impulse that kindled the gallant youth of Leon on this occasion, that not only those of noble blood, but peasants and artisans flocked to his standard, with hearts beating high for lofty adventures in the very spirit of knighterrantry. The archbishop blessed them all, when they reared the banner of the lion and the cross at their departure; and the ladies strewed flowers on them, from the balconies and windows, as they rode through the streets of Leon.

The veteran, Don Froila, mounted on one of the royal chargers—the young king's parting present—rode gallantly at the head of the heroic muster, with sable plumes in his morion, and a back crape scarf across his shoulder, on account of the recent loss of his young heir, over whom the grave had scarcely closed; but his doating father had forborne to weep or to make lamentations for the dead; his whole soul was absorbed in the probable dishonor that awaited the living,—those fair daughters for whom he had never before testified the common feelings of paternity. The Moors were so little prepared for this daring enterprise, that the frontier was passed, the hills, plains and rivers of Castile

crossed, and Arragon itself entered, before Aben Alfaje was well awaer of the invasion.

It is true that the gallant little squadron traversed no unfriendly country, for the main body of the people were Spaniards, who secretly gave them all the assistance they dared, unknown to their Moorish masters.

Unfortunately for Don Froila, he was so dangerously wounded by a Moorish jereed, that he was compelled to depute the command of the army to Marcian de Romana, who had greatly distinguished himself in the commencement of the campaign. Don Marcian adopted the same plan that had been so successfully pursued by Don Froila, that of pressing onward to the capital of the Moorish dominions, Saragossa, without diverging either to the right or left. Hitherto, the gallant ardor of the Christian army had carried everything before it, and they had swept through the Moorish dominions like a fiery meteor, carrying terror and destruction in their path; but now they had stern work, for Aben Alfaje, and his warlike son Abdaliz, were in the field, and fought with the desperation of wild beasts, who defend their den to the death.

Nevertheless, though the noble adventurers met with reverses, they continued to gain ground, and the fierce Abdaliz and his father were compelled reluctantly to retreat, contesting every foot of ground to the city of Saragossa.

Don Marcian do Romana, attended by a trumpet, appeared before the gates, and demanded (for he thought he might as well ask enough) the restitution of the hundred Christian damsels who had been extorted by Aben Alfaje from Don Aurelio.

This was peremptorily refused by the Moorish monarch; so Don Marcian pronounced a suitable defiance, and flung his lance against the gate, which was, of course, considered as a formal renewal of hostilities; and a fierce skirmish ensued, in which the Christians had the advantage, yet they thought proper, at the next parley, to limit their demand to the restitution of the ten daughters of the Count de Toros.

Aben Alfaje was very urgent with his son to accede to these terms, as he dreaded a general insurrection of his Spanish subjects, many of whom resorted to the banner of the invaders; but Abdaliz, like a vilo pagan as he was, vowed that "sooner than restore the damsels of Toros to their countrymen, he would slay them with his own hands." So Aben Alfaje, who was swayed by him in everything, returned a diso-

bliging answer, to which Abdaliz added his particular defiance to the Christians in general, but more especially to their leader, Don Marcian Romana; having learned, from one of the prisoners, that he was a very handsome young man, and the lover of one of the daughters of the Count de Toros.

The captive maidens meantime were informed, by means of some of the slaves who spake the Spanish language, of the gallant enterprise that had been undertaken for their deliverance by their countrymen; nor were Aurora and Seraphina long in learning the active share that had been taken in the same by the Romanas.

Blanche and Orelia were certain that their lovers, though of humbler degree, were engaged in the expedition, and not a whit behind the noblest peer of Leon, in daring deeds for the rescue; nor were they mistaken: for Perez Silva and Gaston Alvarez had joined the brave muster with heart and hand, and had performed such prodigies of valor, that Marcian de Romana had admitted them to the honor of being his squires.

We may imagine the fervent prayers that were offered up to God and the Virgin, by the captive damsels, in behalf of their heroic champions, during the fearful suspense of days of anxious hope and terror —while the brave adventurers continued to batter the strong walls of Saragossa, receiving to themselves a plentiful guerdon of broken heads in return from the perverse infidels; who, inspired by their favorite leader, Prince Abdaliz, declared that they would rather a thousand times be buried under the ruins of their city, than restore the tribute maidens.

Christina had seen nothing of Abdaliz since he had taken the field in person against her countrymen; but when Lorenca informed her that he had been forced to retreat, before the fiery leader of the crusade, Marcian de Romana, and was actually in the city, she was full of alarm and disquiet, and in hourly expectation of his invading her privacy; yet he came not, and she began to marvel at his absence.

One day, after the Moors, who were beginning to be straitened for provisions, had made an unsuccessful sortie upon the besieging Spaniards, and had been driven back with great loss by Don Marcian, Abdaliz entered Christina's apartment in his warlike harness, heated and fatigued from the contest, with the stain and soil of battle on his garments, and the marks of vexation on his brow. There was something so truly terrific to a gentle maiden in his appearance, with all the

fierce excitement of the murderous warfare, in which he had been recently engaged, about him, that Christina involuntarily shrunk back at his approach.

A gloomy fire flashed from his large dark eyes, when he observed the effect of his appearance after weeks of absence; and flinging himself beside her on the sofa, he seized both her hands in his, and pressing them with the vehemence of anger rather than love, he exclaimed:

“Thou hatest me, then?”

He felt the soft hands he held in his tremble and grow cold; and, grasping them more passionately, he repeated his observation.

Christina could not speak, but shudderingly pointed to the crimson stains on his dress. He burst into a frightful laugh.

“And dost thou come to woo me with the blood of my countrymen, perhaps of my father, on thy garments, Abdaliz?” said she, endeavoring to extricate her hands from his grasp.

“By Alla! damsel, this is child’s play, and that thou knowest!” he exclaimed fiercely.

Christina burst into a passion of tears.

“I do believe,” said Abdaliz, “thou lovest nothing on earth but the little idol which thou shrinest on that fair bosom of thine; and thou shalt not retain it there to rival me.”

“Audacious infidel!” exclaimed Christina indignantly; “dost thou mean my crucifix?”

“Aye,” he replied, “I believe you call it so. Give it to me.”

“How can I,” replied Christina, “while you hold my hands.”

He released them, and she darted to the extremity of the saloon, pressing her menaced treasure to her bosom.

“Ah, traitress!” he exclaimed, “but that device shall not serve your turn. I am your master, and will be trifled with no longer.”

He fixed his terrible eyes upon her as he spoke, and Christina, dropping the cross, took the golden bodkin from her hair, and held it in an attitude of defence.

“Ha, ha, ha!” shouted the insolent pagan, “dost thou think a warrior is to be daunted by a sword of that fashion!”

Christina pointed it at her own bosom, with a look that banished the life-blood from the cheek of Abdaliz.

“Hold, hold!” cried he, “I will advance no farther.”

“Leave me at once,” cried the damsel.

"No, by Alla!" he replied, "for I came to name to thee the terms, on which thou mightest save the effusion of Christian blood."

She shook her head, as if she doubted his words were but a device and said:

"You know I dare not trust you—but speak on."

"Will you become my wife?" demanded Abdaliz.

"Your wife," she replied; "how can a Christian become the wife of a misbeliever?"

"I am not prepared to discuss our different modes of faith," retorted Abdaliz; "all I ask you is, will you become my wife if I resign your sisters to their countrymen? For I am prepared to do so, on that condition."

Christina looked doubtfully at Abdaliz, and then replied—"Thou art so full of guile, that I know not in what manner to reply to thee.—Let me see my sisters, and communicate with them ere I give an answer."

Abdaliz clapped his hands, and when Lorenca entered he said:

"Bid Ferrau conduct hither the nine Christian tribute maidens, sisters to this perverse one."

Lorenca prostrated herself and withdrew.

"I would see my sisters alone, Abdaliz," said Christina.

"Thou shalt do no such thing," he sullenly replied.

"You are very cruel," sobbed Christina, "to deny me such a trifling pleasure."

"When *you* behave obligingly to me, maiden, I shall make it the study of my life to pleasure you, replied Abdaliz; "but in the meantime, it is necessary to teach you the difference between the prince of Sansuenna and his slave."

She darted a look of withering contempt upon him, as she replied,—

"I hate myself for having once loved so insolent an ingrate."

"Tell me how long it is since you ceased to love me, my beautiful Christina?" said Abdaliz, throwing all the insinuating softness into his look and manner, which had heretofore proved so resistless with the fair ones he had condescended to woo.

"Ever since I discerned the falseness and ingratitude of thy proud heart, Abdaliz," she replied, but in a gentler tone.

"I swear, by Alla and the prophet! that I never loved any woman but thee," exclaimed Abdaliz passionately; "and, if thou wilt become

my wife, I will forsake all others, and cleave unto thee only and for ever."

"For ever," replied Christina, "how can that be, when thou dost not believe I have an immortal soul!"

"I told thee before, perverse one," said Abdaliz, "that would not dispute with thee on difference of creeds. If thou didst love me truly, thou wouldst forsake the worship of the Nazarine, and become a follower of the prophet for my sake."

"Tempter, avaunt!" said Christina; "art thou not contented with destroying my peace and happiness on earth, but wouldst thou also rob me of my hopes of heaven?"

"Thou hast no interest or hope of heaven at present," replied Abdaliz, because thou art a worshipper of images, and a follower of an erring faith; but if thou wilt forsake these, and become a follower of Mahomed, thou wilt, as the wife of a true believer, be entitled to share of that paradise which he hath promised to the faithful, and the most lovely and beloved of their wives; and I swear unto thee, by the well of Mecca, that paradise would be nought to me without thee!"

"Away!" said Christina, "thy false prophet has deceitfully bribed his deluded followers with fables of sensual joys, and things from which the pure spirits of the just made perfect would recoil with horror; and dost thou think to seduce a Christian into a belief so childish and absurd?"

Abdaliz curled his lip, and was about to offer some heathenish scoff in reply, when the entrance of the fair sisters of Toros interrupted their discussion. Even his hard heart was moved, at the touching meeting between these long separated ones; when regardless of his presence, they rushed to the arms of the weeping Christina, and hung about her in a tender rivalry of affection with each other, and sobbed aloud.

"Damsels," said Abdaliz, addressing them with an air of a master, "do you wish to be restored to your country and to your father?"

"Do we?" they replied and simultaneously throwing themselves at his feet, they implored him in the most passionate manner to set them free.

"You must address your petition to that maiden," said Abdaliz, pointing to Christina, "for it depends wholly upon her pleasure."

The nine damsels looked incredulously from their Moorish lord, to their pale tearful sister.

"He speaks truly," observed Christina, "but it is on condition of my becoming his wife."

"I am sure you will have no objection to that condition," said Beatrice.

"Is he not an infidel, and the foe of Leon!" said Christina, clasping her hands together in anguish.

"I shall not continue the foe of your country, if you become my wife, light of mine eyes!" said the wily Moor.

Aurora, Seraphina, Blanche, and Orelia looked anxiously in their sister's face, but did not speak.

"You love him, my dear sister," said Laura.

The eyes of Abdaliz sparkled at this observation.

"And oh, it would be so sweet to return to Leon, and the dear old castle!" said Violante.

"And to see Felix and Dame Griffinda again," said Adosinda.

"Dear Christina, do not marry a Moor and a misbeliever," said Juanna.

"Now," said Abdaliz, turning to Christina, "if you refuse to accede to my terms, I shall, before the day is one hour older, present these nine damsels to nine of the principal emirs of Sansuenna."

Here the damsels raised such a piteous chorus of lamentation, that Christina turning to Abdaliz, said,—

"Rather than my innocent sisters should suffer a fate so terrible, I am content myself to be the sacrifice."

"The sacrifice!" echoed Abdaliz angrily, "thou wilt, as the wife of Abdaliz, be an object of envy to the fairest daughters of the Caliph of Bagdad."

Christina turned away disdainfully, and Abdaliz continued:—

"Were it not that I cannot live without thee, I swear by the head of the prophet, I would not take thee to wife—I thought thou hadst been meeker than the doves of Aleppo; but thy stubborn pride exceedeth every thing I have ever witnessed of woman's perversity."

"Aye, such degraded slaves as those females to whom thou hast alone been accustomed," replied Christina.

"Thou art thyself a slave," retorted Abdaliz, angrily, "and therefore it doth not become thee to exalt thyself above other women."

"For the love of the blessed Santa Mava, provoke him not, Christina!" said Aurora, who perceived that her sister was minded to make some resentful rejoinder.

"Let me go with my sisters," sobbed Christina.

Abdaliz was more displeased with this petition, than if she had uttered the most bitter retort to his uncourteous speech.

"No," he replied, "nor shall they go, until thou hast performed the condition on which I have covenanted to release them,—that of becoming my wife."

"How can that be?" returned Christina, "when there is neither Christian priest nor church to make us one."

"The Cadi of Sansuenna, and my father's Iman, are all sufficient for that purpose," said Abdaliz.

"It will be a deadly sin to be wedded by two vile heathens to another," returned Christina, with a look of horror.

Abdaliz was indignant at her scruples, and said some very disobliging things on the subject, in the midst of which Don Marcian's trumpets sounded a parley; and Abdaliz very uncourteously bade the ladies hold their peace, till he had learned "what the Christian dogs wanted."

It was only a reiteration of their pertinacious demand of the ten damsels of Toros, which Don Marcian caused to be made every day.

"Tell them I will restore nine of the damsels, provided they will break up the siege, and depart from my father's dominions forthwith, leaving me in the peaceable possession of one maiden only, who has consented to become my wife," said Abdaliz, when the message was delivered to him.

Don Marcian was in a terrible consternation when he heard this, lest the damsel whom Abdaliz proposed to retain, should be his adorable Aurora. Antonio was in quite as great a fright, lest it should be Seraphina; and their brave squires, Perez and Gaston, trembled like aspen leaves, in their apprehension of Abdaliz having taken a fancy to to Blanche or Orelia whom they, of course, considered the most desirable of all the sisters of Toros.

Don Marcian would not agree to the terms till he heard which of the sisters Abdaliz proposed to detain; having resolutely determined, as he was the general of the besiegers, not to budge one foot from the trenches of Saragossa without his beloved Aurora. When he understood that it was only Christina, he thought proper to communicate the offer of the Moorish prince to Don Froila, who was still suffering severely from the effects of his wound.

At first, Don Froila was very much disposed to revile his brave deputy in command, for daring to propose leaving one of his girls in the

hands of the infidels, vowing, that of all the misfortunes that had ever befallen him, the addition of a Moorish son-in-law to his family connections would be the most unbearable ; but when Marcian firmly, but respectfully, talked of resigning the command of the little army, now beginning to be sorely harassed with the tedious leaguer, Don Froila condescended to listen to his reasoning on the subject, and, at length, demanded which of his daughters the son of Aben Alfaje was desirous of making his wife. At the name of Christina he started, and recollecting his mysterious vision of her apparition in a Moorish dress, concluded that it was vain to oppose that which was doubtless the destiny of his daughter, and therefore suffered a reluctant consent to be extorted from him.

The notification that the Christian leaguers had accepted the terms offered by him, was no sooner made known to Abdaliz, than he demanded of Christina if she were ready to perform her part of the contract, since her father had consented for her to become his wife.

Christina spoke not ; she stood irresolute ; her cheek varying from pale to red, and from red to deadly paleness. Abdaliz frowned ; her sisters turned imploring glances upon her. She bowed her head in silence.

“Oh Alla !” exclaimed Abdaliz, “is that the fashion in which a Spanish slave signifies her consent to wed the heir of Sansuenna ?—summon the Iman and the Cadi, Ferrau.”

Christina’s heart beat almost audibly, when, in obedience to a sign from Abdaliz, Lorena hastily enveloped her in the bridal veil ; the dreaded officers entered ; then feeling as if under the influence of a wild dream, she passively submitted to the Musulman ceremony, which united her in marriage to a Moor and a misbeliever.

The Iman pronounced the nuptial benediction from the Koran, the Cadi presented the bridegroom and herself with a writing, signifying that they were lawfully joined in marriage ; after which, both received magnificent tokens of the princely bridegroom’s liberality, and withdrew.

Within half an hour from that time, Christina and her sisters had wept their last farewell, and bidden each other adieu for ever. In half an hour more, the Christian camp was broken up, the chivalry of Leon were mounted, and their plumes and pennons were seen floating in the evening breeze on the banks of the Ebro, preparatory to their departure with the rescued damsels. Anon the flourish of trumpets

sounded the first thrilling notes of a triumphant war-march, and Don Marcian de Romana, waving his sheathed sword above his head, gave the word to the gallant little band :—

“Home—Leon !”

It was shouted from rank to rank, and from man to man, and many a Christian heart in the city of the infidels responded with a throb of agony to the thrilling summons—“Home—Leon !”

“Home, Leon !” repeated Christina, as she stood by the side of her Moorish bridegroom, in the balcony of the pavilion of mirrors, looking at the departure of her sisters, and the Christian army. “Home, Leon ! ye summon me in vain ! neither home nor Leon shall these eyes behold again. I have looked my last upon my own people, and those of my father’s house shall see my face no more ;” she turned her head from the lattice and wept—for the warlike procession had passed away like a dream, and the last faint notes of the Christian clarions in the distance were drowned by the shrill cries of the muzins from the minarets, calling the people to evening prayers.

Abdaliz turned about and left her, for it was a summons which he, in common with all strict Mussulmen, was bound to obey.

Christina remained in the balcony, scarcely conscious of his departure, for since the conclusion of their espousals, he had not deigned to address a single word to her, so deeply had he been offended at the reluctance she had testified to become his wife, so fiercely jealous was he of the affection she had evinced for her sisters and her own people. He made no allowance for the religious scruples, which caused a pious Christian damsel to regard a marriage with a Mussulman as a deadly sin. neither for the timidity of so young and sensitive a creature, left among strangers, and those whom she had been taught to regard as foes ; and above all, he thought nothing of the pain his rude and insolent way of treating her had inflicted upon a heart, which he had reason to believe, in spite of all her coldness, and resentful demeanor, regarded him secretly with tenderness.

“She will not acknowledge her love for me,” said Abdaliz to himself, “even now she is my wife ; but I will humble her proud spirit before I condescend to treat her with affection.”

He did not enter the bridal chamber that night, but he would have been deeply mortified had he known that his poor terrified bride, though surprised at his absence, was relieved, when the morning dawned, to find herself still alone. The agitating events that, in the course

of the last few weeks, had so strangely broken the monotonous calm of an existence hitherto so tranquil and passionless, the conflicts between love and duty, and the subsequent grief and terror she had endured, had been too much for her fragile constitution. She had been in drooping health and declining spirits before she removed from Leon, and she was now seriously ill.

Abdaliz, who had slept less than his bride that night, was in a very ill-humor when Lorenca softly entered his chamber soon after sunrise, and whispered to him of the expediency of summoning a Christian leech, if such could be found in Sansuenna, to visit his bride.

"A Christian physician wherefore?" said Abdaliz, who suspected that the request originated in some perversity on the part of Christina.

"Because, my lord, the sight of a turban will terrify her too much in her present state," said Lorenca, "and, indeed, you had better come and see her yourself."

Abdaliz was by no means displeased at hearing of his bride's indisposition, concluding that it was only a tender device to obtain a reconciliation with him.

"I will come to her after morning prayers and the bath," said he, with an affectation of indifference, which he hoped Lorenca would repeat. He bestowed, it is true, some additional pains on his dress and personal appearance, for he was aware he had visited her in appalling disarray the day before; and he was absolutely shocked when Ferrau reminded him that the caftan and turban which he had worn during the spousal rite, were actually rent and stained with blood. No wonder her gentle nature had been affrighted, and that she had shrunk from him with horror.

After trifling away two or three hours in unnecessary delays, he entered the saloon of mirrors, supposing he should find her there, but the apartment was vacant, and he proceeded to her chamber. Lorenca met him at the door, and held up her finger, to signify he should step softly.

"Is she asleep?" he asked somewhat impatiently, advancing, as he spoke, to the side of the bed.

Lorenca put back the rose-colored and silver drapery with a cautious hand, and revealed the exquisitely lovely, but death-pale features of Christina, which were partly shaded by one delicate hand; and a few scattered ringlets of the beautiful flaxen hair that had escaped from its

confinement, and were spread like wandering sunbeams over her pillow.

Abdaliz thought how often he had played with those glossy tendrils when she hung like a ministering angel over his sick couch—and now she herself lay like a blighted lily crushed to the earth by his cruelty.

The traces of tears were still on her polished cheek, and Abdaliz could not help gently withdrawing the hand that covered her eyes, to see whether she slept.

“Let me alone,” said she, “it will soon be over now.”

The brow of Abdaliz darkened.

“Indeed, my lord,” said Lorenca, “she knows not what she says; she did not sleep till dawn, and she has muttered strange things in her disturbed slumber, as if she had known you in her own land, my lord; but she is very ill, and as I said before, you had better send for a leech, lest her fever should increase.”

“Her fever!” exclaimed Abdaliz in alarm, taking her burning hand in his. She started violently at his touch, and unclosed her languid eyes; but when she saw who it was, she bowed her face upon the pillow and wept.

“Light of mine eyes!” said Abdaliz, “why did you not tell me you were ill?”

“You would not have heeded it, if I had,” she replied sorrowfully, “but indeed I have been so for many days.”

“You are only sick for sorrow of parting with your sisters,” he returned, fiercely.

She wept afresh as she replied,

“I shall see *them* no more”

“You love them better than you do me,” said the jealous Abdaliz.

“They love me, and are kind,” murmured Christina.

“Oh Alla! and do I not love you, my bird of beauty? my houri! my pearl of price!” exclaimed Abdaliz, passionately.

“Ah, Abdaliz!—do not call your evil passion love,” said Christina, “hatred had been fitter far—but indeed when you were wont to speak so softly and tenderly to me in my little oratory, when I stole away from every one to watch and cherish you; I never could have believed you would treat me as you have done.”

“You were kinder to me then,” said Abdaliz, “and I thought you

loved me, and would not sicken with grief and anger at becoming my wife."

"I am not your wife yet," said Christina.

"Oh, Alla! not my wife, perverse one! did I not wed you yesterday?"

"No, Abdaliz, that unmeaning mockery of two pagan priests, which I neither understood nor consented to, did not constitute a marriage between a Christian woman and an unbelieving spouse."

"Ah," said Abdaliz, "I understand it all now, you want our union to be blest by one of your own shaven priests; and if that will content thee, my beloved, I will soon fetch hither a monk, even that Father Stephanos, of whom you used to talk, and he shall mumble his mass, as you call it, over us."

"Ah, now, you are going to talk wickedly again," said Christina "but indeed, Abdaliz, it would be a comfort for me to see a holy monk, or friar, that I may make my confession to him, and receive his shrift before I die."

"Before you die, Christina!" cried Abdaliz, "what cruel saying is this, my bride, my beautiful!"

"Yes, Abdaliz," said Christina, "I am, dying, I feel I am—and, Abdaliz, I am not so sorry to die, as I thought I should be once:—for I feel that if I should live, and you be kind as you once were, you would be a snare and a temptation to draw me away from my God. For oh, Abdaliz! I have loved you, I fear too well;—and though you have killed me, I love you still,—and if you look so piteously upon me, I shall almost grieve to go."

"Stay, stay! my own, my life, my queen! I cannot part with you—and I will not!" exclaimed Abdaliz, snatching her to his bosom, and pressing a long, wild kiss upon the pale lips of the dying girl. Her lips moved convulsively;—Abdaliz fancied they faintly returned the vehement pressure of his own; but, if indeed it were so, it was the first, the only caress she had never bestowed upon him—and, in sooth, the last—for life's parting breath was mingled with it; and her gentle, but o'erburdened spirit departed in the same moment; and the distracted Abdaliz in vain continued to strain the cold insensible form to his breast in a paroxysm of despair, to which no words could be justice. But why should I continue to speak of that miserable man? or attempt to describe grief that was frenzy, and remorse that left one black unbroken gloom on his after days? Suffice it to say, that al-

though he survived the unfortunate Christina for some years, he never wore the crown of Sansuenna, but died in prime of manhood of a withered heart, the victim of his own evil passions.

He would not be buried in the splendid mausoleum provided by Aben Alfaje for the last resting-place of his royal descendants, but his turban stone is still shown in the little lonely garden, near the castle of Aljaferia, close to the spot where pious catholics in after ages raised a chapel over the grave of his Christian bride.

The victorious chivalry of Spain meantime returned to Leon triumphantly, with Don Froila and his nine rescued daughters.

There were proud festivals and high rejoicing to celebrate their return. The love quarrel between Aurora and Seraphina and the two Romanas had been made up, the very day and hour that they were delivered from their Moorish captivity, and the deadly feud between the two houses of Toros and Romana was for ever healed at the altar of Leon cathedral, where the royal Alphonso, with his hand, bestowed, Aurora and Seraphina on their valiant deliverers, it not being considered quite so decent for the young cavaliers to receive their brides publicly from the man who had strangled their father a very few weeks ago though such sort of marriages and pacifications were common enough in the good old times.

Perez Silva, and Gaston Alvarez, who had won their golden spurs next stood to claim Don Froila's promise, and as he could not deny having told Perez, that when he and his cousin came to him as belted knights, he would not refuse to accept them as sons-in-law, the young king insisted on the fulfilment of the conditions he had named, declaring, that they had won their ladies fairly, and were well entitled to noble brides, and more than that, he silenced all murmuring and repining on Don Froila's part, by making them noble also and bestowing arms upon them, with mattadores for supporters.

Marriage was the order of that day, for Don Hermenric Rodrigo notwithstanding his mature years, had insinuated himself into the good graces of his gay young couain Laura, who, notwithstanding all her former levity, was the only serious, matronly-behaved bride of the five sisters of Toros, who were wedded that day in the cathedral church of Leon; and, truth to tell, the only one who was married to the satisfaction of Don Froila.

The other four, being somewhat too juvenile for brides, acted as brides-

maids to their elder sisters, and in due time became, I believe, the wives of very accomplished cavaliers ; and Dame Griffinda lived long enough to dance at all their weddings.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Nay, marry, good woman,” said the king,
 “Thy courtesy is but small!”

OLD BALLAD.

“We like thy story well, Sir Charles D’Espaigne,” said King Henry, “albeit it was something of the longest, and we should have been better pleased if the young heir of Toros had lived to revive the ancient glory of his house ; there is something so very unsatisfactory for a noble line to end in daughters.”

“But consider what illustrious sons-in-law may be acquired by means of daughters, my Henry,” said the queen.

“Never talk to me of sons-in-law, Kate,” replied the distinguished monarch, testily, “tell me of a son of one’s own name and lineage, who will bring a dower into the family, instead of carrying one away from it. Ah, Kate ! Kate ! make me but the father of a boy, and thou shalt chain me to thy girdle, and guide me with thy distaff for life.”

“Have I not borne thee two fair sons, my Henry ?” replied the queen, bursting into tears, “and if it had pleased their Heavenly Father to

recall those precious blessings, the giving and withholding of which are in his almighty hands alone, wherein am I to blame?"

"Not in the slightest tittle, my good lady, I'll answer for thee," said Abigail Trudget, "thou hast doubtless done thy motherly duty in nursing, swadling and dandling thy bonny babes; and since the Lord, who knew best what was good for them, hath willed to take them to himself, thy husband is wickeder than a Turk to blame thee for that, which is no fault of thine. But take comfort, my mistress, for at Walsingham, whither ye are both bound, there are two holy wells, one of which is endowed by our lady, with this rare quality, that if pious pilgrims drink thereof, and wish the while, they shall obtain their desire, seem it never so far off at the time."

"For the love of our blessed lady, then, let us be stirring ourselves, Kate!" exclaimed the king, starting from his seat, "that we lose no time in speeding onward in our pilgrimage, to the end that we may both drink of the rare water of these holy wells of Walsingham, and unite in wishing for a fair young son, to be the joy and comfort of our old age."

"Ye must take good heed when ye bounne ye to these blessed wells and are about to drink, that ye wish not some peevish folly instead of your heart's desire," said Abigail Trudget, "as some have had the ill luck to do, unawares, being moved, per adventure, by a petulant infirmity of temper, to the utterance of things neither profitable to themselves or others. I knew a childless Welsh lord and his lady, who travelled I know not how many hundreds of miles from the west, through evil roads, on a pilgrimage to this veritable shrine of our Lady of Walsingham, as they said, but, in truth, the chief purpose for which they undertook this long journey was, that they might drink at the well of which I speak, and unite in wishing for a son."

"And did they obtain their wish, my good woman?" asked the king, eagerly.

"Aye, marry did they, master!" replied Abigail, "although they united not in their desire, when they came to drink of the water, yet each obtained the thing that was craved at the important moment."

"And were they happier for it?" observed the queen.

"I will not take upon myself to say that they were," replied Abigail, "but I will tell you how it fell out, my masters, and ye shall judge for yourselves; for as all the gentles are telling their tales, why should I not relate one also?"

"I see no just reason to the contrary," said the lively dowager of France, "therefore proceed, good mistress Nab."

"You must know, then, my masters," said Abigail, "that this worthy couple, after they had performed their devotions, and offered their gifts at the shrine of our blessed Lady of Walsingham, betook them to the wishing well, in the hope of obtaining their mutual desire, through the grace of our lady; and so earnest were they on the matter, that they spake never a word, till my lord having knelt down by the well-side, on his bare knee, (as all who hope to gain their wish should do,) and having filled the cup, was in the very act of raising it to his lips, when his good lady cried out—

"Have a care that you wish aright!"

"I wish that you would hold your peace!" quoth he; and with these words he drank off his rare water, and got no better profit of his draught than the fulfilment of his peevish wish, namely, his lady's silence, for she stood speechless with amaze, at his perversity in wasting the precious opportunity in the utterance of such an idle wish. Ye may be sure, that after the fashion of men-folk, he blamed his wife for that which was no one's fault but his own."

"Never fret yourself, my sweet husband," quoth she, right lovingly, "for as I am to have a wish also, I will be sure to wish for a son."

"See that you do, my lady," he returned, pressing his hand upon her shoulder, significantly, as she put the cup to her lips.

"I wish you would not bear quite so heavily on my shoulder," she thought, and eftsoons she gained her desire, for he removed his hand as soon as she had drunk, and asked her what she had wished; "Alack!" quoth she, "a very foolish thing; but I have got my desire, which was neither more nor less than that you should lighten your heavy hand from my poor shoulder. Lo you! it acheth sorely with the weight you bore upon it."

"Out upon you for a fool—woman!—and is that all you wished?" said her husband; "I trow we might as well have tarried at Caerphilly as have come to this far eastern shrine to wish for trifling peevishness."

"Nay, but it was all along of your own fault, from the beginning," said his wife; "therefore let that content ye." And so the couple went their ways, and departed into their own country, neither the happier nor the better for having gained, each'en of them, a wish at the Walsingham well.

"I hope, good mistress Abigail, we shall all profit so well by their folly, as to conduct ourselves somewhat more discreetly, when we come to the blessed well of Walsingham," said the king, "and now mine hostess, as the dawn hath broken fairly, and the rain is all overpast, I pray you to bestir yourself, and your maidens, to make ready for us a special good breakfast, that we may be soon off after sun-rise. By my halidom! the pleasant vigil we have kept hath so sharpened mine appetite, that, methinks I could eat a collop from the hind quarter of a bear this morning, to say nothing of dispatching a leg, and wing, and half the breast of your old goose broiled, which, verily tough as it may be, belike, it would suit my stomach better than meagre diet."

"Marry come up!" cried mine hostess, "and how dost think the rest of the bird is to be shared among my Lord Abbot and Lady Abbess, with the holy monks and nuns their attendants, to say nought of Master Goggs, for whom that same was lawfully slain? But I see thou art for taking care of thine own ungodly stomach, let who will go without; natheless I'm not compelled to cook the best of the fare for the likes of thee, thou greedy cormorant."

"Woman," retorted the king, "I would teach thee to use better names to thy guests, an' I were thy husband."

"I would soon let thee know who was who, an' thou wert!" replied mine hostess, snapping her fingers at the disguised monarch, "but I'd have thee to know, that I hope to get a husband of a very different favor and fashion from the likes of thee, when it pleases the Lord to call my good master hence; for thou art verily the ugliest and most ill-mannered fellow that ever shoved a boat to St. Christopher's Oar; and the sooner it pleases thee to rid the hostel of thy company the better, say I."

"My good man," said Wolsey, turning to mine host, "is there such a thing as a ducking stool in this parish?"

"A ducking stool, master?" responded mine host, "I do not understand your meaning."

"Aye," returned Woolsey, "it is easy enough to perceive, from the unruliness of speech, that the men of this place are not privileged to the use of that convenient instrument for the taming of shrews, yclept a ducking-stool."

"I should be much beholden to you, master, if you would explain its use to us," said mine host with a grin.

"That I shall have much pleasure in doing," returned Wolsey, cast-

ing a glance of malicious meaning upon mine hostess ; “ you must know, then, that a ducking-stool is a rude seat, conveniently fixed to the end of a long narrow plank, and when any notorious scold getteth beyond the bounds of Christian endurance, it is in the power of the next magistrate to condemn her to be seated thereon, and securely fastened to prevent *escapade*, and then carried to the nearest river, pond, or pool, or for the lack of these, to a muddy ditch, and therein immersed thrice, by the parish beadle tripping up the end of the plank ; and if she proceed to farther intemperance of tongue, by vituperating the executioners of justice, yea, or the spectators, then shall the dose be repeated till she become quiescent and tractable in her behavior.”

“ Adad, master !” said mine host, rubbing his hands with great glee, “ that same ducking-stool must be a monstrous convenient thing in a parish ; I have all the mind in the world to speak to our parson and church-wardens to petition for one for Chesterford.”

“ I commend you for the resolution,” said Wolsey, “ and would advise you to lose no time in setting about it, for I know no man to whom it would be of greater comfort than yourself. Moreover, that muddy creek that runneth up nearly to your door, would be a very suitable place for the infliction of the discipline.”

Here mine hostess, whose indignation had hitherto kept her silent, hit the cardinal so bitter a blow on the left cheek, that it was with difficulty that he refrained from returning it with interest ; indeed it was only the restraining presence of his sovereign, and the recollection of the sex of the offender, that withheld him from following the impulse of his revengeful temper.

“ By the mass, friend Thomas ! thou art handsomely guerdoned for thy advice,” exclaimed the ungrateful Henry bursting into a most provoking shout of laughter ; “ I fear thy cheek will tingle for the next three hours,, and the worst of it is, thou art not very likely to obtain much pity from the ladies.”

“ It is not meet he should,” replied Mary of France ; “ I protest mine own fingers itched to bestow as handsome a benison upon him for his malicious commendations of so vile and barbarous a device, for the silencing of feminine eloquence. I commend mine hostess for her spirit, and shall make a point of rewarding her with a golden angel, when I get home, for the very neat manner in which she dealt that slap, which, I know by the sound, must have been a stinger.”

Wolsey rubbed his cheek with a forced smile, and shook his head

reproachfully at the royal beauty, whom he durst not venture to reprove.

"Gramercy, Mal!" said King Henry, laughing, "an' you exhibit such lively indignithion at the mention of a ducking-stool, I shall begin to suspect you of being, at times addicted to the fault for the which it is so excellent a specific. Hey, brother Charles! what say you?"

"That the voice of my wife is always music to mine ear, nor can she vary it to any key that soundeth not sweetly to me," said Brandon, gallantly pressing the fair hand of his royal consort to his lips, who returned his compliment with a look of unutterable tenderness.

"Go along with ye, for a pair of married turtles! I have no patience with your eternal billing and cooing," cried Henry, giving his sister a gentle push. "Ha, Charles D'Espaign!" continued he, turning to the emperor, "sholdst thou not find it mighty dull, I pray, to be for ever enacting the lover to thine own wife, an' thou hadst one?"

The emperor sighed and looked melancholy, and the lovely dowager observed, with a sly smile, "that such condescension was not to be expected from one of his degree," and again she turned a glance, expressive of the fondest regard, on Brandon.

"Now that's what I call being lovingly yoked," cried Mathew Goggs, "and it is such an encouragement to we bachelors to see married folks so kind, that if I thought a certain young gentlewoman, with bright black eyes, would make as much of me, I arn't sure—but I say nothing—for as Matthew Goggs, *is* Matthew Goggs, Esq. with houses and lands, sheep and kine (to say nothing of swine) mistress mine, it will be as well to look a little farther than a pretty face in a wife."

Anne Boleyn received this curious intimation of the state of Squire Goggs' mind with such an uncontrollable fit of laughter, that he once more took umbrage, and very uncourteously assured her, in the words of the old ballad, which was at that time a new one, "that she might lack such a lad ere she died."

"Aye, aye, Master Goggs!" observed mine hostess, "the young gentlewoman, if so be she sneer at the likes of you, may go to her grave without ever having such a chance again; but there's no accounting for the pride and ambition of some folks."

The extreme beauty of the morning, and the comfortable breakfast which mine hostess, who had been greatly charmed by the royal Mary's promise of the golden angel, now busied herself in preparing for the company, restored all parties to good humor. King Henry, after doing

signal honour to this meal, not forgetting the tough old goose of which no one but himself and Matthew Goggs appeared by any means disposed to partake, gave the word for the horses to be saddled and led forth, in order that such of the party as were vowed to Walsingham might pursue their pilgrimage.

He was then informed that a strong reinforcement was about to be added to his party, consisting, not only of the Abbess of Ely, the Abbot of Glastonburg, and their attendants, but of several of those who had sheltered at the hostel that night, who had been so much pleased with the company, and the tales they had heard, that they had taken the resolution of joining themselves to their pilgrimage, to the shrine of our Lady of Walsingham, in the hope of more entertainment of the same kind by the way.

The Queen Dowager of France duly performed her promise of bestowing the golden angel on mine hostess at parting, but Wolsey, to the infinite amusement of Wyatt and Anne Boleyn, manifested his resentful remembrance of the buffet he had received, by strictly questioning every article of the score; and instead of his usual custom of flinging down, by way of payment, a handful of uncounted Harry sovereigns, he compelled mine host to rectify the mistake of a penny, with which he had wrongfully charged his party, and extorted an odd farthing that was due to him in the change; and worse than all, sternly refused to bestow a single pilgrim's token upon mine hostess, though she abated of her habitual viragoish insolence of speech and bearing, so far as to supplicate for these valued pledges, in the humblest manner, it being considered a disgrace to any hostel-house or convent, where Walsingham pilgrims had rested, for them to depart without leaving these testimonials of the hospitable entertainment they had received.

King Henry, having had no great reason to be pleased with the respect that had been shown at the hostel, to majesty in disguise, highly approved of Wolsey's proceedings, both with regard to the score, and withholding the pilgrim's tokens from the uncivil host and hostess of "St. Christopher's Oar."

CHAPTER XXIV.

“The king looked over his left shoulder,
And a grim look looked he.”

OLD BALLAD.

When King Henry and his party arrived at the water's edge, he perceived to his infinite displeasure, that the best places in the ferry-boat, in which they were about to cross to the opposite shore, were already occupied by a motley group, consisting chiefly of those persons who had sheltered in the hostel on the preceding evening. His indignation at this annoyance was greatly augmented, too, when he was informed that they had avowed their intention of joining themselves to the pilgrimage, and accompanying him and his party all the way to Walsingham, whether it might be agreeable to him or not. In pursuance of this resolution they had actually been beforehand with him in securing themselves places in the boat, which, when he was familiarly invited to enter, his wrath boiled over in the following gracious address to the intruders—

“Ha ye vile knaves! ye untaught varlets! Do ye think we are going to embark in the same boat with a worse crew than the unclean beasts in Noah's ark? Out with ye, I say! or by the holy rood I will cause the ferrymen to souse you all into the deepest part of the stream!”

"Aye, aye! if *you* get into the boat I dare swear you will, master," responded his old adversary, Mistress Abigail Trudget, "for I deem you are fat enough to sink the vessel, and withall have sins enow to pull the judgement of drowning on the heads of all the folks who may be found in your reprobate company. I hope, master ferryman," she continued, "you will oblige us all by pushing off without that heavy-sided pilgrim who would prove a very Jonas to our voyage."

This sort of eloquence was not without its effect on the ferryman, who was just preparing to push off without the king and his company; but the sight of a noble, which Wolsey held up to him over his royal master's shoulder, speedily altered his determination; and bidding Mistress Abigail hold her peace, and make room for her betters, he moored his boat as close to the bank as he could, for the better accommodation of the ladies, who were speedily inducted into the huge flat-bottomed vessell by the king, the emperor, and Brandon.

When the pilgrims were once more in the saddle, King Henry beheld, with much dissatisfaction, the unwelcome addition to the cavalry of the pilgrimage of a huge packhorse, that carried double; on this beast was exalted Mistress Abigail Trudget, behind Master Goose, the tailor, whom she had prevailed upon to undertake a pious journey to Walsingham forsooth. Some pilgrims of still humbler degree followed on asses, and a number of sturdy pedestrians brought up the rear, who joined the party in quality of bedesmen, meaning to live on their alms during the whole of their progress to the lady shrine; and these vagrants on account of the badness of the roads, were fully able to keep pace with the royal pilgrims though so gallantly mounted.

All devotees, traveling to any celebrated shrine, were subjected to these augmentations of piously disposed persons, of every degree, by the way; and, however little the intrusion was relished, it was part of their religious duty to endure it at least with an appearance of complacency. King Henry had however, some ado to preserve his temper, when, on drawing near to the town of Linton, they were joined by four well-mounted persons in pilgrims' weeds, in whom to his infinite indignation he recognised Squire Goggs and his three tenants.

The squire saluted the royal pilgrims with jocose familiarity, and purring his fat sleek sorrel mare between the king and Anne Boleyn took up his station by the side of the latter; and presently embraced an opportunity of whispering to her, "that for love of her he had

donned a palmer's cloak and hood, and was vowed to the shrine of Walsingham."

The incorrigible coquette demurely replied that "she was well-pleased by so decided a token of his regard," and having taken umbrage at something the king said to her in the ferry-boat, and being deeply offended at Wyatt's attention to a fair novice under the care of the Abbess of Ely, she honored the Gretna swine, as Wyatt styled him, with a far greater show of attention than was by any means proper for a lady of noble blood to bestow on one of his degree.

The two queens being greatly fatigued by the vigil of the preceding night, and a heavy shower coming on as they approached the town of Linton, the venerable Abbot of Glastonbury prevailed on Wolsey and the king to allow their party to avail themselves of the hospitable monastic accommodation that place afforded; accordingly they dined sumptuously, reposed for the rest of the day, and spent the night at the crouched Friars' Priory at Banham, a hamlet of Linton, where, in compliance with the pressing entreaties of Queen Catherine and Mary of France, the Abbess of Ely related the tale of "The Royal Sisters."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ROYAL SISTERS.

“Deep in the forest’s tangled tracks
Where roamed, at large, fierce Waltham Blacks.”

ANONYMOUS.

Ye have all heard of the pleasant palace of Havering Bower, in the Green Forest of Waltham, which in past ages hath so oft afforded a retreat to the widowed queens of England. I have been told, that our present sovereign lady, good Queen Catherine, much delighted in the place and that she hath greatly improved and beautified it, for the better entertainment of our gracious lord, King Henry; for whose diversion she is accustomed to make princely sport, when he cometh to hunt with his court in Waltham chase.

There were no such merry doings at Havering Bower, in the reign of our late lord, King Henry the Seventh, of happy memory; for it may be recollected that the lady-palace, as it hath sometimes been called, was assigned by him for a residence for his royal sisters-in-law, the orphan and daughters of King Edward the Fourth.

The youngest of these princesses, the Lady Bridget, being of a heavenly-minded temper from her cradle, took the veil at a very early period of her life; and I believe King Henry would have been as well pleased, if the others could have been induced to follow her pious example; but when the same was hinted to the Lady Cicely, and her sisters Anne and Catherine, they protested their utter disinclination to

a conventual life, with such earnestness, that their royal brother-in-law thought it better not to press the matter too closely.

The nearness of these ladies to the succession, in case the princely, issue of the king by their elder sister, our late sovereign lady, Elizabeth of York, should fail, rendered it impolitic to allow them to contract marriages with foreign princes, much less with subjects, since all the perilous strife, and deadly effusion of English blood, in the unhallowed wars of the rival roses, had originated in the inauspicious marriage of Richard, Earl of Cambridge, with Anne Mortimer, a lady situated in a somewhat similar position to themselves, as regarded the future succession.

King Henry placed these royal sisters, who were then unfortunately the objects of his jealousy, under the care of the widow of one of his most tried adherents; this was the Lady Killingworth; and be it known to you, my worthy brothers and sisters of the pilgrimage, that this was my worldly name and station; albeit, it seemeth so strange unto me since I have eschewed all mundane things under the consecrated veil of the Abbess of Ely, that I will speak of my former self in the course of my narrative, even as of a strange and indifferent person. In this important trust, was associated Sir Ralph Swillington. He was a man whose narrowness of mind and tyrannical temper well qualified him to play the part of a jailor; and these royal ladies, though treated with all the princely ceremonials to which their lofty birth, and nearness to the throne entitled them, were in truth, little better than prisoners of state, at Havering Bower.

The ladies, Cicely, Anne, and Catherine Plantagenet, were maidens of a high spirit, and little relished the uninterrupted seclusion of the life, which the narrow policy of their royal brother-in-law compelled them to lead, at Havering Bower.

A royal table and suitable retinue, were, it is true, provided for their accommodation; and they had the liberty of hunting, and practising all other princely divertisements, in which ladies of their age, and high rank, might feel disposed to engage; but, as it was always in the presence, and under the surveillance, of Sir Ralph Swillington, they took little pleasure in these things.

At length the increasing unpopularity of the king afforded only too favorable an opportunity for the formidable insurrection in favor of that bold adventurer, Perkin Warbeck. King Henry, finding that among many other causes of offence he had unfortunately given his subjects,

the entire seclusion of the queen's sisters had been publicly censured, thought proper to invite the Lady Cicely to visit the court, and to act as one of the sponsors to the infant princess Mary, his daughter.

An event like this, we may suppose, was anticipated with no slight degree of interest, by a royal beauty, who had passed the last nine years of her spring-season of life in solitude far more profound than the seclusion of a convent. Her sisters, the ladies Anne and Catherine, though somewhat mortified at not being included in the royal invitation, were full of expectation that some fortunate change for themselves would result from an interview between the queen and Cicely, whom they charged even in the hearing of Sir Ralph Swillington, to repeat his injurious treatment of them, to their royal sister.

"Aye, and to the king as well, Cecil," said Catherine; "for albeit, the false knave pretends that he has authority for his behaviour, I am well advised that the king being a knight, and our kinsman withal, would cause him to be hanged over the gateway, if he knew only one half of his insolence."

Sir Ralph Swillington regarded the royal sisters with a malign asstance, as much as to intimate, that he would treasure these imprudent threats in the evil tablets of his memory, as debts for which they should account to him with some somewhat of usury, on some occasion.

The absence of the Lady Cicely, temporary as it was, increased the gloom of Havering Bower, in no slight degree, for her sweetness of temper and amiable qualities had endeared her, not only to her sisters, but to the Lady Killingsworth, by whom she was very tenderly beloved.

At length the day appointed for her return arrived, and when evening came, the ladies Anne and Catherine, with Lady Killingsworth, sought the leads of the mansion to watch for her approach. Hour after hour however passed away, the shades of twilight closed over the leafy glades of the forest, and the moon had risen and was flinging her silvery brightness over hill and dale, but no Cicely appeared.

The castle clock proclaimed the eleventh hour, and the princesses began to entertain apprehensions lest some evil accident had befallen their sister to occasion this delay.

The lady Killingsworth was of opinion that the king had detained her for another day in order to grace some courtly pageant or processson with her presence.

The two princesses laughed the idea to scorn assuring lady Killingsworth, that the king, if so courteously disposed toward the Lady Cicely,

would have doubtless dispatched an express to prevent any alarm, the amiable Sir Ralph Swillington and herself might suffer on account of her protracted absence.

Another hour had worn away in expectation, which now assumed the character of painful suspense, and lady Killingsworth, after representing to the princesses the improbability of the Lady Cicely having been permitted to commence her journey after sunset, told them, as the ride from London could be performed in less than three hours, she must have arrived long ere this, even if she had left London so late as seven o'clock; therefore, it would be vain to watch for her any longer that night. Lady Killingsworth concluded, by expressing her fears, lest they should take cold, from being so long exposed to the chilly dews and damp night air.

"So that my will and pleasure be not gainsayed," said the Lady Anne, haughtily, "I care little for the endangerment of my health."

"In truth," added the Lady Catherine, "its preservation is not worth the heeding in this cheerless solitude, though, *Grace de Dieu!* I never suffered from any malady but heaviness of heart."

"That is admitting somewhat in favor of the salubrity of a spot, which, notwithstanding the contempt you and my Lady Anne are pleased to express, has been the abode of many royal ladies," observed Lady Killingsworth.

"Aye," retorted the Princess Catherine, in high disdain, "toothless dowagers, who were fain to retire hither, to hide their infirmities from the eye of man. I wish my days of dowagerhood be still far distant; albeit, King Richmond's policy dooms our maiden roses to wither in a place only meet for age and sorrow, as if, like the ancient possessors of this bower of gloom, we too have outlived the charms and joyous hopes of youth."

"Henry of Richmond is not content with immuring us within this sylvan prison-house," observed the Lady Anne, "but lest we should be tempted to stray beyond its doleful bounds, he hath appointed us our jailors, both male and female."

"I would, that his grace had put any other office on the widow of his faithful servant than that of governess of honor to ladies, whom it is impossible to conciliate, by either kindness or the most scrupulous exercise of respectful deference," said Lady Killingsworth. "Were it not for the sake of the Lady Cicely, your sister, I would have relinquished the post long ere this; but there is some meekness in that

sweet child, Heaven bless her ! and there she comes at last, but in unwonted company."

The two princesses hastened with Lady Killingworth to the portal of the gate-tower, to receive and welcome their sitter.

To the great surprise of all within the castle, the Lady Cicely had returned without any other escort, than that of two stout well-armed foresters, while her palfrey rein was led by a gentleman, who wore the dress of a Breton cavalier.

Instead of replying to the warden's challenge, he turned to the princess with these words ;—

" Having guarded you safe to the verge of your own dwelling, permit me to say farewell ; since I can be of no farther service."

" Not so," replied the princess, " I hope the Lady Killingworth will permit me to invite you to enter the Bower-palace, and partake of needful rest and refreshment."

" I am willing to do so, provided it will not incur the king's displeasure," replied Lady Killingworth in a hesitating tone.

" For the approbation of the queen my sister, I can answer," said the princess, " and I think even for the gratitude of my brother-in-law, the king, in a case like this," she continued, bending her lovely eyes with an eloquent look of entreaty on the stranger, who stood with his plumed cap in his hand, gazing passionately upon her, by the light of the torches which the servants in the court-yard held.

" The king's gratitude !" he exclaimed, with a bitter laugh. " Lady, you make me smile despite of heaviness of heart. Lightly I ween, would Henry of Richmond value the service which it has been my good hap to render you."

" Ah !" sighed she, " if my own royal father had been living, the gallant deed which you have performed would not have lacked meet guardon at his hands."

" His hands !" returned the stranger, starting back, with a look of horror, " those hands were stained with the blood of all my house.—Farewell, lady ! for your sweet sake I would fain forget that you derive your being from the remorseless tyrant, Edward of York, whose crimes God may forgive, but I cannot."

With these words he turned hastily about, and mounting his gallant steed, rode off at fiery speed ; and followed the green glades of Epping Forest, leaving the Lady Cicely pale and speechless, with sad surprise,

at the unhappy termination of a scene in which she had been only too deeply interested.

"Heaven bless and preserve us from the visits of such gallants!" said the Lady Anne, when they had gained the privacy of their own apartment. "What chance threw you under his protection, sister?"

"An evil chance it was," replied Lady Cicely, "and had it not been for the interposition of his valor, I might not have been alive at this hour." She then proceeded to inform them, that she was attacked by ruffians, as she was crossing Waltham Forest; who, having slain two of her guards, and put to flight the rest, were proceeding, with many frightful threats, to tear the rings from her fingers, and the chain from her neck, when her cries attracted the gallant stranger, and his followers to the spot; who, after a most desperate encounter with the ruffians, succeeded in dispersing them, and carrying her off in safety. That he had demeaned himself towards her, when left singly in his power, as became a knight and a gentleman; and had, in compliance with her wishes, conducted her to Havering Bower.

Having satisfied the anxiety of her sisters on that point, they began to make enquiries respecting her reception at court.

"In truth, my sisters, the whole ceremonial was as dull and spiritless as can be imagined," said she. "The queen was passing kind to me in her closet; but in public she was too silent and sad to pay me much regard."

"Poor heart! she is little less to be pitied than ourselves," said Catherine, "but how did King Richmond demean himself toward you?"

"Oh! he honored me with a low reverence and a kiss withal, which savored mightily of his conventual breeding; and enquired, with due solemnity, after his *tres chere* sisters at Havering in the Bower. He likewise favored me with a sight of his infant progeny, and caused the hopeful heir of Pendragon to present me with a diamond carcanet and pendants, of small value, as a proof of his regard to his loving aunt. At parting too, his highness expressed himself marvelously well disposed to pleasure us in all reasonable matters."

"We are mightily beholden to him for his gracious care of us," returned Catherine, ironically. "But methinks, our royal brother is losing time, in providing fitting consorts for his beloved sisters. Prithee, Cicely, did he touch on that point?"

"In good faith, Catherine, he appeared to consider us perfectly out of the question, when matrimonial projects were brought on the tapis,

although he talked of the necessity of providing suitable spouses for bantlings of his own, the eldest of which has not seen seven summers."

"His paternal solicitude is provident betimes," said Catherine, "but how did the nobles of the court bear themselves toward the daughter of their late sovereign?"

"Those who were inclined to Yorkist principles, ventured not to direct a glance toward my sister or myself, lest they should be suspected of paying treasonable homage to the white rose; but their caution was best pleasing to me."

"And how did the Lancastrian party demean themselves?"

"Oh! with the free and easy bearing of men who considered themselves entitled to become candidates for the hands of royal damsels."

"I was counted passing fair among them too: and it appeared that they risked nought by allowing their admiration to become apparent."

"Insolent traitors! a marvel at their presumption!" exclaimed the Princess Anne, "I would soon convince them of their folly, did they dare to raise their eyes to me."

"Under favor," said Catherine, "I think you would act unwisely; for were it my fortune to appear lovely in the eyes of a red-nose gallant, his passion should provide me with store of diversion enough to dispel for a whole month the tedium of this solitude; where, in good sooth, we are as dolorous as in the sanctuary, in the days of wicked uncle Dickon."

"Ah!" said the Lady Cicely, sighing, "how can you, with so much levity, recall the memory of those most unhappy days? Surely we are ungrateful to Providence, in murmuring against the peaceful asylum in which we are permitted to find shelter, after the frightful storms that troubled our dawn of life."

Then, complaining of fatigue, she embraced her sisters, and they separated for the night.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“She brightened like the lily
Till her wan hue was gone,
And with rosy cheek and rubie lip
She smiled her love upon.”

OLD BALLAD—THE GAY GOSS-HAWK.

The pale cheek and heavy eyes of the Lady Cicely, next morning, attracted the attention of her sisters. To their anxious enquiries respecting her indisposition, she replied, “that she had been troubled with agitating dreams of her past dangers.”

“In which, I suppose, your brave deliverer had his due share,” said Catherine, archly peeping into her sister’s eyes; who sighed and was silent

“I should deem you unwise,” said the Lady Anne, “if you bestowed more than your dreaming thoughts on such a will-of-the-wisp as that same errant knight of yours; I own I liked neither his guise or bearing. What is your opinion, Catherine?”

“Oh, if I could have permitted my fancy to step backward nearly three centuries, I should have ventured to pronounce him no other than the gallant outlaw of Sherwood Forest, accompanied by twain of

his merry men ; but our gracious sovereign, *de facto*, takes good care to keep his greenwoods clear from such unlicensed rangers, for the better preservation of his lieges' purses, and his own venison."

"Surely," exclaimed the Lady Cicely, coloring indignantly, "you cannot suspect my gallant perserver of being a lawless freebooter?"

"Better men than he have taken up that calling in these troublous days, and had I not heard his undisguised hatred of our party, I should have guessed him a confiscated Yorkist, who had taken himself to a desperate way of gaining his livelihood ; but though malcontent against Richmond's government, he was plainly a stark Lancastrian."

"Is it not time that those fatal distinctions should be forgotten, my dear Catherine, or would you see again a revival of the fearful days, when the hostile names of York and Lancaster were the rival war-cries that armed brother against brother, father against son, in the unhallowed strife which drenched England's desolated fields with the life-blood of her children, for thirty years of unprecedented horror, and caused such frightful crimes to be committed, as either side obtained the vantage in the unholy struggle?"

"You, then, Cicely, are contented to see the rights of our family entirely usurped by the Earl of Richmond, who disdains even to mention the better title of his consort."

"Be patient for awhile, Catherine, and you will see the glory of our house revive in the posterity of our sister, whose elder claim we are all bound to recognise."

"Very dutifully spoken, Cecil ; your late visit to the court has marvellously improved your loyalty, and, peradventure, when I stand high enough in King Richard's favor to receive an invitation to the court, his graciousness may have a like happy effect upon my rebellious temper, but," continued Catherine, "in the mean season, I shall indulge myself in what freedom of speech listeth me best, since even the caged dove lamenteth her captivity, unrestrained by the displeasure of her tyrannous keeper."

"Certes, it is not of personal restraint that your ladyship complains," said Lady Killingworth ; "since you have free liberty of riding, hunting, hawking, or any other princely divertisement, suitable to your sex and age."

"Yes, truly, but in the presence of jailors, and surrounded by spies, I marvel who could take pleasure in the like company ! I care not if I never hunt or hawk again, on such terms," rejoined the Lady Anne.

“And greatly Henry of Richmond would heed if you never did,” said Catherine, laughing. “Now I am differently minded, and since it appears that we may recreate ourselves in these exercises, at our pleasure, I will, that you, Lady Killingworth, order, forthwith, the huntsmen and hounds to hold themselves in readiness to attend us by the time we have donned our riding tire ; as I mean to hunt this very day.”

“Any thing to content your ladyship if it be within the bounds of possibility,” replied Lady Killingsworth, leaving the room for the purpose of giving the necessary orders.

In the space of an hour the steeds were caparisoned, the hounds coupled, and the whole of the princesses’ retinue in attendance.

“It is near unto high noon, an’t like your royal graces,” said Wolfran, the huntsman, much disconcerted by the unsportsman-like proceeding, of commencing the chase at so unseasonable an hour. “I wot you must be contented with woeful lack of sport to-day ; besides, the scorching beams of the sun will not only risk marring your beauties, but what is worse, will cause the dogs to hang chase withall—poor beauties !”

“Never fear, Walfran,” replied the Lady Catherine, laughing, “against the first peril, our riding masks will defend us : and as for the second, if it should chance to befall, we will promise not to chide you, or accuse your beloved dogs of having disgraced their training, but rest satisfied with the better divertisement of having followed our own pleasure.”

After beating the covers, in vain, for some time, Wolfran at last started a pied buck, and the whole party followed the chase in high spirits. The Lady Catherine had ever been accustomed to be the foremost rider ; but white Clovis, Lady Cicely’s favorite hunter, had, during his mistress’s late absence, been aired by Baldwin, the page, and now began to evince some of the long dormant spirit which the equestrian abilities of that audacious youngster had drawn forth ; and seeing the Lady Catherine’s steed before him, white Clovis determined not to be outdone, and set off at such speed that he soon distanced the whole train.

The Lady Cicely was in no mood to enjoy the boisterous amusement of the chase that day, and endeavored to restrain the mettlesome spirit, of her steed, whereat white Clovis taking umbrage, began to rear and plunge with such violence, that his fair rider feeling some alarm lest she should be unable to keep her seat, cried for assistance to a per-

son in hunter's garb, whom she perceived at a little distance, leaning against a tree. He instantly intercepted the horse, and seizing the bridle rein firmly, lifted the princess from the saddle and placed her in safety on the green turf. Meantime the refractory steed sprang off after the hounds with the speed of an arrow.

"It was fortunate that I was near you at so critical a moment, lady," he said, "for one of the girths of your saddle had given way."

Cicely uttered a lively exclamation of pleasure at the sound of his voice; and at the same moment raising her eyes to his face, recognised the features of the brave unknown; who had on the preceding evening rescued her from a fate so full of horror.

"By what chance is it, gallant stranger," said she, "that you are ever at hand in the time of peril?"

"Through the direction of my good angel, I should say," he replied, respectfully raising the hand which she extended toward his lips, "were it not that the happiness of being able to render you a trifling service is purchased at a price which is fatal to my peace."

"How will you explain that saying, fair sir!" asked the princess, looking down and blushing.

"Nay, gentle lady, ask me not to do that, or I shall say too much," he replied, with an eloquent glance.

"You will tell me your name, at any rate, I hope," said Cicely, "for though I do not recognise your features, your voice is so familiar to mine ear, that I am tempted to think we have met before; nay, now I look at you more attentively, I am persuaded that we have, but it must have been in years long past."

"Was it not in the sanctuary at Westminster, royal lady?" said the stranger, a sudden flush of pleasure lighting up his melancholy features.

"In good sooth, it was," she replied. "How could I ever forget the noble youth who was wont to render my unhappy mother, my sisters, and myself, so many kindly courtesies?—you are the heir of Welles and Willoughby?"

"The last representative of that unfortunate house," he rejoined, "but Lady Cicely, you are too kind to bear in mind such trifling marks of sympathy and attention, as an unfortunate orphan boy (whose life was only preserved by the protection of sanctuary) was able to render you."

"You know not how precious they were to us at the time they were

offered," she replied, "nor how sweet the remembrance of them has been to me, at least, in the dreary interval that has past since last we met."

"And is it possible," said Welles, pressing the soft arm that rested on his, to his throbbing heart; "is it possible, fair Plantagenet, that you have ever condescended to bestow a thought on one who has been forgotten by all the world beside?"

"Ask me not how many!" said she, blushing, and averting her eyes.

She felt the arm on which she leaned tremble as she spoke; and when she ceased, Welles seizing both her hands in his exclaimed in a voice broken with strong emotion—

"Why have we met again, since inexorable destiny must for aye divide those whose fond hearts love has in vain united?"

"You are mistaken," said Cicely, "if you suppose that my royal birth will form a barrier to my union with a subject. The king (if indeed his selfish policy, doom not myself and my sisters to a life of cloistered seclusion) will, or I mistake him strangely, easily forgive the offence of our forming inferior alliances."

"Tell me no more," interrupted Welles, passionately, "or say you are the daughter of a crestless yeoman! nay, of a peasant—of any father, save the remorseless tyrant who doomed mine to a scaffold."

"Alas!" replied the weeping Cicely, "I have been told that the memory of that deed sat heavily on my poor father's spirit, in the hour of his departure; and sorely did he supplicate the saints to intercede with him for pardon; and if deep penitence could avail him, I trust his soul has gotten grace." She wept afresh.

"Wretch that I am, to grieve your gentle nature thus, sweet maid!" said Welles, who was deeply moved at the sight of Cicely's tears.

"Nay," she replied, "however painful it is for a child to hear allusions to a father's crimes, I can readily forgive the pang your words have inflicted on my heart, Lord Welles; for well I know how deadly have been the wrongs you have suffered from my house—would that it were in my power to atone to you for them."

"Angel!" exclaimed Welles, gazing with mournful tenderness upon her, "why is it not permitted to me to devote my life to your service? and why does the red torrent of a father's and a grandsire's blood rush like a sea of fire, between me and the daughter of their murderer?"

"And yet," said Cicely, "Henry of Richmond, your master, scrupled not to wed my sister, under circumstances of a similar nature."

"True," replied Welles, "and in a blessed hour for bleeding England, entwined the rival roses in the myrtle wreath of wedlock, yet I have been told the union has not been productive of happiness to themselves."

"Because the cold-hearted tyrant could not appreciate the love of a faithful consort; nor forget that her title to the crown he wears was better than his own," said Cicely; "but you are not like him, noble Welles."

"Hear me, sweet maid," said Welles, "for I have other scruples not to be lightly overcome. You are the daughter of a king—nay, more than that; after your sister and her children—presumptive heiress to a throne—the throne of England, royal Cicely! and shall I, a landless adventurer, in the service of a foreign prince, dare to raise my eyes to you?"

"They say princesses must be wooers, if they would wed with those beneath them, noble Welles," replied Cicely, blushing; "if indeed you love me—"

"Bear witness for me, all ye saints and angels!" exclaimed Wells passionately, "if ever man loved more truly, more devotedly than I."

"Then why do you not ask me of the king? as you are of a race whose fealty to the cause of Lancaster has been so deeply testified," said Cicely.

"Would you indeed forego the chance of royalty, and all the lofty hopes to which you are by birth entitled, to unite yourself to a man of desperate fortunes?" demanded Welles; and Cicely raising her full clear blue eyes to his face, replied unhesitatingly—

"I would."

There was a majestic brevity in her reply, that might have well seemed a queen's declaration of her pleasure to a subject, and yet all the tender devotion of a lover was conveyed in those two words: Welles forgot every consideration which had hitherto impelled him to do violence to his own feelings, and throwing himself at her feet avowed his passion, and plighted his faith in reply.

The continuance of their perilous interview was precarious. Welles, in answer to a question of hers, proceeded to inform the Lady Cicely, that the king's ingratitude, in having purchased the co-operation of the person on whom the forfeited heritage of his family had been bestowed,

by confirming King Edward's grant to him for ever, had induced him, after having distinguished himself in the battle of Bosworth, to leave the kingdom in disgust, and having entered into the service of the Duke of Bretagne, he had attained to a command of some importance in his army ; but after the death of the duke, and the marriage of his heiress with the King of France, he had recently returned to his native country, and having by accident seen her and her sisters during the solemnization of high mass at the abbey, he had experienced a renewal of the boyish passion that had at first touched his youthful heart, while in the sanctuary at Westminster, and had not been able to resist the delight of lingering in the vicinity of Havering Bower, in order to enjoy the happiness of occasionally beholding her.

More, much more, would Welles have said on this subject, but the park now rang with a tumultuous winding of horns, and the shouts of the attendants crying :—

“The Lady Cicely !—What ?—Ho ! the princess !”

“We must part,” said she, “I am missed, and must, by my instant appearance, quiet the alarm of my sisters and Lady Killingworth. Perchance we may meet again.”

“Oh, doubtless !” he replied, impetuously ; then added in a suppressed voice of deep emotion : “Albeit, it were better for us both, if we never did !”

Cicely turned a reproachful glance upon him,—and then exclaimed :—

“Aye ! let us meet and quickly—only name the time and place, lady mine, for I am yours through life and death ——”

“Nay ! mock me not with such deceitful words of homage and devotion,” replied the princess, “since your will consents not to the passion you avow, proud Lancastrian, and it irks your cold heart to love the daughter of your foe.”

“It is a crime in me to do so, as well you know, sweet maid, and yet I would not help it if I could !”—he continued, clasping her hand in his.

“Say you so, brave Welles,” returned Cicely, smiling through her tears, “then am I well content to own my love, and to appoint you a meeting in the chapel this very evening, after vespers. You shall gain admittance without difficulty, for it is open to all who feel disposed to pay their devotions at the shrine of St. Edward, the royal patron and founder of Havering Bower.”

The sudden approach of her company prevented her from saying more; and as the honorable feelings and manly pride of Welles forbade him to make an abrupt retreat at their appearance, the princess was still leaning on his arm when they drew nigh.

The attendants of the Lady Cicely uttered a glad cry at seeing her in safety; and her sisters greeted her with tears of joy, telling her how sorely frightened they had been, by finding white Clovis in at the death of the stag, without his rider.

"Ah! white Clovis that was wont to be so gentle, has practised headstrong tricks and evil caracols to day," said the princess, "but Providence again sent this valiant gentleman to my rescue."

"Methinks 'tis strangely fortunate that this gentleman, who, if I mistake him not, is the gallant of last night, should chance to be always at hand at the very moment of your peril, my lady princess," observed Sir Ralph Swillington, eyeing Welles with a close inquisition, that passed the bounds of common courtesy.

Welles bore his scrutiny with an air of haughty indifference; and replied scornfully:—

"It is well, as you observe, Sir Castellan, or whatever else may be your proper title of office, that strangers are sometimes at hand to succour this royal lady; since those whose duty it is to protect her, are so negligent of their charge."

Sir Ralph Swillington bit his lip; and turning from Welles, said:—

"I would whisper a word of advice in my Lady Killingworth's ear—That it would become her to look more closely to the movements of such errant damosels for the future. For mine own part, I shall hold it my duty to report this mal-adventure to my lord the king."

"You may spare yourself the trouble, Sir Ralph Swillington," said the Lady Cicely, "for it is my intention to inform my royal brother and sister, forthwith, of my late perils; and I shall be instant with his highness to remove us from this place into his more immediate care and protection, for which he will doubtless consider the negligence of our present servants as a sufficient reason."

"In the mean time, look to yourself, fair madam! and consider whether your late conduct and new associates will bear the examination of his highness's council," muttered the castellan between his shut teeth.

It was well for him that the fiery Welles heard not this insolent speech; or fatal consequences might have ensued. As it was, the

young lady, as if in defiance of Swillington's implied menaces, refused to remount her horse, and permitted Welles to walk by her side. till they reached the very gates of the palace; and when they were flung open to receive her, she turned to Welles, and said:—

“Noble stranger, had I a home of which I was the mistress, I would say, enter freely, and partake of the hospitality of a Plantagenet.”

“And, by my faith! madam,” said the castellan, “the king does not empower you to give harbour to all the vagrants you may find lurking (with what purpose God wot) on his manor of Havering in the Bower.”

“Villain! thou shalt pay dearly for thy taunts,” exclaimed Welles, starting forward, and laying hand on his sword. Sir Ralph retreated hastily within the gates, and began to call to his serving-men to fetch him his rapier, as the one he wore was not trust-worthy to execute his vengeance.

“For heaven's sake forbear,” said the princess, detaining Welles, who was about to follow the castellan into his strong hole: “consider the construction the king will put on this rashness.”

“I obey you, gracious lady, and shall suffer him to escape this time, without fitting punishment; but let him not again insult you, in my presence. Farewell, ladies,” continued Welles, “if you have farther cause of complaint, commit your quarrel to the king, who must, and will redress your wrongs.”

He bowed to the fair sisters, and slowly and sternly withdrew.

“He is a valiant man and true, and of a noble presence, withal,” said the Lady Catherine, following his majestic figure with her eyes, until he disappeared among the thick copse-wood of a grove to the left.

“I wis we did him injustice in our surmises of last night,” replied the Lady Anne.

“You did, undoubtedly,” said Catherine, “but notwithstanding, I could have kissed him outright, for his bold bearing and brave replies to yon saucy Jack-in-office, Ralph Swillington: yet I will still aver, that he doth strangely resemble that hero of ballad lore, bold Robin Hood.”

The Lady Cicely expressing some uneasiness at this discourse, the sisters retired into their withdrawing room, and busied themselves with their embroidery frames in silence.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“A peerless page was Fridolin.”

SCHILLER.

After an hour's quiet occupation, the Lady Catherine pushed her frame from her, saying, “Out upon this stupid stitchery, I am weary of it! I protest I would rather roam the land, at mine own discretion, in gipsy tire, than wear the royal robes in a palace, where I am abiding contrary to my own free will.”

“Hist! ladies,” said Baldwin, the page peeping in, “are there no tale-bearers within earshot?”

“None, good Baldwin,” replied the Lady Catherine, “therefore declare your tidings.”

“Your ladyship will scarcely thank me for them, as they are none of the best; but the truth is, that Sir Swillington has penned a notable epistle, in which he has given a mal-representation to the king of the perverse accidents that have lately befallen the Lady Cicely.”

“The malicious traitor!” exclaimed the Lady Catherine, “but how know you this, for certain, Baldwin; since I trow you are not his chosen counsellor?”

“Yet I am ever of his counsel when he indites a letter, for he has a habit of repeating every word he writes aloud, and as I am often near

his study door, I become, *par accident*, edified by his whole correspondence."

"Thou art a wayward imp," said Lady Cicely, "yet I thank thee for thy friendly warning, and will speedily circumvent our enemy, by writing a full detail of these misadventures to the king, and truth shall prevail."

"Not if your grace designs to send her to court," observed Baldwin slyly, "therefore I humbly advise you, to devise as plausible a tale as you may, to which myself will bear witness, as I am in duty bound to serve you, both by word and deed; and the word may, in these times, often perform better service than the deed."

"Go to, Baldwin! thou art an adept in all the arts of thy calling, I see," said the Lady Cicely, "but in this instance, as in every other with which I have had concernment, a plain statement of facts will best avail me; and if I need thy aid, it will be in seeking me out some trust-worthy messenger, who will deliver my packet to the king."

"That will avail your ladyship right little," replied Baldwin, "when his highness shall have read Swillington's story, which he will have done, a good hour before your letter arrives. Now, if I might presume to offer you counsel, it would be to empower some adventurous knight, or squire, such as, perchance, your royal ladyship may well wot of, to pursue Swillington's courier, and either by fraud or force win his letter from him, detaining him withal, until your own letter is sped and I would myself (for want of a better adventure) mount white Clovis, and ride, forthwith; at full speed, to Sheen, where I would engage to deliver your packet, faithfully and discreetly, into the king's own hands."

"By my faith, sister," said Lady Catherine, "the boy counsels well. Were I you, I would prevail on the gallant ranger of the greenwood, to add this one service to those he has already rendered you; and if I read him rightly, it is a deed he will delight in."

"No," answered the Lady Cicely, "I will never engage him in so perilous an adventure. Swillington's packet shall not be prevented by any such questionable measure of mine. I will be immediate in writing to the king; but will leave mine epistle to the good ordering of Providence, who will care for the cause of truth and innocence."

She then called for her writing tables, and penned a short, clear, and dignified statement of the whole matter; and having superscribed the dispatch "To the most royal hands of the king's highness," she

encircled it with a narrow silver riband, richly wrought with flowers in needle-work, and sealed it with a device, betokening the united roses of York and Lancaster, surrounded with a wreath of laurel and myrtle, mingled with olive leaves.

“Ha!” exclaimed the Lady Anne, disdainfully regarding the impression, “is this a device meet for a princess of the legitimate line of York to use?”

“The seal was a present from the king, among other toys, at the time of his espousals,” replied the princess Cicely; “I think the use of it, in the present conjuncture of our affairs, may avail me somewhat. It is ever wise to mingle the cunning of the harmful serpent with the truth of the innocent dove.”

She then placed her packet in the hands of Baldwin, charging him to leave the castle secretly, and use his utmost speed in reaching Sheen; and with the Lady Anne, accompanied Lady Killingworth to attend the vesper service in the chapel, leaving the Lady Catherine alone; who, for reasons best known to herself, declined attending evening prayers.

It is to be feared that the thoughts of the Lady Cicely were more occupied by her approaching interview with Welles, than with her devotion.

When the service ended, and the Lady Anne, with the officers of the household, was retiring, the elder princess expressed a wish of remaining in the chapel, for the purpose of private meditation.

After the departure of the priest and his little flock, the Lady Cicely remained alone in the state gallery leaning against an open window, and watching the varying colours of the western clouds, as their bright tints faded, and melted into the grey shades of twilight, as one by one they vanished, till all were gone, and the heavens retained no trace of their glories.

So faded the hopes of the princess, as hour after hour wore away, and her lover appeared not; and she now recalled to her mind his expression—“that it were better for them both if they never met again.” Unwillingly she came to the conclusion, that his deeply rooted sentiments of enmity to her father’s house had conquered the love with which, in spite of those feelings, he had evidently regarded her, and she sighed when she reflected on how sandy a foundation she had permitted herself to erect hopes that were so soon to be crushed. A momentary flush of resentment and wounded pride suffused her cheek, as she thought that she had suffered her ideas to rest on one, who could not

sacrifice party animosity for her, who would willingly resign the hopes of the throne to which she was nearly allied, for his sake ; and would not for a moment weigh his fallen fortunes against his noble and heroic qualities.

Still she lingered, reluctant to give up all the hopes of an interview which she had anticipated with such thrilling interest, till the chimes of the chapel, proclaiming the ninth hour, warned her that her absence would no longer be tolerated. Slowly and sadly she retired from the chapel and bade adieu to all hopes of seeing Welles again.

On her return to the castle, she encountered Sir Ralph Swillington, who surveyed her with a look the most offensive and insolent ; then calling to Peter, his confidential servant, he bade him " summon twelve of the household band, to search the precincts of the castle and park, and take into custody any strolling vagrant who might be found lurking thereabout ; doubtless with evil designs against his highness's deer."

The Lady Cicely felt the implied insult, but she possessed too much real dignity to betray any consciousness that she did so. She passed the castellan in silence, and retired to her own apartment.

The entrance of Maudlin, her tirewoman, to perform the nightly duties of the toilet, roused her from the indulgence of a reverie, not unaccompanied with tears.

" Comfort, comfort, dear lady !" said Maudlin, as she placed her silver lamp on the table ; " your ladyship is not in such evil case as you may fear."

" How so, Maudlin ?" asked her lady in some surprise.

" Oh ! I have tidings which will make your melancholy grace smile. I wis, my Lady Katherine laughed outright, and skipped in her merriment, withal, when she heard them."

" I will venture to guess, that Sir Ralph Swillington is displaced from his office ; for nothing on this earth would delight my Lady Catherine so much," replied the princess.

" Your ladyship's guess is a shrewd one, and we will regard it in the light of a prophecy, since such an event is likely to ensue, from your packet being presented to the king, full twelve hours before his highness can hear Sir Swillington's tale."

" Nay, my good Maudlin, I misdoubt me that all Baldwin's speed would prove unequal to the task of overtaking a well-mounted courier who has started an hour before he was in the saddle."

" How Baldwin sped I cannot answer ; but this I know, that over-

taking Gilbert Shaw was a feat that some one was capable of performing, seeing that the varlet returned to the castle within the last ten minutes, having lost Swillington's packet, and gained a broken head."

"Lost Swillington's packet!" repeated the princess in breathless agitation—"how, and by what means?"

"Troth my lady, but that is more than I can learn; all I know farther than what I have unfolded is, that Swillington is in a prodigious fume, and the whole household teems with fuss on the occasion. But here comes my Lady Catherine, who, peradventure can reveal more of the matter."

"Out upon thee for a prating wench!" exclaimed the Princess Catherine, striking Maudlin playfully with the feathers of her fan; "thou hast skimmed the cream of my tidings, by being the first to impart this dainty business to thy lady."

"Your ladyship has yet the advantage of me, seeing that you can enter into the particulars of this affair, whereof I may be said to know nothing beyond the simple facts."

"For the love of holy Mary! keep me no longer in suspense, sweet sister; but declare unto me what plot is on foot," said the Princess Cicely.

"I should not be my father's daughter, no, nor my uncle's niece, if kindred qualities must be confessed," replied Catherine, "if I could not dive into any plot, however warily it might be conducted;" then changing her merry careless tone into a loud and cautious whisper, she continued "But what, Cicely, if the whole were devised by no other person than Catherine Plantagenet, your trusty and well-beloved sister?"

"Tell me, as you love me," cried the Princess Cicely, turning very pale as some undefined surmises crossed her mind, "the means you used to compass your ends, Catherine?"

"What recks it talking of the means, when I can produce so notable a witness of the success of our emprise?" said Catherine, triumphantly displaying a packet sealed with the arms of Swillington.

"Heavenly host! how came that scroll into your possession, Catherine?"

"Before I satisfy you in that particular, girl," replied Catherine, "I crave leave to gratify certain feelings of mine own, which prompt me to take a peep at the epistolary talents of Ralph Swillington, Knight."

"Imprudent Catherine, would you break the seal of a letter addressed to the king?"

“And do you think, Cicely, his grace would cherish the least scruple with regard to a paper superscribed with my name? and therefore, as I would, in common with every other Platagenet, follow the *lex talionis*; and above all, as I did not take all this trouble for nought, here goes,” said Catherine, breaking the seal, and reading as follows, interlarding the text as she proceeded with her comments—

“To the king’s most sacred highness, these presents are addressed, by his most humble and faithful servant Ralph Swillington, Knt.

“May it please your most high and mighty Sovereign,

“It becomes my duty to lay before you as in conscience bound, (*out upon thee, old knave, what hast thou to do with conscience?*) certain passages in the conduct of the Lady Cicely Plantagenet, second daughter of that most notable rebel, the late Duke of York, and sometime King of England, *de facto*, usurping under the style and title of Edward the Fourth (*now, may the gallows receive the vile traitor, for these very words.*) It is a true saying of the prophet, that ‘the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are on edge.’ Now the said Cicely Plantagenet (*Cicely quotha? thou untaught varlet! canst afford no addition to the name of the daughter of thy sometime sovereign?*) partaking largely of the evil qualities of her most evil parent, (*whose worst offence, heaven assoilzie his soul, was leaving the knavish head of Ralph Swillington on his shoulders*) has for a long while been suspected by your highness’s most faithful servant, of holding treasonable correspondence, in common with those most untowardly damosels, her sisters Anne and Catherine Platagenet, (*I thought the vile pickthank would not leave us out*) with that pestiferous woman o’er seas, their aunt of Burgundy, (*how knowest thou that, master jack-in-office?*) and over and above, I myself have incurred the wrath of the said Cicely, for detecting her in open conference with your highness’s rebel and traitor, Perkin, or Peterkin Warbeck, (*now, who, in the name of the saints, may he be?*) in the Park, at your highness’s palace of Havering in the Bower; the residence appointed by your highness in your princely munificence, for these malapert scions from an unblest root; for whom I might venture to observe, the tower were a more fitting lodgment, (*Oh! that uncle Dickon had triumphed at Bosworth, were it only that your vile head might have scared the crows from London bridge!*) and farther be it known, that she returned from your highness’s most royal court, accompanied by the aforesaid pestilent and bloody-minded traitor, Perkin, or Peterkin Warback (*now have I a shrewd guess, who this same*

Peterkin may be, but truly he is not over fortunate in the sound of his name) having, in the course of her journey, aided and abetted him, and divers pugnacious and evil-minded outlaws, his companions, in killing and slaying the royal escort, which your highness graciously appointed to guard her from Windsor, to Havering in the Bower."

"Oh, most false and calumnious assertion! and can he really affirm so villanous an untruth?" interrupted the Princess Cicely, with a burst of bitter sorrow.

"The foul fiend clapperclaw him therefor!" cried Maudlin, transported with rage, at hearing such an accusation brought against her gentle mistress.

"An honest prayer, wench! so I will say amen, at the end of it!" said the Princess Catherine, laughing. "But to pursue this brave epistle to its close."

"And forasmuch, the Lady Cicely did withstand me, with fierce and angry words, backed by the said Perkin or Peterkin, who drew upon me, and had slain me outright, had not certain of your highness's servants interposed; on which he betook himself to flight, or I had arrested him on the spot, in your highness's name, (*Oh brave Ralph Swillington!*) but seeing that he doth yet run up and down in your highness's county of Essex, to the distraction of men's minds, and the imperilment of your subjects' bodies; and that the said damosels, Cicely, Anne, and Catharine Plantagenet, (*damosels! forsooth! deserve we no higher distinguishment from the sometime groom of our uncle Clarence?*) do most notoriously and shamelessly affect the company of the said Perkin or Peterkin Warbeck; having also used certain treasonable and malcontent speeches, in disparagement of your most sacred highness's person and government; to the which Dame Margery Killingworth is oft-time a consenting listener, if not a private approver, (*What! back-biting thy fellow-jailor, Judas?*) I, therefore, lose no time, in laying these matters before your highness, that you may take such steps as prudence and wisdom may dictate, for your Grace's own security, and that of your royal offspring.

"Praying that St. Mary, and all holy saints and martyrs, may holy your highness in their watchful keeping, I remain in all things your grace's most devoted subject and servant to command,

"RALPH SWILLINGTON."

"From his Highness's Royal Manor,
of Havering of the Bower."

"Fie upon the name, for that of a false-hearted traitor!" exclaimed Maudlin, who had listened to the whole letter with a countenance full of indignation, "I would that the broken head, which Gilbert Shaw has gotten down yonder, had been reserved for his master's entertainment withal!"

"Honest Maudlin! true-hearted wench!—methinks, you and I were born under the same star," said Catherine, "for you never put up a prayer for yon old-fox, but I ejaculate a hearty amen to it! But now," she continued, "mine over scrupulous sister, you who were but even now inclined to rate me soundly, as a reward for all the pains I have taken to get this precious piece of villany into mine own hands, answer me one question—how would you have liked this foul misstatement of innocent but embarrassing facts to be placed in the hands of the suspicious tyrant, who rules England, ere your own story had been laid before him?"

"I confess that appearances would have been strongly against me. But, oh! Catherine, Catherine! how much rather would I have trusted to the integrity of mine own cause, than have resorted to indirect means, in order to avert danger from myself, at the expense of peril to others."

"But since your sister's care has preserved you, you will not surely upbraid her with the means she employed to produce so happy an effect?" said Catherine, looking anxiously in her sister's face.

"Ah, Catherine! it is for the sake of the agent, whom you employed to compass your ends, that I feel so spirit-sad; for I am assured that it is *he* alone who dared undertake, and could execute, an adventure like this."

"Lo, you there!" said Catherine, turning to Maudlin, laughing, "yon maiden, your mistress, thinks that I am to understand, from her expressive *he*, whom she means, without farther name or description 'Tis true, persons to whom that emphatic sign of the masculine exclusively belong, come so seldom to the converse of us forlorn maidens of the Bower, that I may have a pretty shrewd guess, that she means no other, than *him* of the eloquent dark eye, and doublet of hunter's green—and somewhat mysterious pedigree."

"The same! the same! Catherine; but heavens! how you trifle! Can you not see that I am fevered with impatience to hear how, when, and where you chanced to encounter him?"

“Nay, Cecil, I have had two interviews with him since I saw you last.”

“Indeed! I trust he has risen in your esteem, in consequence,” returned the princess, with a faint smile on her lips, and a sickly feeling at her heart, which had some reference to her own disappointed watchings in the chapel gallery.

“I were ungrateful if he had not,” said Catherine, gaily; “seeing that he undertook the emprise I imposed on him, with the air of a Paladin, and of his worthy execution of the same, I trow I have sufficient proof here in my hand. Oh! but you asked me, when and where I met this Will-o’-the-wisp. I crave his pardon; I suppose I should call him Perkin or Peterkin Warbeck, for, of course, Ralph Swillington knows his name.”

“Aye, but he vilely falsifies it, when he states it to be that of a low-born Fleming!” interrupted the Princess Cicely, indignantly.

“Well, well, I will not dispute the matter; you have had more particular converse with him than I, and he showed but small confidence in the lady of his heart, if he did not entrust her with his name.”

“I would not boast me of the superior confidence which he bestows on me, Lady Catherine, but, certes! he has declared both name and lineage to me.”

“Hey Maudlin! see you not in which corner the wind sets now?” exclaimed Catherine, laughing. “Well, my fair sister, spare yourself all uneasy thoughts on the score of my two interviews with your gallant ranger, for they were both for your service and behalf; and farthermore, sweet Cecil, lest you should continue to suspect me of wishing to win the heart of your brave forester, I do declare unto you, that he must be a bolder, gayer wooer, who would please Catherine Plantagenet. Smiles and sighs, and languishments, withal, are pretty divertisements, and rhyme well in the romaunts of our wandering minstrels; but, Cecil, they are marvelously dull in practice. Oh, give me a lover that dared reply to me when in an imperious mood, with a spirit as lofty as mine own—and woo me as a Plantagenet ought to be wooed. Yet deceive not yourself, my sister, by the surmise, that I had a single sigh from Peterkin. Oh, I remember me! you do not love to hear him so styled.”

“No, Catherine,” replied her sister, earnestly, “I know him to be a very different person from that low adventurer. Perkin Warbeck is

merely a creature, whom my aunt of Burgundy has spirited up to disturb the government of Henry of Richmond. Warbeck personates our sweet murdered brother York, who it is pretended escaped from the tower; but, we know, Catherine, that our uncle Richard was not a man who would do the work of slaughter by halves, and in addition to his motives of guilty ambition, he (you will remember) entertained a personal hatred against that most promising blossom of our hapless house, and therefore had a double motive to make himself certain of the actual death of that fair child. Recollect, my dearest sister, the crafty wiles, the base perjuries he used, to win our younger brother from his mother's arms, when in the sanctuary at Westminster; and can you for a moment believe, that the traitor, who hesitated not to destroy the gentle Edward, would spare one, whom he so bitterly hated, and whose life withal would make the death of his other victim a useless crime? Oh, doubt not Catherine!" she continued, with impassioned earnestness, while the tears swelled into her eyes, "but the same nameless grave contains the lovely twain, the murdered hopes of England and of us!"

An audible burst of sorrow from either sister followed this allusion to the calamitous destinies of the beloved companions of their childish joys and troubles; and both wept for some minutes on each other's bosom; while the kind-hearted Maudlin, whose compassion was strongly excited by the sight of her ladies' grief, sobbed with them from downright sympathy.

At length the lateness of the hour warned the Lady Catherine to leave her sister to repose; and she retired from her apartment, having first satisfied her, as to the means by which her interviews with Welles had been obtained; this was, as must have been anticipated, through the agency of the page Baldwin, whose genius for intrigue would have rendered him an able appendage to the suite of any minister of state in Europe.

The twofold inducement, of gratifying his own curiosity and executing an acceptable service for his lady, at the same time, so quickened Baldwin's powers of perceivance, that long before the vesper bell began to chime, he had obtained such a clue to the haunts of Welles, that when the Lady Catherine empowered him to deliver a message to that gentleman, it was plain that she had selected the most proper person in existence to perform her bidding. While Sir Ralph Swillington and the rest of the family were absent at vespers, Catherine took the

opportunity of holding conference with Welles; who, when he understood the peril in which the Lady Cicely stood, hesitated not, even at the expense of breaking his appointment with her, to pursue Swillington's messenger, (of whose person and dress Baldwin gave him an accurate description,) and take from him the mischievous scroll of which he was the bearer. Soon after, Baldwin mounted White Clovis, to whose fleet qualities we have already rendered due testimony, and used all possible speed, in order to deliver the Lady Cicely's packet to the king.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"I beseech your grace, let this letter be read,
Our parson misdoubts it, it was treason, he said."

LOVE'S LABOUR LOST.

The success of the Lady Catherine's plan has already been detailed, but she was not permitted to exult in it many hours, for with the dawn of day, Swillington himself left the castle, on his way to the court; with the avowed intention of disclosing all he had discovered to the king. The princesses required no other evidence than the sight of his intercepted letter, to assure them that Swillington would give his own malicious coloring to the whole, to which, the circumstance of his courier having been rifled of a packet addressed to the king, would lend a still more suspicious appearance.

All this the Lady Cicely represented to her sister, but the sanguine Catherine either did not or would not perceive the precipice on which her daring scheme had placed all concerned in it. But it was for the generous and unfortunate Welles, that the Lady Cicely felt such painful apprehensions, which were increased by her neither seeing him nor

hearing from him : although it was natural for him to seek an interview with her, were it only to explain the cause of his broken appointment in the chapel.

Toward evening, Baldwin returned from Sheen, and gave the Lady Cicely an account of his mission. He delivered her letter to the queen's favorite woman, who presented it to her royal mistress before she retired to rest. The next morning Baldwin had a private interview with the queen, who had demeaned herself most graciously toward him, telling him "she had taken a favorable opportunity of placing the Lady Cicely's letter in the king's own hands, who testified no displeasure at the perusal thereof; and she entertained good hopes that no evil consequences would follow her mal-adventures." The queen concluded by telling Baldwin "to commend her heartily to the princesses, her sisters, and to request them, for her sake, to be very circumspect both in their words and deeds, seeing that the rebellion, excited by that notorious impostor, Perkin Warbeck, did mightily incline his highness to examine closely the actions of all persons, and to weigh attentively their most trifling expression, lest they should be found to fall short of their bounden duty and allegiance."

Catherine put up her pretty lip, when she heard this message, and the Lady Anne expressed no little indignation at the cautious line of conduct, which the queen had thought it expedient to recommend. The Lady Cicely asked Baldwin, "whether he were not the bearer of a letter from her royal brother or sister."

"From neither, madam," replied the page, "and if I may make bold to interpret a distant hint,—which fell from the beauteous lips of royalty, pens and paper, and all other writing implements, are somewhat scarce in her grace's closet, at this time."

"Baldwin has hit it!" cried the Lady Catherine, "now a plague on, all such suspicious tyrants!"

"Hush! hush! Catherine, is this the first ensample you give of your dutiful observance of our royal sister's cautionary admonition?" said the princess Cicely, giving her sister a reproving glance.

"The Lady Catherine is, I trow, fully aware of my faithful and discreet qualities," observed Baldwin, directing a look of great meaning to the princess Catherine; "in proof of which," he added, "witness for me this paper, which has been my bosom-companion for the last twelve hours."

“For me, for me!” exclaimed the princess Cicely, eagerly extending her hand for the letter.

“Right sorry am I to be the vile cause of disappointment to so fair a princess, but I lament me to say, it is not destined for one of my ladies in particular, seeing that the superscription runs thus:—‘To my fair and royal nieces of England, the Ladies Cicely, Anne, and Catherine Plantagenet, from their loving aunt, the Lady Margaret, duchess of Burgundy, greeting.’”

The Lady Cicely turned away with a look of mortification, while Catherine, eagerly seizing the letter, severed the golden ribbon that encircled it, and earnestly perused the contents: the princess Anne, at the same time, reading over her shoulder.

“I crave pardon for interrupting your ladyships,” said Baldwin, “but I have not yet imparted to you, that it is the general opinion, that you are about to be removed from Havering in the Bower, to some place of greater security. Men talk that Perkin Warbeck designs to get my Lady Cicely into his own power, in order to set up her title to the crown against that of my lady, the queen.”

Here Catherine directed a searching glance to her sister, who crimsoned at the insinuation it conveyed, not unobserved by the sly page, who, an adept in the tricks of his profession, had possibly coined the latter part of his report for the purpose of making farther discoveries, as to the terms on which the mysterious stranger (whom he devoutly believed to be Perkin Warbeck) might be with the Lady Cicely.

“Our aunt of Burgundy speaks to the same effect as Baldwin,” said Catherine, “and in fact she plainly exhorts us to escape, if it be possible, from Havering in the Bower, and not to hesitate to place ourselves under the protection of Warbeck.”

“I marvel at the perverseness of my aunt of Burgundy,” replied the princess Cicely, in a tone of great vexation. “Why should she be for ever seeking to stir up troubles in the realm, when after so many broils it is at length settled in peace? She has not—she never had the slightest consideration for our sister Elizabeth, whose situation is sufficiently painful, without its being rendered still more so by the intrigues of her aunt, who is, I see, bent on dispossessing Elizabeth and her issue in favor of a low adventurer.”

“It is well that our aunt Burgundy hears you not,” replied the Lady Anne, “or she might justly accuse you of ingratitude and want of duty.”

“I should not be wanting in gratitude to my aunt for the interest she takes in my fate, did I not perceive, from her so warmly espousing the cause of yon Fleming against the undoubted rights of Elizabeth and her children, and even of our own claims to the succession, in case of the failure of these, that her hatred to the house of Lancaster exceeds her love to York.”

“Ha! Cecil, you have touched the right string now—*our claims* to the succession!—There is sound reason, I trow, in your refusal to aid and abet our aunt of Burgundy’s scheme in favor of the Flemish boy,” observed the princess Anne, with sudden animation. “The children of Elizabeth are puny and sickly nurslings; nor is it to be expected that the bantlings of Richmond should be like the vigorous and blooming scions of Plantagenet. In event of the failure of those children you are heiress to these realms; therefore it would be madness on your part to wish to alter the order of the things that be.”

“But I may live single, or, in the event of my marriage, die childless, sister Anne; and in such case you would stand in the same relation to the succession as I do now.”

“Enough, Cicely, you have convinced me that it would be folly on my part, to enter into our aunt of Burgundy’s designs. A throne is a glittering object, even when viewed in distant perspective; and our prospect is not so remote, by many degrees, as that of some whom we have seen, even in our young days, attain that proud pre-eminence.”

[CHAPTER XXIX.]

“Here comes your lordly chivalry.”
 OLD BALLAD.

The bright summer sun was sinking over the wood-embosomed turrets of Havering in the Bower, when two knightly gentlemen, mounted on noble and splendidly caparisoned steeds, and attended by a warlike retinue, were seen advancing at a slow and stately pace, between the long arcades of oak trees leading to the palace.

“St. Mary! what have we here?” exclaimed Maudlin, overturning her embroidery-frame in her haste to spring to the window, attracted by the swell of martial music, with which the cavalcade saluted the royal residence, as they made a nearer approach. The next moment the Lady Catherine had secured to herself an advantageous post, in the centre compartment of a jutting window, and was enjoying with all the delight of one unaccustomed to such pageantry, the sight of waving banners, nodding plumes, and glittering armor, not forgetting prancing steeds, and gallant-looking horsemen. Her attention was particularly excited by the noble bearing of the two foremost riders, who with their four squires, seemed to be of a superior rank to the rest of the party. The elder was apparently of that age, in which manhood has attained its full dignity,—his figure was alike built for strength and activity, but he was of a majestic rather than elegant demeanor, and at a glance might be

distinguished for one to whom courts and camps were equally familiar. His companion was tall and fair, and of a somewhat effeminate beauty, while the ornamental parts of his dress were composed in an almost fantastical style of gay adornment.

It was not without some secret feelings of satisfaction, that the Lady Catherine beheld the splendid train file into the court and dismount for the purpose of entering the palace. The next moment the princesses were informed that the Earl of Devonshire and Sir Fabian De Spencer craved admittance to their presence.

"May we be so bold as to ask what has occasioned us this superlative honor?" said Catherine, as the knights entered and saluted the royal sisters, with as much reverence, as if they had been paying them homage in the court of their victorious father.

"I grieve that we should be enforced to give a discourteous reason for our visit, but the king's commands must be obeyed. By this instrument he empowers us to make diligent search, at the palace of Havering in the Bower, for all seditious papers, especially letters of private correspondence from the Duchess of Burgundy, and that notable traitor and rebel Perkin Warbeck, and other evilly disposed persons, enemies unto the king's person and government," said the earl of Devonshire, displaying the royal mandate to that effect.

Catherine's bright complexion faded with apprehension, but she successfully rallied her spirits in a moment.

"Oh! I congratulate ye, noble sirs, on the grace you have found in the king's sight, which has procured you the proud distinction of being preferred to this honorable office," she replied.

"The knights looked at each other in some perplexity, till the youngest took up the word, saying—"If, fair and royal ladies, ye would deign to read my Lord of Devonshire's commission, ye would be instantly convinced that it is only in obedience to royal authority, that we stand in this beauteous presence, which in common prudence we ought to have shunned to enter; as I feel to my cost we have not done so without endangerment to my peace, since with pain I have discovered, that the chilly ice of indifference, that has hitherto guarded my heart, has now melted away before the blaze of loveliness, by which it is at present assailed."

Sir Fabian Spencer pressed his hand on his heart, and bowed low as he concluded. The Lady Cicely heard the compliment with immovable gravity. The Lady Anne turned away with a haughty smile of con-

tempt, while the princess Catherine, to whom the language of courtly gallantry was new, laughed outright, and then said:—

“I find, sir knight, you have been lately conning the Provençal romances, but methinks the terms of your speech but ill accord with the uncourteous errand that brings ye hither.”

“It was the king’s commands that brought us here, madam, and no impertinent intrusion of our own. For which unintentional offence I entreat you and your royal sisters, to hold myself and Sir Fabian de Spencer excused,” said the Earl of Devonshire.

“The king has proved his judgment in selecting Lancasterians as his instruments in this glorious service,” observed Catherine, glancing at the Earl with infinite disdain, from beneath her long dark eyelashes.

“He has so, madam; persons of less firm principles would have been unfit to be exposed to the seducing influence of such charms,” returned the Earl, with an air of lofty courtesy.

The Lady Catherine surveyed him with an air of close scrutiny, that seemed to say, “I will ascertain how far I may venture.” It was her mental conviction, that the Earl of Devonshire although most sensible to the power of beauty and female attraction, was not a person who would permit himself so be trifled with. He had the air of a man to whom command was familiar; but no offensive haughtiness was apparent in his bearing. Dignified, and rather reserved in his manners, it was only in phraseology that the courtier might be discovered. His age did not seem to exceed thirty-six years. The bloom of youth had long departed, but his countenance was eminently distinguished for manly beauty; and if traits of sternness mixed at times with a shade of thought, which had compressed his fine brow with a slightly perceptible frown, there was enough of sweetness, and even playfulness round his lips, to contradict that pensive expression, which had probably been printed there by early misfortunes and sufferings. Perhaps there was more of fire than softness in his clear blue eyes, but those eyes belied him if they expressed a cold heart, or a soul insensible to woman’s loveliness.

His step and mien were decidedly martial, yet his conversation bore the stamp of the statesman, rather than that of the soldier, but his whole deportment was majestic and baronial. His evident reluctance to execute the commission, which royal authority had imposed on him, gave to his manners an air of embarrassment and restraint, which formed a marked contrast with the gay, high flown gallantry of Sir

Fabian de Spencer, who appeared to enjoy being admitted into the presence of the royal sisters, on any terms.

After an embarrassed pause of some minutes, the Earl of Devonshire again reminded the princesses that his duty imperatively obliged him, however contrary it might be to his inclinations and feelings, to commence a strict search for letters of a reasonable nature.

The sisters protested against this measure with a bitterness and vehemence, which exceedingly perplexed and disconcerted the gentlemen. Sir Fabian de Spencer even proposed to the earl, that they should waive the ceremony of the search, and taken the words of the ladies, that they had no papers of the nature described in their possession.

"What say you, ladies, may we venture to confide in your honor, and give his Grace a favorable answer, with safe consciences?" asked the Earl of Devonshire, bending a piercing glance on the fair sisters.

"If you choose to perform the knightly exploits of breaking our locks and ransacking our drawers, coffers and cabinets, and even exploring the secrets of our dressing tire and comb-cases, why, we must submit to the outrage, seeing that we are powerless to resist such tyrannical and irksome usage. But my lord of Devonshire, not all the might of all the armies, that ever swelled the pride of Lancaster, can, extort from us answers to impertinent questions, and methinks, you exceed your commission in proposing them!" said the princess Catherine.

"Perverse lady, you will not permit us to show you any courtesy?" returned Devonshire.

"Oh, no! we wish not to be beholden for favors to those who could become instruments of an unmanly tyrant, in putting indignities on unprotected and orphan females," said the Lady Catherine.

"Good heavens! madam, what are we to do—what can we do in this most painful business? Have we not explained to you already, that our mission was involuntary on our parts?" returned the Earl.

"Why then did you undertake it?" asked Catherine quickly, with her eyes sparkling through tears.

"Alas! most beautiful lady! why turn the terror of your indignation on us?" said Sir Fabian de Spencer. "You annihilate us with the angry blaze of those dark suns!"

"It is to no purpose, I regret to say," rejoined the Earl of Devonshire, smiling "unless their beams have power to melt the king's seal from the royal commission, in which case I would gladly admit my authority to be invalid."

"Oh, if that be true, the seal shall soon be removed," said the Princess Catherine, promptly taking the parchment from the table, where Devonshire had accidentally laid it in the warmth of the discussion, and essaying to tear off the royal seals.

"Softly, madam, softly!" said the Earl, gently laying his hands upon her, and extricating the instrument from her grasp, "I would pleasure you in this small matter, were it not that I should probably have to pay the penalty of my head, for having suffered the royal commission out of mine own hands."

"Said I not," returned Catherine, disdainfully, "that Henry of Richmond was shrewd in his choice of men fitting to execute his ungentle biddings? Furthermore, I do protest, that you have sorely pinched my hand, in tearing from me your warrant of villanous oppression," and so saying, she displayed a slight redness, which mingled with the whiteness of the prettiest little hand in the world. The Earl only replied by pressing it to his lips. "Audacious man," said she, striving to release her hand, "have you any warrant in the royal mandate for such an outrage?"

"There are certain situations arising from unforeseen circumstances, in which persons, acting under royal authority, must be left to the exercise of their own discretion,"—returned the Earl with much animation.

"A truce with this trifling, Catherine," said the Lady Cicely, "as these noble gentlemen act but in obedience to royal authority, it is childish, and indeed fruitless, to withstand them in the performance of their duty. My Lord of Devonshire and Sir Fabian de Spencer, here are the keys belonging to all my coffers, presses and cabinets, and you my Lady Killingworth, will have the goodness to attend these gentlemen, and give them free access to our apartments, where they may exercise what liberty of search they list."

"May it please your ladyship," said the Earl of Devonshire, "his highness has been explicit in his instruction, in directing us to commence our search, by scrutinizing strictly the apartment in which we may hap to find you and your sisters abiding, before we proceed to examine any other part of the palace."

The consternation of the fair sisters at these words became plainly apparent—but no consideration of circumstances could tame the Lady Catherine's tongue.

“I believe it to be nothing more than a malicious device of your own, Lord Devonshire,” said she, angrily.

“Fair lady, you do me great wrong,” returned the Earl, “but I forgive the bitterness of your taunts, seeing that my mission must needs be offensive to you, and I beg that you will pardon my enforced interference as freely as I do your petulance.”

Both gentlemen then, after again entreating the forgiveness of the fair sisterhood, for the execution of the king’s orders, proceeded to perform their delicate commission, and commenced searching every cabinet, drawer, and writing-case, that the apartment contained. Catherine, in the meantime, did her best to perplex them, and divert their attention by the most ironical expressions, as—

“Sir Fabian de Spencer, you lack diligence in your scrutiny! You omit to examine the interior of that squirrel’s cage! My Lord of Devonshire, what blinds your eyes to the fact, that yonder silks are wound on written papers? Nay, my good lord! I will furnish you with a dozen reels, that you may pause awhile, and wind off the silk to satisfy yourself that nothing of a treasonable nature lurks beneath it. But, soft, my lord! you have no instructions to treat my ribbon-ware so rudely. You forget that we poor orphan maidens lack the silver to purchase fresh gear of the kind, to replace what you so wantonly maltreat. Cannot you take pattern from Sir Fabian de Spencer, who handles millinery as if he had been accustomed to nothing else from his youth upward? My lords be pleased to use more reverence toward my embroidery frame! Oh! you will make rare work among our, wearing apparel and head tire, when you begin to toss that over! Oh! now you are about to examine my writing table. No doubt it will afford such noble knights high amusement to inspect all my receipts for candies, juleps, and confections, not to mention rare pastes and perfumed waters, for beautifying the skin, and removing all frecks, tans, and sun burns. I would counsel you, my Lord of Devonshire, to especially note down in your tablets, all the remedies you may find for curing the latter defect, and who knows but you may return to court with as delicate a complexion as Sir Fabian de Spencer!”

“Would, madam, that I could with truth report the contents of this case to be of as innocent a nature, as the things you have been pleased to enumerate. But alas! the day!—that it should fall to my lot to lay such a paper as this before his highness,” said the Earl of Devonshire showing the letter that the princesses had just received from the

Duchess of Burgundy, and placing it with a sorrowful air in his bosom.

"We are lost!" exclaimed the Lady Cicely, sinking back in her chair, and bursting into a flood of tears.

"Had you destroyed that letter as soon as you had finished its perusal, this unhappy accident had not happened," said the Princess Anne to her sister Catherine.

"Would to Heaven that you had so done!" observed the earl, sorrowfully, "I had then been spared a most painful task."

"Say you so, my lord? Then it is not too late now," exclaimed Catherine, springing from her seat, and darting her hand into the earl's bosom, she drew from thence the letter, tore it in an instant into a hundred fragments, and flying to the open window scattered them to the four winds of heaven. Then throwing herself into the arms of the Princess Cicely, she laughed and wept alternately, with hysterical passion.

A pause of utter amazement followed, which was first broken by Sir Fabian de Spencer.

"By Venus and the three Graces, but I stand astonished! Who ever dreamt of lady fair doing a deed like that? Why, my Lord of Devon, I trow it was an honor you were little prepared for, to have the hand of a princess for your bosom guest. I would it were my good hap to find a paper also."

"You take the matter gaily, De Spencer; but I tell you our heads are emperiled by this freak of my Lady Catherine, and hers as well, or I mistake King Henry's mood strangely," replied Devonshire.

"Tut! tut! man! Why need the King know a tittle of the matter? I do protest the Lady Catherine has acted with equal courage and discretion in this affair. She has, with marvellous presence of mind, destroyed the only evidence of her treasonable correspondence; and we should shame our knighthood were we capable of betraying distressed beauty to the wrath of majesty."

"I would I knew of any means by which it were possible to suppress this dangerous concern, without forfeiting mine honor and violating mine oath to the King," said the Earl of Devonshire, pacing the apartment in great agitation; "I know not, in fact, what course to pursue," he continued, while his noble brow became deeply compressed with anxious thought. "If I, as in duty bound, reveal the truth to the king, he will be sure to imagine that the contents of the letter

were of still more dangerous tendency than was actually the case, and not only myself, but Lady Catherine would have bitter cause to rue his suspicion. If, on the contrary, I conceal this circumstance from his highness, I shall become vile in mine own esteem, by reason of having sworn an oath to perform that which I have voluntarily failed in."

"Nay, sir earl, I were loth that you should put restraint on your conscience, if it cannot be quieted, save by bearing witness to the king against three unprotected orphan maidens, by all means do it; and when the deed is chronicled, see how highly it will exalt the glory of the Courtenays," observed Catherine, whose emotion had speedily subsided.

"These taunts are needless, lady," replied the earl, greatly moved, "you are most powerful in your weakness; and you ill read the heart of the last of the Courtenays, if you think him capable of betraying helpless innocence. I have been an orphan myself, and my early youth was crushed beneath the iron rod of oppression. Never can I become instrumental in heaping wrongs on those whose situation too nearly resembles what was once my own." His lips trembled as he spoke, and he turned aside to conceal the tears, with which bitter recollections filled his eyes.

"Generous Courtenay!" said the Lady Cicely, weeping, "how little did my father deserve that you should show this grace to his children!" For she well knew that the blood of the Courtenays had streamed on the scaffolds of the merciless Edward: and she felt grateful for the delicacy and consideration with which he had executed a commission, that offered an ample opportunity of retaliation on the children, for all the wrongs and injuries he had received from the father.

The earl took the hand she extended to him in agitated silence, then pressed it respectfully to his lips, and after a long pause, he said, "If the oath of a man, who is now about to break one previously given, may be relied on, I swear on this fair pledge of peace, between our adverse houses, to suffer the hand which holds thine to be stricken off on the block, and flung in its recreant master's face, if ever I permit my lips to breathe a word to the king, that may imperil either of this fair assemblage. How say you, my Lady Catherine," he continued, in a livelier tone, "will you, for the greater security permit me to repeat the same form of asseveration?"

"Not on that hand, which you so grievously maltreated in your un-

mannerly struggle even now!" said the Lady Catherine, pouting, and offering him her left hand.

"The nearer the heart, fair maid, and therefore the more welcome to me," exclaimed the Lord Devonshire, covering its snowy surface with kisses.

"Nay, sir earl, your usage of this hand is still worse than your entreatment of the other," said she, extricating it from his grasp, while Sir Faban de Spencer advancing to the Lady Anne, expressed, in a very flowery speech, his hope that she would bestow the same favor on him that her sisters had just vouchsafed to his friend the Earl of Devonshire.

The haughty maiden surveyed him with a look that conveyed to the young courtier the full conviction of the distance which her royal birth had placed between them. She then extended her hand to him, with as lofty an air as if she had been seated on the throne of her father, and was receiving the devoir of one of her subjects. Sir Fabian was too much disconcerted by this treatment to tender a like homage to the other princess; and somewhat crest-fallen, he was glad to take refuge by the side of Lady Killingworth, from the saucy glance which the Princess Catherine could not refrain from directing toward him.

"My Lady Killingworth," said the Earl of Devonshire, "we must trespass on your house-wifery to find entertainment for ourselves and train, since it is his highness's will that we become your guest at Havering in the Bower, for the better security of these royal ladies; and I doubt we shall be obliged to hold garrison here till the return of Sir Ralph Swillington; who is, at present, in London, disabled from exercising his usual duties, by the effects of a fall from his horse."

"And in the interim you arrive at the preferment of becoming vice turnkey at Havering in the Bower?"

"Catherine, Catherine, forbear! You are too malapert to the noble earl," said the Lady Cicely, "and, my good Lord, I pray you to excuse her untamed freedom of speech; she was ever ready in the fluent exercise of a sharp wit."

"Gentle lady, I can easily forgive the princess Catherine the pretty petulance which both so well become her, by adding brilliancy to her before bright eyes," replied the earl; and Catherine, though she affected disdain, was not at heart insensible to the homage rendered her, by a man of the Earl of Devonshire's dignity of character.

CHAPTER XXX.

“Fair as unshaded light, or as the new
Unfolded bud, swelled by the morning dew.”

DAVENANT.

The presence of the royal garrison, under the command of the Earl of Devonshire, at Havering in the Bower, transformed that before gloomy abode into a scene of gaiety and festive enjoyment; and though prayers were put up in the chapel for the speedy recovery of Sir Ralph Swillington, yet it is to be doubted, that even from those who did join in the petition, it was only a lip-deep form, for there was not a person in the palace, from the princesses to the lowest tire-woman, who did not rejoice in the exchange.

The unaccountable disappearance of Welles had left a deep cast of melancholy on the mind of the Lady Cicely; yet she could not help sharing, at times, in the general exhilaration that pervaded the palace. Every day the Earl and Sir Fabian devised some new diversion for the amusement of the ladies, who, though they were in effect their prisoners, were so well pleased with the courteous manner in which they were treated, that they never once suspected the fact. Even the haughty Lady Anne so far relaxed from her reserved and distant manners, as to take a part in the masks and interludes which formed part of the

revelry. These entertainments possessed, at least, the charm of novelty; for the royal sisters, although past that tender age from which heroines are generally selected, had been kept in such entire seclusion, that they entered into the spirit of these diversions with all the ardent vivacity of extreme youth.

The three sisters were dissimilar in person as well as character, and it formed matter of wonder to those who were abiding with them, that such a strong attachment could subsist between persons who were so unlike each other.

The Princess Cicely was certainly the most distinguished for sweetness of temper, soundness of judgment, and tenderness of disposition; and no less so for the perfection of her form and face. No one would have hesitated to pronounce her the most beautiful of the three; the faultless line of her features, the exquisite fairness of her complexion, the delicacy of which needed not the aid of color, the pensive and Madonna-like expression of her down-cast eyes, and the soft and feminine graces of her whole figure and deportment, gave to her a resemblance to one of those masterpieces of Grecian sculpture, at which the gazer looks till he doubts whether nature ever produced anything so enchanting, while the rich profusion of bright light hair, which fell like the wandering sunbeams round her fair face, gave her the appearance of early youth, although she had actually seen her twenty-fifth summer. Yet, whatever poets may say in praise of girlhood, there are few men who could have seen in a female of sixteen, the polished loveliness which adorned the Lady Cicely, now in the perfection of all the beauty that belongs to woman.

The Lady Anne, although one year younger than her sister, appeared several older, from the haughty majesty of her form and person. A true Plantagenet both in mind and form;—there was a grandeur in her cast of features, which while it commanded admiration, repressed love. Few, indeed, would have dared to address words of tenderness to one who appeared so fully conscious of the distance which her elevated birth had placed between her and those who were not of royal rank.

Catherine, although less beautiful than her sisters, was, perhaps, more captivating than either. There was a power in her fine dark eyes, a witchery in her smile, and a brilliancy in her ever varying expression, which regular beauty seldom possesses. How, indeed, could any one who met her radiant glance, when she looked up, observe that

those animated features missed perfection? What man who saw her magic smile, could have discovered a fault in the mouth which displayed such rich stores of coral and ivory, and in whose playful dimples the loves and graces delighted to revel? The ebon tresses, which unadorned by a single gem, and unconfined by wreath or bandeau, clustered round her fair throat, and floated in luxuriance on a bosom of snow, increased by the force of striking contrast the effect of a complexion, in which the delicacy of a blonde was united to the brightness of a brunette.

Like the Princess Anne, she possessed much of the haughty spirit of her majestic race, which manifested itself, not in the cold, disdainful reserve that characterised her sister, but in quick and almost fierce assertion of her natural rights, and a passionate resistance to every species of oppression or insult. The unsophisticated child of nature, there was much in her character that required softening and correcting. Her hasty temper, and sarcastic wit, which dangerous weapon she turned indiscriminately against all who approached her, caused her most prudently to provoke those who were inclined to be her enemies, and to wound the feelings of others who were disposed to be her friends. Too proud, too reckless, for disguise, Catherine's frankness, while it surprised, amused and charmed the Earl of Devonshire, who had for many years been accustomed, even to satiety, to the artificial manners of the females of the court of the seventh Henry. The sharp sallies of Catherine's wit, although generally aimed against himself, delighted him, while they would possibly have created a deadly enmity against her, in the mind of a person of less manly character.

The Princess Catherine was fully sensible, how much the discovery of the Duchess of Burgundy's letter had put her in the Earl of Devonshire's power, yet she treated him not a whit more civilly on that account, and sometimes alluded to the circumstance with an air of laughing defiance, bidding him prepare evidence against the day of her arraignment before the bar of the upper house, for her treasonable correspondence. But notwithstanding the sharp encounters of wit on either side, and their frequent and hot differences on account of political principles, these two were either by accident or design constantly together. In mask or pastoral the characters of the lovers, which by lot, from some odd chance generally fell to the share of the Lady Catherine and the Earl of Devonshire, and when this was not the case, it was observed that their performance was languid and spiritless.

If the noble company amused themselves with music, Catherine's virginals absolutely refused to be in concert pitch with any instrument but the earl's double lute; and although she took great pains to convince him, that his voice was one of little value, yet its bass had the art of according passing well with her notes, when they sang together, and Catherine never sang singly.

Sir Fabian de Spencer, although a musical genius of elaborate cultivation, could never keep tune or time with fair Catherine; the voice of the young Lord Sandys was as feminine as her own; George Petworth's was harsh and broken, and made her hold her ears, and almost shriek with musical disgust; "among the bad, Lord Devon," she declared, "was certainly the best," and Lord Devon was ever by her side, patiently enduring her manifold whims. In the dance, they were either partners, or *tete-a-tete* spectators of the performance of the rest of the company, and though their conversation was seldom amicable, yet they were never silent. If they walked, Catherine was sure to be overcome with either heat or fatigue, or to meet with some perverse accident or disaster, which rendered the assistance of the earl's arm indispensable. If the whole party took the exercise of riding on horseback, Catherine's palfry never could fall in with the rest of the cavalcade, unless the Earl of Devonshire was attendant at her bridle rein, to keep it in due order; but if it chanced that his attention was directed to another quarter, and Sir Fabian de Spencer supplied his place, her petulance always drove him from her, and then her horse, directly after his departure, was sure to perform such caracols, as terrified all present, and brought the earl immediately to her side. Thus the Earl of Devonshire, one of the clearest-headed men among Henry the Seventh's ministers, had not been one week an inmate at Havering in the Bower, before he found himself guilty of the folly of thinking incessantly of a maiden fifteen years younger than himself, who tormented him continually, avowed her utmost contempt for his party and principles, and was, withal, the most whimsical and capricious of her sex. Catherine, who had seen her twentieth year, without having heard the language of love, was charmed with the discovery of her conquest, of which, with true feminine discernment, she was fully aware, long before the earl himself suspected the situation of his heart, and she in her turn, while she imagined that she was but amusing her vanity, by playing with his passion, was in reality cherishing the first principles of feelings toward the earl very similar to

those with which she had inspired him. Love is indeed never more triumphant than when he entangles the heart of a coquette, and to do this feat effectually, he seldom unmasks his battery, because people do not take precautionary measures when they apprehend no danger.

Thus did Catherine proceed, till she found it requisite to call all her pride to her aid, to avert the disgrace of suffering the Earl of Devonshire to perceive that his influence over her was pretty nearly equal to the power she possessed over him. To prevent so afflicting a result, she now and then smiled graciously on the passion of the young Lord Sandys, the Earl of Devonshire's squire, who addressed her with all the eloquence of sighs, looks of languishment, and when opportunity occurred, with vows of love, besides presenting to her, on bended knee, amatory sonnets, penned in her praise.

Catherine, at first did not believe that it was possible for her to feel the slightest regard for a Lancastrian, especially for a man who was so many years her senior, and who had arrived on so offensive an errand. Yet so it was, despite of pride, of royal birth, party animosity, disparity of years, and opposition of sentiment, Catherine Platagenet loved the Earl of Devonshire. Her high spirit prevented her for some time from acknowledging even to herself, the partiality with which she beheld the earl, and though she was listless, weary and absent, when he was not in her presence, yet she, with usual self-sophistry, attributed the tedium of the hour of absence, to the dullness of Sir Fabian de Spencer, Lord Sandys, and the rest of the sojourners at Havering in the Bower, and not to the loss of the company of Devonshire.

The unexpected return of Sir Ralph Swillington, sufficiently recovered to take upon himself his usual command of Havering in the Bower, by filling the heart of the Lady Catherine with more than common uneasiness and vexation, brought the first full conviction which she received, of the existence of a passion which her pride disdained, and which she was resolved to hide sedulously from every one—and more especially from him who was the object of her love. Yet there had been something in her demeanor toward the Earl of Devonshire, that convinced him, notwithstanding her petulant raillery, and air of lively defiance, that she was not wholly indifferent in her heart; and the evening previous to his departure from Havering, he came to the resolution, and a bold one it may be deemed, for a man of his age and avowed opinions, to speak to the Lady Catherine on a subject which had of late, so tyrannically engrossed his every thought.

He had passed the age when he might have departed in an uncertainty on a point that affected his peace. He was not without fears as to the reception which so whimsical a damsel might give his declaration, and he did not scruple to confess to himself, that it required infinitely more resolution to encounter the bright disdainful glance of her radiant dark eyes, than to face her warlike uncle at Bosworth Field; yet he, nevertheless, did not choose to leave the matter in doubt. So, humming an air of the Provencals, called "*La belle dame sans merci,*" which he had caught from his Squire Sandys, by hearing that enamored youth frequently repeat it, he commenced his search for the princess, not forgetting, within the recesses of his heart, to put up prayers to all the saints in Cupid's calendar, that he might find his lady-love in a favorable humor.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Now fortune stick to me!
I am a soldier and a bachelor, lady,
They that use many words, some are deceitful,
I long to be a husband and a good one."

OLD PLAY.

The Princess Catherine was alone in her own withdrawing-room, when the Earl of Devonshire entered in search of her. She was sitting in one of the large windows, and appeared lost in a pensive reverie, to the surprise of the earl, who was struck by a circumstance so unusual to her character. Her tapestry frame stood before her, but instead of engaging her attention, it only served to support her folded arms, on which she had bowed her face. A quarto volume bound in rose colored velvet, richly embroidered, and within splendidly illuminated, lay upon a stand near her, which, at a glance, the earl discovered to be the celebrated "*Romance of the Rose.*" Her virginals, too, were close

by, and seemed lately to have occupied her attention and to have been hastily abandoned. In short, she appeared like one who sought amusement and found none.

So deeply was the Princess Catherine buried in her contemplations, that the object of them had advanced to her very side, before she was aware of his vicinity.

"It is so unusual to see the Lady Catherine alone, silent and pensive, that if I might presume so far, I should enquire what subject is honored by her consideration?"

"Go to, sir earl! is this knightly or mannerly, to steal upon a lady's private meditations?" replied the princess, somewhat provoked at being surprised in so melancholy an attitude.

The earl had not counted six-and thirty-years without being well versed in the various wiles and intricacies of woman's heart; he therefore gathered from the unprovoked disdain with which the princess received him, that it was assumed to cover no small degree of confusion, occasioned by his sudden presence; from this he furthermore rightly surmised that he was not wholly indifferent to her. Encouraged, therefore, by a speech and manner that would have confounded a lover of a less firm mind and temper, he proceeded to take one of the pretty white hands that rested on the tapestry frame.

"How, now, insolent!" said the princess haughtily disengaging it, "fear you not my displeasure?"

"He who would woo you, fair Catharine, must not know the word *fear*, if he thinks to win you," was the answer.

"To win *me*, sir earl,? Does your presumptuous spirit incline you to such a thought?" returned the Lady Catherine, quickly.

The Earl of Devonshirs was somewhat unprepared for the bluntness of a question so entirely contrary to the usual etiquette of love affairs. Catherine instantly perceived his confusion, and laughed with mischievous satisfaction.

"And what, gentle lady, if my presumptuous hopes were guilty of soaring to such a height!" replied the earl, recovering his presence of mind, and fixing his eyes on her. Catherine felt that those eyes were eloquent; but lest he should construe an advantage, from the blush which their ardent glance called into her dimpled cheek, she hastened to reply—

"If that were the case, my lord, I should enjoin you, perhaps, to visit the herald's college forthwith, and there to take a lesson on the differ-

ence of degree between Catherine of England and William of Devonshire, by way of penance."

"Any penance which the lady of my heart wills me to perform, I am ready to undertake," said the earl; "but fair Catherine, I have studied heraldry before to-day; and will, in my turn, recommend to your consideration a chapter therein, which tells of a fair Plantagenet, the eldest daughter of a reigning monarch, and of a loftier monarch too, than, with all his pretensions, was Edward of York, wedding not only an earl, possessing no other qualification to boast himself withal, than William of Devonshire, [whose ancestors, by the way, wore the imperial crown of Constantinople,] but even descending to a second marriage with a simple esquire."

"The folly of her second choice is a poor argument for the wisdom of her first," retorted the ready Catherine.

"Had she been the first or last of England's royal daughters, who thought it no disparagement to their dignity to prefer the love of an English husband to the heartless hand of a foreign prince, I had not named Joanna of Acre," replied the earl.—"But I have done, madam, for I plainly perceive that the man who cannot lay a diadem, at your feet, is no wooer for you."

"I am not bound to correct all your errors of judgment," returned Catherine; "for if I were, I deem your presumption would pass all bounds."

"Ah!" exclaimed the earl, throwing himself at her feet, "what am I to gather from those words?"

"Nay, my lord, that is your business to discover. A brave wooer, you! to ask a maiden to explain her meaning. Why, your boy-squire, Edwin Sandys, would read it in my eyes. I counsel you, my Lord of Devonshire, to get a lesson from him, before you attempt to engage in love discourses with a princess."

"Distraction!" exclaimed the earl starting to his feet—"what know you of Sandys?"

"Ask you what I know of Lord Sandys? All that is courteous, passionate, and chivalric, know I of the gentle Edwin. I should have known something more to your advantage, proud Devon, had you composed such rare poesies in my praise, and sung such sweet madrigals under my window on moonlight nights, as he hath don," replied Catherine, who now saw with the greatest glee the advantage she had gained over

the firm mind of her lover, and was determined that his boasted reason should bend to her power.

"But I will at least venture to hope that you have had no converse with the youngster," said the earl with ill-concealed agitation.

"Then you venture rashly; but that I see is no uncommon case with you—No converse?—St. Cupid! to speed! what should keep us silent, when you, my Lord of Devon, were playing the squire of dames to the Lady Anne? Or do you think that no one courts princesses but yourself?"

"Nay, then, your ladyship was wrong in treating the devoir of a belted knight with such scorn, if you condescend to listen to his squire."

"Your lordship has taken pains, within this hour, to convince me that a nobler maiden than poor dowerless Kate Platagenet has so done ere this."

Lord Devonshire colored and bit his lip, and Catherine continued with an ambiguous smile—"The story of Joanna of Acre's second marriage was not so new to me as your lordship might surmise. There be other squires who deem themselves as likely to win the love of a king's daughter as the fortunate Ralph de Monthermer; and peradventure the example of Joanna of Acre may serve as a precedent for another princess in forming a humble alliance."

"But lady Catherine, you are not aware, perhaps, that young Sandys has not yet told his eighteenth summer, and you?"—

"Have completed my one and twentieth year, you would say. Why, you uncourteous earl, you are as spiteful as an ancient spinster on the score of a young maiden's age! but I forgive you on the consideration that if years are to be counted as defects, you have a goodly number to account for—fifteen more than myself, I wot well, and surely if Sandys have three less, I should be downright simple to object him for possessing the advantage of youth in a superior degree to myself."

"It is enough, madam," replied Devonshire, with an expression of bitter mortification; "you have completely convinced me of my folly, in aspiring to a lady of your degree, and your scorn is a punishment I must submit to, with what grace I may. Perchance I had not been so bold, had I not fancied that you rather affected my company and conversation, but I was, as many a better man has been, deceived by my own vanity. Far be it from me to blame you, that you have, as was most natural, chosen a lover of an age more suitable to your own; one too, who is in all things save royal birth most worthy of you—

young, noble, and highly gifted withal, both in mind and person, of gentle manners and stainless honor; if ever there was a subject who might deserve the love of a princess—Edwin Lord Sandys is the man.”

“You are at least a generous rival,” said Catherine, greatly moved; but striving to stifle her emotion, she rejoined, “and now my lord, what if I were inclined to carry the matter beyond a mere dialogue of love speeches, or to speak decisively, to bring it to the conclusion to which honorable love doth ever tend?”

“I understand you, madam. I have influence with his highness, which I had fondly hoped would ensure his consent to our espousals, if, indeed, it had been my blessed lot to win your virgin heart. But let that pass. I must now, if it will secure your happiness, exert that interest in order to procure your union with my more fortunate rival.”

“Ah, noble Courtenay! how dearly could I have loved you, had you not been a Lancastrian,” exclaimed Catherine, giving way to her wonted impetuosity of feeling.

“And I had been fifteen years younger, and possessed the gift of writing amatory verses withal,” rejoined the earl, with a slight degree of bitterness.

“Nay, my lord, you need not scoff, both of these had been desirable points in a wooer.”

“I were guilty of mean envy could I dispute the fact,” replied the earl, “and I congratulate you, Lady Catherine, on possessing a lover who suits your taste so well.”

“Oh, when was true love ever so magnanimous?” exclaimed the princess; “Courtenay, you may be a hero, a statesman, and a philosopher, but you are no lover.”

“Would to heaven that I were not, tormentress, since you love another.”

“Who told you so? Am I to blame, if you, in your jealous transports, presumed to imagine that the daughter of your late sovereign smiled on the suit of your squire?”

“Hold, madam! if we are on the subject of rank again, the Lord Sandys is my peer.”

“But what if I consider you as *peerless*?” returned Catherine, with one of her witching smiles.

Uncertain in what sense to take her words, the Earl of Devonshire looked at her with an expression of doubt in his countenance. The per-

plexity in which she had mischievously involved the manly and true-hearted earl, was so amusing to Catherine, that she threw herself back in her chair, and laughed heartily.

"I see," said Devonshire, reproachfully, "that you only use my passion as food for mirth, fair Catherine; and so fare you well, I wish you a loftier lover, a truer you cannot find."

He rose to leave the apartment, but felt himself gently detained by his sleeve, he turned about in surprise, and Catherine laughed again. "Bear with my humor," said she, recovering herself, "my temper is a merry one, although my destiny be of the saddest;" her tone changed as she pronounced the last words, and her laughing eyes filled with tears.

At that sight the earl's displeasure vanished, and throwing himself at her feet, he passionately besought her "to exchange a pleasant prison, restraint, and solitude, for a life of ease, happiness, and freedom, as Countess of Devonshire—if, indeed, her heart were not set on a royal alliance or given to Lord Sandys."

"And what," rejoined the incorrigible Catherine, "if Sir Fabian de Spencer should be the object of my preference?"

"In such a case, lovely Catherine, I reckon that I should be apt to draw consolation from a full conviction of your want of taste," returned the earl, gaily, who now began to enter into all the changes of Catherine's capricious vagaries; and to hope that she had, at last, tormented him to her very heart's content.

"Spoken with admirable spirit, my Lord of Devon, you are right; I detest a sighing wooer, and if I must at length speak according to my conscience, I do own that there is no one whom I should like so well in the latter capacity, as a certain earl now in presence, could he love me well enough to give me one convincing proof of his affection."

"Name it, name it, loveliest Catherine! all that I possess in this world, with my heart and very existence, is at your command; and what farther proof of my love can you in reason demand?"

"Certes, we shall never come to a conclusion if you name the word reason, seeing that my request is not what you, in the masterly pride of manly obstinacy, will choose to deem reasonable. So it were as well if the treaty were broken forthwith, since the parties cannot agree on preliminaries."

"Speak your wishes, lady mine, and if it be in the power of William Courtenay to fulfil them—"

"Now, my lord, we may be likely to come to terms, for the fulfilment of my wishes, although peradventure, they may run somewhat contrary to the will of William Courtenay, yet, certes, lies wholly in his power."

"For the love of gentle St. Mary! I do conjure you to trifle with my pain no longer, Lady Catherine; but tell me seriously what are the conditions on which you will be mine?" exclaimed the Earl of Devonshire, vehemently.

"Catherine Platagenet cannot vow obedience to a man who is the servant of Henry Tudor," answered the princess with an expression of more genuine pride than she had yet shown, for her former haughtiness had been mingled with such a gay witchery and playful consciousness of powerful charms, as took from it all offensive reality; but now the dignity of her royal birth spoke in her tones, and flashed from her eyes. "If, my Lord of Devonshire, you become the wedded Lord of Catherine of England, you must give up your great office of master of the ordnance, and resign all attendance at the court of an upstart, whose claim to royalty I will never own; and be contented to live with me in a dignified retirement, at Powderham, on your baronial possessions. Nay, I see you are already about to protest against these terms—but I have not yet done. You must no longer consider yourself as the pillar of the throne of Richmond, nor an adherent of the hated house of Lancaster."

The earl stood as one thunder-stricken, when he heard her last words, and remained silent. After an embarrassing pause, the princess resumed with some bitterness—

"Did I not read you rightly, when I deemed that your love would weigh but lightly against your ambition?"

"Speak not of ambition, Catherine, for all court favor will I yield to your wishes—but is it just, or is it right to insist upon the sacrifice of my honor and principles to your vain and idle prejudice, in favor of a by-gone faction?"

"Oh! it is well for a traitor, and a grand-son of an attainted and executed traitor, so to name the rightful quarrel of the legitimate line of York!" retorted the princess, giving way to passion.

"The indignant blood flushed the earl's cheek and brow to the deepest crimson, and Catherine had not well concluded her speech, ere he flung from him the fair hand of which he had hitherto been permitted

to retain possession, and said, while his whole frame trembled with fierce agitation,

“ You have, my Lady Catherine, been pleased to receive the declaration of my passion, with every manifestation of coquetry, scorn, and ridicule ; but this, perhaps, my folly deserved, and you were free to use the natural weapons of your sex against me. Had you been content to confine yourself to this feminine artillery, I had yet remained entangled in the strong chain of your charms. Yea, you had still found me the willing slave of your caprices, but you have offered me an insult on a point which maiden gentleness might have taught you to refrain from touching upon—the mightiest warrior of your line had not alluded to it unpunished.”

Here Catherine assumed an air of personal apprehension. “ Nay madam,” continued the earl, smiling disdainfully, “ affect not a fear you do not—cannot feel. Were you seated on the throne of your father, I had not sought for vengeance on a woman—but helpless, unprotected, and oftentimes oppressed as you are, I were less than man did I seek revenge for your injurious words—yet I should be more than man could I forget them.”

“ Be more than man, then, noble Courtenay,” almost rose to the lips of the princess, but he was gone ; he had departed in fierce anger, and before she could summon her hurried thoughts to devise some plan for reconciliation, she saw him riding from the palace toward the London road at furious speed ; nor did he once turn to glance back at the windows, or manifest the least sign of interest in those whom he quitted.

CHAPTER XXXII.

“My peace is gone,
And my heart is sore :
I’ve lost him, and lost him
For ever more”

GOETHE’S FAUSTUS.

While the noble figure of the earl of Devonshire was discernible, Catherine continued to follow it with her eyes, but when it was lost in distance, she experienced a feeling of sudden bereavement and desolation, such as is felt but by those who have just been deprived of all that made life valuable. A moment after, hope rose in her breast, and whispered that he could not be in very deed gone, and for ever ! She relied too much on the power she had over his heart, to suppose that he could for an instant preserve his displeasure, if she could condescend to tame her high spirit to make the slightest concessions. Surely he could not be finally gone ; when the royal instructions named the morrow as the day for withdrawing the garrison from the castle, he, their commander, could not leave it before that time. Would he depart too, alone and unattended, and without bidding farewell to her sisters, which, in truth, courtesy required ? No, it could not be, it was too bad to happen. Thus did Catherine flatter herself, for she could not endure to meet the plain fact, nor was it till she saw the earl’s two squires, George Petworth and the Lord Sandys, accompanied by their

men-at-arms, issued forth from the palace, mounted and equipped for their departure, that she would admit the reality.

Again and again did Sandys, who, with the quick glance of a lover, had noted the Lady Catherine's appearance at the window, turn to salute her with every demonstration of despair in his attitude, for his unexpected departure. Catherine coldly returned his greetings, and if she observed his impassioned gesture, she read in them that she indeed had been the cause of hurrying away his master from Havering in the Bower, before the appointed time. The entrance of the Princess Cicely interrupted these meditations, but it was only to increase their bitterness, when she enquired "if Catherine knew the cause of the Earl of Devonshire's sudden departure from the palace?"

"Oh yes," exclaimed Catherine, giving vent to her usual impetuosity of feeling. "I have lost him, Cecil, I have lost him for ever! It is from me he flies."

"You, my dear Catherine, impossible! He loves you."

"Oh, he did love me—truly, fondly did he love me. You, Cicely, know how oft I have tried his noble temper, for my sport withal."

"Yes, I have many a time chidden you for trifling with the gallant earl. And now, Kate, it seems that in your wayward pride you have carried the jest too far; as I always said you would."

"Oh that I had heeded you, and imitated your gentle bearing!" exclaimed the weeping Catherine. "It is my own intemperance of speech which is alone to blame! Woe worth the day! that I should have driven from me the noblest gentleman that England can boast—The only man I ever can love!"

"Comfort thee, sweet sister," said the Lady Cicely, kissing away her tears, "matters may not be in such evil case as you apprehend! My Lord of Devon loves you too well to leave you for a hastily spoken word, especially as he knows you to be quick of speech and shrewd-witted unto all. A short absence is not utter loss of love, and that, dear Kate, you must bear as you may. My word for it he will, as soon as his resentful fit is past, return to your feet."

"Ah, Cecil, you would not say so if you knew all that has happened."

She related the whole scene to her sister, and gradually becoming animated as she entered into the detail, she laughed with glee as she described the various discomfitures she had inflicted on her lover; and wept again passionately when she came to the conclusion.

The Lady Cicely looked seriously, when she heard the cause of the quarrel, and observed—"But what whim could possess you, sister Catherine, in your sudden wish for retirement, so contrary to your usual temper?"

"In truth, Cicely, I cannot exactly define mine own intentions. I did think it would be the most dignified proceeding, if I really became the wedded wife of Devonshire. Nevertheless, I doubt not but I should have sorely rued my fantasy, if the noble Devonshire had taken me at my word, and agreed to bury himself, with me, in the sad seclusion of an ancient baronial hall," said Catherine, giving way to her usual vivacity.

"So, my sister, you are, as many a woman has been before you, sorrowful for the lack of not knowing your own mind. Well, cheer, you, sweet Kate, with the remembrance, that love is not conquered by anger, and absence weareth not away the memorial that affection, too fondly indulged, imprinteth on the heart." The Lady Cicely faltered as she uttered these words, and certain reflections of her own suffused her eyes with tears; and throwing herself into Catherine's arms, she, in her turn, wept long and passionately.

The following day, Sir Fabian de Spencer, after taking a most courteous leave of the fair sisters, departed, with the rest of the garrison, from the castle; and all relapsed into the same gloom and monotony, which pervaded the palace of yore.

Sir Ralph Swillington resumed his sway with tenfold rigidity; and this strictness was felt by the royal sisters as the more irksome, from being contrasted with the gaiety and pleasure they enjoyed during the government of the Earl of Devonshire. Even the Lady Killingworth, prudent and guarded as she was, could not forbear complaining of the restraint imposed upon herself and royal chargers, since they were no longer permitted to ride in the park out of sight of the palace, nor even then without an armed guard, nor to walk beyond the limits of the garden. It was evident, not only to themselves, but to the whole household, that the princesses were now no other than prisoners of state, whom policy would not permit the king to bring nearer the capital.

This reflection gave great uneasiness to the royal sisters, but produced not between them and the Castellan the angry disputes which formerly would have arisen. A change of demeanor had taken place among the fair prisoners, Cicely drooped in hopeless despondence and

languor, Catherine had lost all her animation, and Anne, deprived of the assistance of so able an auxiliary, only expressed her displeasure by disdainful looks and haughty monosyllables.

Time fled away, and only brought increase of anxiety to the breast of Lady Cicely, and her intense wish to ascertain the fate of Welles became, at last, so painful, as to subdue all scruples of reserve; and she determined to secure the intervention of so powerful a friend as the Earl of Devonshire, in behalf of her unfortunate lover. After due deliberation, she wrote a clear and succinct statement of the case to the earl, requesting his aid in discovering what fate had befallen Welles, of whose person, dress, and manners, she gave a striking description; concluding, by attributing the interest she avowed in him, to her gratitude for the eminent service he had rendered her. Having sealed her epistle, she was fain to employ Baldwin as her courier, his oft tried fidelity leaving no doubt of his proving a trustworthy messenger.

Baldwin, whose genius had been somewhat in eclipse, during the sojourn of the late gay company at the palace, was delighted at finding himself once more of consequence. He had of late much ingratiated himself in the favor of Sir Ralph Swillington, by a pretended devotion to his interests, and by giving him, with an air of mystery, sundry informations of divers secret matters, relating to the princesses, that were of small importance. He had allowed the officious Castellan to open, privately, many letters committed to his charge, by his ladies, containing instructions to tirewomen, silk merchants, and essence vendors, and other persons of little moment. Thus, Sir Ralph Swillington contrived to see every letter of no consequence which was written in the castle, and Baldwin, from the merit of giving him a sight of these, was enabled to manage without the slightest suspicion, any interdicted correspondence his ladies chose to carry on. The princesses had small means of rewarding the services of this faithful adherent; but, independent of the attachment which the page bore to his fair mistresses, he experienced a pleasure, in outwitting Swillington, more captivating to a lad of his temper than the promise of the most considerable rewards.

A true lover of intrigue, and admirably qualified to succeed in the laudable science of finesse, Baldwin enjoyed, with all the pride of art, the management of a new and difficult enterprise. Above all, the youth was deeply tinctured with romance—he beheld in the princess-

os, royal maidens unjustly held in captivity, whose chains it was the bounden duty of every man to assist in loosing; although Baldwin was, in years, and still more in person, a very boy, yet, in common with all his class, he prided himself on his manly character and feelings.

To this notable gallant did the Lady Cicely commit the charge of delivering her packet to the Earl of Devonshire. To do this, an opportunity of leaving Havering in the Bower, with the letter, was required by Baldwin, and this, to any person but one in such high confidence with Swillington as the wily page, would have been no easy matter, since all goers or comers, at this time, entering or leaving the palace were subjected, by the suspicious Castellan, to a most rigorous search. Baldwin's ingenuity, however, was not in this instance put to the rack, for while he was considering how to obtain a few hours' leave of absence, Swillington summoned him suddenly, for the purpose of employing him as courier to London.

The princess Cicely most anxiously counted the hours till his return on the following day, when he soon found a fitting opportunity of delivering to her a packet from the Earl of Devonshire. She broke the seal with a fluttering heart, and read as follows:—

“To the fair hands of the most royal Lady Cicely Plantagenet.

“I would, gracious lady, that it were in my power to give you more satisfactory intelligence respecting the unfortunate whom you honor with your sympathy; and, I lament me to say, that the same evil-minded person who hath so villanously empoisoned the king's ear with unjust suspicions against your fair self, and the noble ladies, your sisters, hath likewise brought that unhappy gentleman into the sore peril of his highness's extreme displeasure. Moreover, the complexion of the times is so passing dangerous withal, that I run no small risk, in my own person, as one of his highness's ministers of state, by giving you the information you require; albeit that consideration will not debar me from complying with your request, and thinking myself bounden unto you for your confidence in mine honor.

“I have (since receiving the epistle you were pleased to dispatch unto me) examined more closely into the case of the Viscount Welles, now a prisoner in the Tower of London. He is represented, I opine most falsely, by Sir Ralph Swillington, to be one of the traitorous followers

of the notorious Perkin Warbeck, if not Perkin himself. Which suspicion has taken such strong hold on his highness's mind, that the Lord Welles doth lie in grievous peril of being questioned by such means as I would not willingly wound your gentle nature by describing; and, I fear me, no good offices of mine can prevent such a result.

"This I do the more deeply lament, as I believe him to be a most honorable gentleman, whose only crime is his imprudence in suffering himself to be transported into uttering passionate language against his highness, which, though used, perchance, under the sense of unmerited neglect, he will find it no easy matter to justify. He is, likewise, accused of having, by your ladyship's desire and incitement, pursued, and taken by force of arms, from the person of one Gilbert Shaw, a letter addressed and superscribed to the king's highness. This is matter of serious import, but the worst yet remaineth behind. The arch imposter, Perkin Warbeck, doth boast himself that he hath a rich ouche, a family jewel of your house, being a cluster of inestimable gems wrought into the well known ancient device of the line of York, namely, the falcon and fetterlock. This remarkable jewel is remembered to have been seen in the hat of your brother, the Duke of York, when he entered into the sanctuary, at Westminster, with the queen your mother, yourself and royal sisters; what became of it farther no man knoweth, and if the imposter can indeed produce it, men will say that it is strong proof in favor of his being the very Richard of York that he pretends to be, yea, it is an evidence which will weigh fearfully against the king's title.

"Now, Sir Ralph Swillington doth declare upon oath, that he hath seen the said jewel in your possession, and heard you affirm with tears, that your brother Richard did give it to you, as a love-token, before he left the sanctuary—therefore, if Perkin Warbeck does, in very deed, possess it, Sir Ralph Swillington shrewdly guesses that it must have been given to him, or sent by you, and Welles (if not Perkin himself) is the agent, to whom you have confided so precious a pledge, and that he has carried it beyond seas, for the traitorous purposes of assisting the imposter. Most deeply is his highness incensed against Welles, yet, doth he offer him a free pardon, if he will bear evidence, that your ladyship and royal sisters are engaged with the above-mentioned treasonable correspondence; this the Lord Welles doth, at the present, most manfully and stoutly deny, protest-

ing your innocence and his own from this foul charge; but who can answer how far his constancy of resolution may hold good when these questions are proposed to him on the rack? for certain of the royal council do daily press on his highness the expediency of having him tried by torture, and indeed, this time of tumult and open rebellion is unhappily very like to decide the king to prompt and severe measures against all who lie under such circumstances of doubt and suspicion, as, I grieve to say, the Lord Welles now doth.

“Having thus acquitted me of the commission with which you have honored me, I now hasten to offer you my poor counsel on this most unfortunatè conjecture, leaving the decision to your own discretion. The king hath before now, on a lesser matter than that with which Viscount Welles is charged, inflicted both torture and death; and his mind being irritated at this unlucky crisis, I do hold the peril of this unhappy gentleman to be extreme. I, therefore, would recommend you, for your own sake, as well as his, if you have indeed the important jewel alluded to above in your own safe keeping, to undertake a journey to London, forthwith, and seeking the king's presence, by producing the jewel clear yourself and the Lord Welles at once, from the worst of the charge, and using withal your utmost wisdom in explaining the remaining misrepresentations of Swillington, which, God knoweth, will be a hard matter. This course I do urge you instantly to pursue before my Lord Welles doth expire on the rack, or the extremity of torture doth wring from him some false charge against both you and himself—which confession, you would find great difficulty in disproving when you are prisoner in the Tower, where a warrant will be speedily issued to commit you. If (as I gather from your letter) your heart's ease doth indeed depend on the préservation of the life of this unhappy gentleman, certès, your instant witness in his favor is the only step I can devise in order to save him.

“I am aware, that your ladyship will find it no easy matter to quis Havering in the Bower, by reason of the strict watch kept by Ralph Swillington. If you have courage to follow the course I have pointed out, your departure must be in the way of escape in the night season, which, I think, you may compass by means of Baldwin, your shrewd and trusty page, confiding in no one but him, not even in your sisters, lest, if matters should have an evil termination, they should be implicated in your flight.

“If you will advertise me of the time and place of meeting, I will,

myself adventure, for lack of nobler escort, to conduct you in safety to London, and introduce you into the presence of the king.

“Now, commending you to the good care of Providence, and praying you to believe, that I will in no wise abuse the confidence with which you have honored me, I rest your steady friend and faithful servant,

“DEVONSHIRE.”

This letter not only verified the worst fears of the princess, respecting the fate of the unfortunate Lord Welles, but harrowed up her heart with apprehensions for the future, and painful remembrances of the agonising past. Instinctively she sprang to the cabinet which contained her casket of jewels, and almost expecting that some dark agent of iniquity had rifled from her this dear proof of her murdered brother's love—and the innocence of herself and Welles. She put up an ejaculation of thankfulness when she beheld the diamonds flash in the rays of the lamp she held, from the usual nook in which she was wont to keep them.

After weeping over the jewel in sad recollection of the hour when she first became its possessor, she vowed not to part with the token till she placed it in the hands of the king. She remembered the time when her young brother, with sagacity beyond his years, foreseeing his own fate, had disengaged it from his cap, and privately given it to her, his favorite sister, to keep as a remembrance of him when he should be no more. This circumstance had happened during the time when Cardinal Bouchier was in earnest conference with her mother, and it was unknown to any but herself and sisters, till she mentioned it one day before Swillington. Warbeck and his abetter knew not that she had the ouche in her keeping, and had forged some imitation of this remarkable jewel as one of their proofs, trusting that the original had been lost in the dark scenes that followed the departure of the young prince from the sanctuary, or that it had been plundered by one of his murderers.

Thus situated, the Lady Cicely scrupled not to write to the Earl of Devonshire instantly, saying that she would immediately follow his advice, as she had the proof of Welles's innocence safe in her possession, and that she held herself in readiness to quit Havering and undertake a journey to London, under any protection he might see fitting to provide for her.

No sooner had she dispatched this note by Baldwin her ready mes-

senger, than it appeared as if the suspicious Castellan had, by secret intuition, become aware that some intrigue was on foot, for not contented with redoubling his means of jealous watchfulness without the palace, he proceeded to bar all communication between the princesses and their domestics within; and over and above, he inflicted on them his personal company for the whole day, notwithstanding the intimations he received from Catherine, that his presence in their domestic circle was a grievance intolerable beyond all others. It was to no purpose that they left him in possession of one apartment, he pertinaciously pursued them to that in which they had taken refuge from the annoyance of his society.

Toward evening the appearance of Baldwin, with the customary refreshment of wine and spices, relieved the Lady Cicely of the apprehensions that had beset her since the increase of Swillington's vigilance, lest the page had been detected by him with her packet about his person. The shrewd look of intelligence which he slyly directed toward her, convinced her that he had, at least, acquitted himself successfully, as far as related to delivering her billet to the Earl of Devonshire; and she farther guessed, from his manner, that he was the bearer of some reply or message from the earl, which he only waited a fitting opportunity of communicating to her.

At the moment when Baldwin approached her with the silver cup and spice box, she perceived that both were the objects of Swillington's most jealous attention, therefore, he would instantly detect any attempt at the conveyance of a letter.

"No, good Baldwin," said she, rejecting the offered refection, "I do not feel disposed to partake of wine and spices to-night, the cordials that I require are those of hope and peace to my o'er anxious heart, which droops with these troublous times."

"Fear not, lady mine, but the times will shortly mend," returned Baldwin, in his most significant manner.

"How now, master Jackanapes!" said Sir Ralph Swillington, angrily, "I'd have you to know that it is a gallows penalty for such sorry knaves as you to offer consolements of a treasonable nature to the ladies of York!"

"Nay, marry forfend that I should attain unto such lofty destiny, without any reasonable deservings on mine own part," returned the ready page, "but I wist not, Sir Castellan, that good presages of better times could be construed into matter of treason, seeing that in the

present perilous insurrection of yon foul traitor, Warbeck, it behooves all friends unto the king's most gracious person and government to pray for the restoration of peace and good order."

Sir Ralph Swillington regarded the page with an enquiring and suspicious look; but the frank and careless glance with which the youth met the scrutiny, if it did not convince the Castellan of his fealty, at least had the effect of assuring him that no present secret design could be carried on under so gay an exterior.

However, as before observed, it was the pride of Baldwin to outwit the wary Castellan. That night at supper the Lady Cicely, on breaking her manchet, found that it contained a slip of paper, on which was written these words in the Earl of Devonshire's hand—

"To-night at twelve of the clock, if you can find means to leave the palace, I will meet you at the park gate, which leads to Romford, and speed you Londonward.

Yours in all faith,

"D.——."

The princess started, and her color varied from red to pale, as she read this billet. When she looked up, she saw the oppressive eye of Swillington fastened upon her. A glance from Baldwin recalled her to self-possession, and she hesitated not, in compliance with his silent intimation, to swallow the paper in small portions with part of the bread.

Her own fate, and that of her sisters, seemed to depend on her present firm perseverance in the hazardous adventure she was about to encounter; yet, the very importance of the stake had the effect of unnering and paralysing her spirits, and when she gained her own apartment, she flung herself on a seat, and covered her face with her hands in utter bewilderment of mind. The tones of the castle clock pealing the eleventh hour, reminded her that she had not yet formed any plan of escape, and much must, she knew, be ventured and effected within the remaining hour, if yet she hoped to obtain the life and liberty of Welles. In dreadful uncertain how to act, and in total ignorance of the measure it would be best to take toward leaving the palace, she felt aware that the precious moments were gliding rapidly from her, and each, as it fled for ever, was shortening the brief space that yet remained ere the appointed time would expire.

A slight noise caused her to look fearfully around, when she perceived, to her infinite joy, a bundle placed softly within the door of her apartment. This she found contained a full suit of new attire exactly

like Baldwin's page dress, cap and plume, and all complete. She lost no time in assuming this disguise, and scarcely had she fully arrayed herself when Baldwin's presence at the window was announced by a low and cautious tap. When she unclosed the lattice, he in a whisper, informed her that he had attached a rope to the balcony, and was there to assist her in descending.

"But my sisters," cried the princess, "what will they think of my sudden disappearance? Tarry one moment, good Baldwin, while I go to the Lady Catherine's apartment to acquaint her with the cause of my flight."

"Your ladyship may do so if it likes you," replied Baldwin dryly, "but even if Sir Swillington, or his spies, should by miracle of good fortune fail to meet you in this quaint array, what warrant have you that my Lord Devon's patience will hold good against your delay and induce him to wait after his appointed time?"

The Lady Cicely yielded to the force of Baldwin's reasoning, and the next minute she stood in safety on the dewy turf.

"Now, lady," said Baldwin, unlocking a small door in the gate tower which led into the park, "our mutual safety commands that I should leave you; half an hour's swift walking will bring you to the western gate, and if challenged there by the porter remember to say boldly, 'Swillington for Richmond,' and they will permit you to pass; likewise should you be encountered rudely by any one, either within or without the park, fear not, but say the same pass-word as manfully as you may, and I pray you shame not my resemblance by trembling thus, lest men who take you for me, should twit me with my coward fit. But let that pass—when you proceed Londonward you shall soon meet the right noble earl, whose word of recognition is to be 'For Life and Death,' and then, I trow, all the perils of the escape will be over. Farewell, gentle lady! heaven be your speed."

Having finished this code of instructions, Baldwin reascended the rope-ladder, and drawing it up after him, all traces of the means by which the Lady Cicely had quitted the palace were lost.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“Lo, the moon is down, the crickets chirp, the screech-owl
Calls in the dawn—so which way now?”

OLD PLAY.

The fair and timid fugitive pursued her lonely way through Havering Park, under the shelter of a starless night. Many invocations did she put up to St. Edward, the patron saint of her family, and as she fled swiftly through the chase, cowering along under the deep embowering shade of tree and thicket, she ever and anon cast a frightened look into the darkness, half expecting to see the apparition of the holy confessor emerge from some glen of this, his chosen spot, his favorite Bower of Waltham Forest. Her busy fancy did not fail to call to mind that the earth she trod was haunted ground, celebrated in monkish lore for having been the scene of the supernatural appearance of St. John the Evangelist, when in the guise of a poor pilgrim he received the ring from St. Edward, which circumstance, it is well known, gave rise to the name of Havering.

Hallowed as she deemed the spot by the celestial visitations of beautiful spirits, yet the awe she felt diverted her mind from dwelling on the

danger of encountering some of the park rangers, employed in watching the deer, or others posted by Swillington to question all who approached the royal residence. Whether the royal saint and confessor, aided by his high patron holy St. John, really gave the Lady Cicely any assistance, as she wended her perilous way through the darksome shades of Havering in the Bower, we are not permitted to say; but certain it is, that she escaped an encounter which would have perplexed her sorely, through her devotion to the saintly king. In a lone low dingle near which she had to pass, there stood a little open shrine, containing a statue of St. Edward, before which burned a lamp shielded from the weather. Hearing approaching footsteps, hither the princess fled, as to a city of refuge, and was kneeling before the statue of the Saxon king, in earnest prayer for assistance, when the head ranger of Havering Park, accompanied by his band of foresters armed in more warlike guise than was the usual wont of greenwood rangers, passed close by.

"Soho, Master Baldwin!" cried the deep manly voice of the chief ranger, "thou art late at thy devotions to-night. I guess that thou art bound to London on some of Sir Swillington's behests. Well, haste thee, boy, and finish thy orison to our good saint, and speed thee on thy way, for taking the word of an old forester, there cometh up a heavy thunderstorm anon. The cloud hangeth dark and deep over the forest of Hainault, and will break ere morning."

As he spoke the gallant forest-band passed by, and scarcely had the words ceased to echo to the clear voice of the ranger, which rang among them almost as musically as the notes of his own bugle, before the princess, rejoicing at the seasonable mistake, and uttering a hasty "*Sanctus Edwardus! ora pro nobis!*" sprang from her knees, and again fled through the green-wood with the speed of a frightened bird.

In a few minutes, she stood before the western gate without accident, and replied to the porter's stern challenge, as directed by Baldwin, "Swillington for Richmond." The gates were unbarred, unlocked, and cautiously unclosed just wide enough to allow her passage through. She wrapped her cloak round her slender figure, lowered her head, and pulled her page's cap over her eyes to conceal her face from the scrutiny of two steel-clad soldiers, who advanced from the interior of the lodge with torches in their hands, by the light of which they took a close survey of the feigned page. She pressed both her hands tightly on her breast, to still, if possible, the terrified pulsations of her heart,

which she suspected would soon become as audible to her inquisitors as they were to herself. A gruff "All's well" from one soldier, and "Pass on," from the other, relieved her present apprehensions, although she trembled with an ague fit of alarm. With faltering and uncertain steps she pursued her way, but had not proceeded two hundred yards, when she was arrested by a second challenge of "Who goes there?"

"For life and death!" was her frightened reply.

"You have soon forgotten your lesson," rejoined the challenger. "Had not 'Swillington for Richmond,' been the more prudent answer?"

"Alas! yes," returned the princess; "but for the love of holy St. John, declare who it is that knows me."

"A loyal knight and true, therefore you have nought to dread," said the Earl of Devonshire, advancing, and drawing her arm through his.

He led her a few paces from the high road, and whistled three times. Immediately his two squires made their appearance, each leading a ready caparisoned horse.

"Now," said the earl, "as you have discarded your female tire, you must consent to mount as one of my train, although during the night, I shall, for the better security of your person, ride by your side, and guide your bridle rein; and I trust to convey you through the streets of London, under shadow of night, and safely lodge you in my apartments in the tower, where we can conveniently obtain a conference of him whom you will wot of; which measure I judge to be most expedient before your interview with the king takes place.

By this time the Lady Cicely had mounted and commenced her journey; but the storm which had so long hung brooding over the forest, began to make itself heard, and the lightning which had ever and anon opened the heavens, and given them the appearance of a broad sheet of flame, began now to assume a more mischievous character, precipitating each flash on the earth in arrowy semblance, while every such dart was immediately answered by a deafening volley of thunder.

Although the horse that the Lady Cicely had mounted, reared and curveted at each flash of lightning, yet she manifested no terror, and succeeded in managing her perverse steed with great spirit and courage, so that the earl hoped yet that they should be able to pursue their journey, and bring the princess into the tower under the shade of night; but before they reached Chadwell heath, then a peculiarly open and desolate tract of country, the rain, so long delayed, began to fall with

deluging violence, absolutely furrowing the earth in its sweeping fury. It was a storm before which the robustest man would need shelter, much more the tender form of the Lady Cicely. At a distance, on the heath, they saw a furz-cutter's hut, and thither the noble company speeded for an abiding place till the fury of the storm was past. The rain abated little of its violence till the dawn, as the Earl of Devonshire stood by the door of the hut, watching the departure of the storm, that was rolling off from one quarter of the heavens before the advancing morning, which was breaking in the other, he said to the Lady Cicely—

“ I grieve to say, royal lady, that as sorely against my will, we are enforced to enter London in the face of day, you will be obliged to bear yourself in all things as may best beseem a discreet and trusty page, carrying my cloak and lance at your saddle bow ; and when we enter London, to avoid suspicion, you must be content to fall back in the rear with my two squires, Sandys and Petworth, whom I have commanded to have special care of you, and I would counsel you to have a care for yourself, since it behoves one to be passing well skilled in horsemanship, who makes a first essay at entering the noisy and tumultuous streets of the eastern part of London, where the untaught carles, who resort thither, to buy and sell beeves at the cattle mart, pay small respect to the retinue of nobility, especially in these times of rebellion and public disquiet.”

A less timid female than the lady Cicely would have felt confused and bewildered on entering, in such unwonted array, a scene of so much bustle and confusion as the hamlet of the Whitechapel presented, even at the hour of six in the morning. It was through a press of cattle, carts, and busy chapmen, that the Earl of Devonshire and his followers had to make their way. When they approached Aldgate, the eastern portal of the city, the fine person of the earl was too remarkable to pass unrecognised ; and so popular was his administration with the Londoners, that his appearance was greeted by loud acclamations on all sides, a proof of regard that he would then have most willingly dispensed with, as it was not only the means of drawing fresh crowds together, and of course impeding his progress, but it had also the bad effect of attracting attention to his company.

The lady Cicely felt as though she would have shrunk, if it had been possible, into the very earth to elude observation, as not a few of the unmannerly rout annoyed her with rude jests on her timid riding, and

gazing in her face, burst into laughter at the terrified glances she threw on either side, as the unlicensed throng pressed tumultuously around her

“Sandys,” said the Earl of Devonshire, “this will never do. I was not prepared for these popular demonstrations of good will from this quarter of the suburbs; and as it would be rather inconvenient to be attended to the tower with such a band of the loving citizens at our heels, as are, I see, preparing to do us that honor, we must even decline passing through the gate, and avoid the city by turning short to the left, which way will lead us, though somewhat circuitously, to my country-house at Stebenhithe, where we will rest for the present.”

“It is most discreetly resolved, my lord,” answered Sandys, “for our fair charge can scarcely sit on her horse, and needs must have rest and refreshment forthwith.”

The earl then raising his bonnet, and addressing a few courteous words to the populace, expressive of his grateful sense of their regard, bent his course to that part of the extensive parish of Stebenhithe situated close to the Thames, distinguished as a place of rural retirement for the nobility and gentry, and rendered exceedingly pleasant by the flourishing groves of poplars which adorn the banks of the Thames. From these poplars that part of Stebenhithe or Stepney, called Poplar, takes its name.

When the noble company arrived at the earl's country residence, the Lady Cicely was so much overcome with agitation, terror, and fatigue, as to render it necessary for her to be lifted out of the saddle, and the earl, looking with sympathising interest on her pale countenance and harrassed appearance, pronounced that a few hours' repose was an indispensable preliminary to her visiting Welles.

“Alas! my lord,” replied the princess, “it is grief of heart alone of which I am sensible. Fatigue would be unheeded by me were my mind but once lightened of its heavy burden; therefore I pray you, my Lord of Devon, to delay no longer an interview that may tend to restore peace to my troubled spirit.”

“That such an effect may proceed from the expected meeting I do most earnestly hope,” returned the earl; “but since so happy a result is somewhat doubtful, and you have committed yourself wholly to my guidance, I do enjoin you to partake of needful refreshment and rest till noon, at which time we will proceed by water, to the tower, in mine own barge. It was an error, on my part, to attempt bringing

you through London streets in this guise, but I had reckoned on having you safe in the tower before peep of day."

The Lady Cicely would still have disputed the point, but there was a gentle yet firm authority in the manner of the Earl of Devonshire, which showed plainly that resistance would be useless. Rest, however, though unwillingly taken, was not without a beneficial effect on her wearied frame, and somewhat prepared to endure her the agitating scenes that awaited her.

The meridian sun shone brightly on the waters, as seated by the side of the Earl of Devonshire, in his gilded barge, she glided almost unconsciously over the bosom of the Thames. When the tumultuous sounds which proceeded from that strange pile of arches and houses called London Bridge, met her ear, and the bargemen rested on their oars, she suddenly raised her eyes, and found herself opposite to the gloomy and frowning pile which the earl had no need to name to her as the tower. She started up in agonising emotion, and would have fallen into the water, had not the arm of Devonshire been promptly interposed between her and the edge of the light vessel.

"How!" exclaimed the earl, as he reseated her with gentle violence—"is this the calm self-possession and high courage that I expected from a Plantagenet?"

"Alas! my lord," she said, grasping his arm expressively, "how can a Plantagenet behold, without o'er-mastering agony, the place which has been stained with the murder of so many of her race?"

She shuddered, and became of a mortal paleness, as if the very vicinity of a fortress that had been so fatal to her family, was deadly.

The earl gently chid her for the violence of her emotions. "Come, cheer up, my fair page!" said he, "I may not have you disgrace the hose and doublet with woman's softness and woman's fears. Recall the mighty spirit of your race to support you through all the scenes of the drama in which you have voluntarily assumed a part of importance and difficulty, and faint not in its very commencement. Prudence," he continued, "requires you to bear yourself in the most guarded manner; and truly it behoves us both to be wary, for see!" he added, pointing to the royal standard, whose gorgeous folds were floating above them from that part of the tower, occasionally used by the sovereign as his residence, "Know you not, by yon token, that King Henry at this time keeps court in the tower?"

“ Ah !” cried the princess, with a suppressed shriek, “ save me from him, he will know me !”

“ Surely he will,” replied the earl, “ unless you put a greater restraint on your feelings. As to my shielding you from his wrath, in case of our probable detection, I doubt whether all the present influence I possess, joined to the memory of past services, would be sufficient to preserve my head from keeping company with that of Sir William Stanly, over the drawbridge yonder, who, malgre the many obligations owed him by the king, was, for no greater offence than a lightly spoken word, beheaded no longer back than last week.” He pointed, as he spoke, to the turret in the middle of London Bridge, which commanded a drawbridge, always raised and guarded in case of an attack on the city by water. On this turret was placed the ghastly head of the unfortunate Stanly.

“ Dreadful times !” cried the Lady Cicely, hiding her face and clinging to the earl’s arm for protection.

“ Need I assure you, noble lady,” said the earl, “ that the arm on which you lean is most honored by lending you its support ? nevertheless, if you would enact the character of my page with any hope of deceiving the guards belonging to the stern fortress opposite to us, you must not depart so far from its accustomed bearing as to appear on such terms of familiarity with your supposed lord, or we shall have his highness speedily advertised, that I am conducting a lady fair to soothe the prison hours of my Lord of Welles.”

The pale cheek of the Princess Cicely crimsoned with shame and offended pride at these words, and there was somewhat of haughty pique in the air with which she abandoned the arm of the Earl of Devonshire, and removed herself a little space from the place where he sat.

As the earl now thought that the princess had obtained sufficient firmness to enter the fearful pile before them, he bade the bargeman to steer direct for the Watergate, which opened its stern portals to receive them. They floated in silence under the dark and ominous arch, whose portentous shadow had before that day been thrown over many an innocent and noble victim.

When they had landed, the Lady Cicely followed the earl to the apartments which he possessed, by virtue of his office in the fortress, and Devonshire presently demanded of Sir John Digby, the lieutenant

of the tower, instant admittance to the prison-room of the person committed at the instance of Sir Ralph Swillington.

The high place which the Earl of Devonshire held in the state, and the great office belonging to him in the tower, prevented this request from being for a moment questioned, and orders were immediately given to conduct him to the prisoner, whom he required to see.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“When love, with unconfined wings,
Hovers within my gates,
And my divine Althea brings,
To whisper at my gates—”

COL. R. LOVELACE.

The warder motioned back the soldiers who stood with crossed partisans, guarding a heavy door; he then drew the ponderous bolts, and turning the huge key in the rusty lock, which grated harshly on the ear of the princess, he threw open the low-arched portal, and admitted the Earl of Devonshire and his page to the gloomy interior of a damp and desolate apartment, where the light of day was but feebly dispensed through a high, narrow, and very strongly grated window, and seemed as if meted out with niggardly precision to the unhappy tenant of this doleful abode.

At the farther extremity of the room, occupying a sort of rude couch that appeared to serve the purpose of a bed by night, and seat by day, sat the unfortunate Welles, listlessly employed in tracing characters with a light staff on the dust, which had, in the course of years, gathered on the stone floor, unmolested by any operation of housewifely cleanliness.

The sudden stream of light admitted by the open door, caused Lord Welles to raise his eyes, and he gazed with some surprise on the noble-looking earl and his companion.

"How fares it with you, brave Welles! son of my father's friend and fellow sufferer?" said the Earl of Devonshire, advancing to greet the captive with more than his wonted manly frankness of manner. There was that expression of noble candour and high integrity, in the clear blue eyes of Courtenay, which, at a glance, inspired the forlorn prisoner with confidence in him, whom otherwise as a stranger and one of Henry's trusted ministers, it had been but prudent to doubt.

"You are welcome, my lord," said he, receiving the hand, which the earl kindly and courteously extended toward him as a pledge of friendship, with both his fettered ones. "The more so, as I expected visitors of a very different stamp from you and your gentle follower, who, kind heart! weeps from very sympathy."

The Lady Cicely had indeed covered her face with both her hands and was endeavouring to stifle the heavy sobs which burst from her oppressed heart.

Emotion that so far exceeded the usual bounds of commiseration, attracted a more particular regard than Welles had at first bestowed on the counterfeit page, whom he had not suspected to be other than the attendant of the Earl of Devonshire.

A second glance, however, dispelled his error, and notwithstanding her unwonted attire, amidst all her confusion, tears, and blushes, love was not slow in recognising its dearest object.

The consciousness that she was known, flushed her cheek with a brighter crimson, as her timid eyes met the enquiring glance of his, and then sought the ground in tearful embarrassment.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, springing toward her, "may I believe the evidence of my own senses? is it some beautiful spirit that has taken the guise of my loved one?—Yes," he continued, taking both her hands, and perusing with an eager eye the lineaments of her lovely countenance, "it is in very deed herself—for there is nothing on earth like her—but wherefore are you here, and in such unwonted attire and company?"

"Ah! rather let me ask you what evil chance has brought you to this place of woe and terror?" she replied, looking tenderly upon him through the fast streaming tears that dimmed her soft eyes.

"Even my adverse destiny," he answered, "which induced me to seek

the chapel after I had received the commission of Lady Catherine, in the presumptuous hopes that, notwithstanding my delay, you yet lingered there. Thus I fell into the snares of Sir Ralph Swillington, who, with a company of armed men, beset and overpowered me, and despite of resistance or expostulations, bound and conveyed me to this place, where I now have suffered some weeks of solitary confinement. Yesterday the first degree of the torture was inflicted upon me, in order to force from me a confession of being either with Perkin Warbeck, or some accredited agent of his, engaged in treasonable correspondence against his highness's government, with your royal sisters. Ridiculous as this accusation is, it has taken such strong hold on the mind of the king, that malgre all my protestations against the injustice of such proceedings, I have been told that I am to expect this evening a renewal of what I went through yesterday, only with aggravation of torture, unless my perverse obstinacy, as they are pleased to style my steadfast adherence to the truth, should yield before that time arrives—but," he continued, "of my constancy of resolution, Henry of Richmond has already had proof, and let him not flatter himself that the utmost extremity of bodily suffering that his remorseless instruments of cruelty can inflict, shall force from me one syllable that can be construed into aught that may militate against oppressed and unprotected innocence."

"Oh! noble Welles," cried the princess, who had listened to him in an agony of grief and terror, "and is it for your ill-starred meeting with the daughters of your foe, and the services you have rendered them withal, that you have endured such things as break my heart to think upon? But since the king requires confessions, relative to those meetings, I will hasten to him and relieve you forthwith, from the weight of his sore displeasure, by revealing to him the whole truth; and whatever blame there be in the matter, that will I (as is most just) take upon myself."

"Not for worlds," cried Welles, "shall you so venturously expose yourself to the wrath of Henry, who, for a less offence than might be drawn even from your innocent actions, scrupled not to shed the blood of Stanly, in this very den of iniquity, not many days ago."

"Oh! seek not to deter me from my resolve, by essaying to excite in me selfish terrors for my own safety. For myself, I am as fearless as the boldest warrior of my line. Nay, my Lord of Devon, you need not smile so incredulously, for, though you have seen me belie hose and doublet with woman's tears, yet they sprung from the overwhelming

reflection, that I breathed the air of the fatal place where my sweet brothers were foully done to death by my guilty uncle; and, that perhaps I should unconsciously tread over the nameless and unhonored grave, where the princely relics of my king and brother had been rudely thrust by ruffian hands. And I thought," she continued, glancing half fearfully around the gloomy apartment, and pressing closer to the side of Welles, "I thought that the restless spirit of my uncle Clarence might be hovering near, denouncing woe and retribution on the head of another child of his relentless brother."

"And feared you not, also, to encounter the holy shade of the sixth Henry?" interrupted a hollow and sepulchral voice, that seemed to proceed from a vaulted recess which was thrown into deep shadow by the projection of a huge stone buttress near the group. All gazed in consternation toward the spot from whence the voice appeared to issue, which, after a pause, thus continued—"Report saith that the royal and saintly martyr of whom this world was not worthy, was foully butchered in this very room, by the order of the remorseless Edward—but his blood has failed to cement the slaughter-raised throne of York!"

The princess, whose fancy was, as we have already shown, in a high state of excitation, uttered a piercing shriek, and in the first impulse of her terror, threw herself for protection into the arms of Welles.

"Fear not! life of my life!" cried Welles, fondly carressing her; "had you nothing more to apprehend from the malice of the living, than from the gentle spirit of the beatified Henry, small would be your cause of affright, I trow!"

But the fears of the princess could not be deemed without foundation when the manly cheek of the bold Earl of Devonshire varied from its color, as a figure, whose face was partially concealed by the muffling folds of a large black cloak, advanced from the dark recess, and added himself to the startled company.

"So!" said he, preventing with a glance of deadly import, some motion that the Earl of Devonshire appeared desirous of making, "the Lieutenant of the Tower is a trustworthy servant to the king—and the Master of the Ordnance seemeth marvellously discreet in his choice of companions!"

A second lowering glance checked the utterance of the reply that rose to the lips of the Earl of Devonshire; and bending in a searching, penetrating look on the face of Welles, from beneath the dark drapery that suffered little more of his visage than his eyes to be visible, he

continued. "And you, audacious traitor! who appear to have found a soft solacer, a bosom friend, to while away the hours of captivity; let me ask you whether you are disposed to save yourself from a repetition of yesterday's fare, by a full confession of your manifold treasons?"

The dark eyes of Welles blazed defiance, as he replied, "And I, in my turn, will ask by what right or authority you presume to question me! You, who are neither my judge nor my peer, but a base spy, who, felon like, skulketh in secret holes and hiding-places, to steal the thoughts of an unhappy and injured man."

"Hush! hush! for the love of heaven!" exclaimed the Earl of Devonshire.

"Silence!" interposed the stranger, in a tone of stern command; and Devonshire stifled a sigh of impatience, bit his lip, and yielded reluctant obedience to the mandate.

"And now, insolent!" pursued the stranger, turning again to Welles, "know that I would have you consider my visit in the light of that of a friend, since I came hither in order to try whether you are willing to listen to the voice of reason and prudence, and declare voluntarily and by gentle means, the truth, which, otherwise, the extremity of bodily tortures shall wring from your lips."

"You were not present last night at mine examination," returned Welles, sternly, "but your colleagues in deeds of darkness can tell you whether I am likely to lack firmness on a repetition of the same scene."

"Oh, doubt not but your perverse obstinacy has been duly reported; and be assured at the same time, brave sir! such means were as duly devised as needs must conquer it, even were your pertinacity ten times as contumacious as it is. Those with whom you have to deal have tamed fiercer spirits than yours, and will humble you to the very dust before they have done with you."

"'Tis false!" interrupted Welles, "the body is indeed within their power, and that they can rend and mangle as they think fitting; but my spirit is my own and above their art to bow!"

"Oh these be high words, and are easily spoken," returned the other, "but it is another thing to maintain them when put to proof."

"From the sample which I afforded of my constancy last night, it may be guessed whether I rate my endurance too highly, or should fail on being put to farther trial," said Welles.

"By the soul of St. Edward! but I begin to think that you are a Paladin of such lofty emprise, that you almost desire to astonish this

noble company with a show of your hardihood ; and I doubt not but you possess sufficient obstinacy to make your vaunts good for a short space ; but let me counsel you as a friend, not to allow the season of grace to pass by. For by the light of our lady's brow ! I swear, if you do—'

"What then, insulting fiend ? You can but take my life," interrupted Welles, "but that, God knows, were a charity almost too great to be dealt by you ; although such a deed might well bescem the recreant arm of the muffled assassin or dark skulking spy."

"Madman !" cried the Earl of Devonshire, "you know not your peril !"

"It would better become *you* to look to your own—abettor of traitors !" interposed the stranger, glaring fiercely on the Earl from beneath the folds which overhung his large gloomy eyes, with an expression that awed and silenced the earl, though he evidently held his peace most reluctantly.

"Let me know my crime and the name of my accuser, and I will prove him a liar, let him be as great as he may," said Welles. "I am an Englishman and a peer of the realm, and, withal, a descendant of men whose fealty to the house of Lancaster has for generations been sealed with their blood on the scaffold—and for the sake of their services and mine own sufferings in the cause of the Red Rose, I do demand a fair and open trial."

"As a preliminary to that request being granted, you must make full and ample confession of the nature of your intents in lurking among the woods of Waltham, and on the royal demesne of Havering in the Bower ; likewise on account of the correspondence that existed between you and the daughters of Edward of York, not forgetting a true statement of your connection and conspiracy with that foul traitor and imposter, Peterkin Warbeck, and with the Duchess of Burgundy, against the only rightful and lawful sovereign happily established in these dominions—by legitimate heirship from the princely line of Lancaster—by yet more ancient descent, from Arthur Pendragon—by right of conquest—and by free choice of a grateful people, whom the present king rescued from the foul usurpation and bloody tyranny of Richard of Gloucester."

"You set forth his highness's titles in the style of a champion who expects to hear them attacked, and their legality questioned by his hearers," returned Welles, "but I say unto you, that I have main-

tained these titles at point of lance, and by dint of sword and battle-axe, in the red field of Bosworth. Upholding them *there*, was I trow, a somewhat stronger poof of devotion to the cause of Lancaster than expending a little empty breath, by insisting upon titles, at a time and place, where it is treason to question their validity; when, too, even the boldest adherents of the White Rose have been enforced to add their voices to the general acclaim, 'For God and Henry of Richmond,' who, malgre his injustice and ingratitude, is the only man that I ever did, or ever will acknowledge as my sovereign."

"Oh you take a discreet tone now, and I suppose you expect that your loyal effusion will be duly reported to his highness."

"My noble Lord of Devonshire, you were pleased to offer me your friendship, even now," said Welles, turning indignantly from his tormentor, "suffer me to ask of you, as the first and last proof I shall ever require of it, that you will exert yourself in expelling from my presence yon dark fiend, who has intruded upon me but to mock my miseries."

The Earl of Devonshire only answered by casting an embarrassed, and even imploring look at the stranger; but Welles, who noticed his hesitation, exclaimed with some warmth—

"There is no need, my lord, of excuses, I can plainly perceive that there is a secret intelligence between you. Yet I should have deemed that when the king sought for emissaries to betray the confidence of an unfortunate man, he would not readily find one in the Earl of Devonshire."

"Now, by my father's memory, you wrong me!—deeply, foully wrong me, Welles!" cried the earl, greatly moved, "but I forgive you, for I am at this moment the victim of circumstances which—"

"Will you be warned, William Courtenay?" interposed the stranger, sternly, "or must I remind you, that there be other lodgments in the Tower besides this?"

"And by my hopes of Heaven, I would rather tenant one of them than endure to appear in a light so dishonorable as that in which it has been your pleasure to place me this day," returned the Earl of Devonshire, with a flushed cheek, yet with a voice suppressed and respectful.

"Away!" interrupted Welles, indignantly, "this mummery does not beguile me! My Lord of Devon, I once held you as the flower of England's chivalry, as the mirror of knighthood, and the soul of hon-

or; but either I have been strangely beguiled, or you are foully changed! I were right loth to wrong you by my suspicions, yet I much misdoubt—”

“O, doubt him not, my Welles!” interposed the princess, earnestly, “I can witness largely and fully to the integrity of his purposes.”

“And what is it *you* can witness? You of the cap and plume; which is worn so irreverently withal, in presence of your master!” said the stranger, seizing the arm of the terrified and shrinking Cicely, and drawing her to him with a degree of roughness which caused Welles to start from his couch, and struggle with his chain, while Devonshire, visibly agitated, advanced a step, with the purpose of interfering; but a look from the general tormentor was sufficient to awe him, as before. After surveying the trembling counterfeit from head to foot, with a provoking scrutiny, he continued, “And now, pretty one, I should be glad to hear what part you were originally destined to play in my Lord of Devon’s mask, and for what good purpose you were brought hither?”

She threw a troubled and inquiring glance at the Earl of Devonshire.

“No! sweet-heart, that will not do!” said the querist, “I will have no secret intelligence carried on before my face. It is your answer, and not my Lord of Devon’s that I want. The moment for catechising *him* has not yet arrived, but that will come anon!”

The angry color which had so deeply flushed the cheek of Devonshire, during the whole of this extraordinary scene, yielded to a sudden paleness, which change of countenance alarmed the princess more than aught that had occurred. Urged by a sort of desperation, she turned quickly to the mysterious stranger, who appeared to hold such a singular control over their destinies, and said—

“Only show me your face, and I will tell you everything!”

“And why not with my face concealed?”

“Because,” said the Lady Cicely, “I cannot read in your countenance whether you be an honest man.”

“What then think you that I look like now?”

“Shall I answer?” said Welles.

“Peace, insolent!” returned the stranger, and then reiterated his former question to the Lady Cicely, who replied—

“Like a man who is ashamed of light because his deeds are evil; but,” she continued, lowering her voice, and speaking with fearful

earnestness, "you do specially remind me of a man who stood thus shrouded, and with lineaments concealed from observation, behind a pillar in the Sanctuary in Westminster, while certain of the privy council with the cardinal archbishop were beguiling my mother about giving up my sweet brother York; and they afterward told me that muffled figure was my uncle Richard!"—She paused and shuddered.

"By my faith!" replied the stranger, "I would not wish to bear such semblance another moment. And since, sweet mistress, you are so skilled in reading the countenances of men, (albeit, it is a curious sort of craft for a maiden to boast of,) and as you do desire to see my face, you shall e'en take your wish." He dropped the cloak, and stood Henry of Richmond confessed.

"My Royal brother! my king! and my only protector! have compassion upon me, and upon the unhappy Lord Welles, who is the victim of suspicious circumstances, which have been artfully turned against him by a villain," said the Lady Cicely, flinging herself at the feet of the king, and bathing his hands with her tears.

"Rise, madam," replied the king, gravely, "I will promise nought till the whole truth be laid before me of your doings here—and without any prompting from my Lord of Devon."

"You shall hear the truth, the whole plain truth, my dread lord," said the princess, "and then, if I fail to satisfy you, let all the weight of your displeasure fall upon me."

"I am not wont to revenge the crimes of men upon women; and I will not be dictated to, as to whom I am to spare, and whom I am to punish," replied the king, casting one of his peculiar glances at the Earl of Devonshire, who, folding his arms, returned his gaze proudly and unshrinkingly.

"Unhappy that I am! I have involved two noble gentlemen in ruin by my folly," cried the Lady Cicely, wringing her hands, and gazing in anguish from Welles to Devonshire, and then turning her imploring eyes, swimming in tears, on the king.

"To what purpose is all this passionate distress?" said Henry, taking her arm, and raising her from the ground with gentle violence. "Come! no resistance, obedience is your best and wisest course. Unless you will compose yourself, and tell your own story, now I am in the mood to listen to you, I shall depart, forthwith, and send my attorney general to receive your depositions, and *others*, that your friends well wot of, to extort theirs."

“ Ah !” exclaimed the princess, clinging to him in alarm, “ I will tell you every thing, my gracious liege, if you will but stay. Indeed it was for that purpose that I ventured to quit Havering in the Bower, without express permission from your highness—”

“ And sought me, maiden, in the prison of this traitor ?”

“ In truth, my liege, I was minded to see him before I conferred with your highness.”

“ Of course—in order that your separate stories might not clash. Why, my Lady Sister, you are no bad politician ! I shall come for the future, and crave counsel of you, when I have any difficult matter of state to settle !”

“ Your highness is pleased to disport with my sore distress,” said the princess, bursting into tears.

“ Be calm,” said the king, “ when ladies weep, I always leave them. It is truth, and not tears, that I require from you—but I fear you are like the rest of your race, too guileful for me to deal with.”

“ My Lady Cicely,” said the Earl of Devonshire, “ I perceive you hesitate with his highness, because you fear to draw evil consequences on me by revealing my share in your escapade from Havering in the Bower—but it is my earnest wish, that you do declare the whole matter fully and without reserve ; if not for your own sake, do it for mine, that his highness may see on what light grounds he has suspected one of his most faithful servants.”

“ Well, lady, since the Earl of Devonshire has graciously condescended to unseal your lips, I am ready, impartially, to listen to your story,—but hold—I bethink me it were as well to deal first with this insolent one, but as I choose to examine my witnesses separately, I shall catechise ye apart, and well it will be for all if your tales agree.”

So saying, he offered his arm to the princess, and led her into another room, and waving his hand for Devonshire to enter a third he left Welles to the indulgence of his solitary reflections for the space of a few minutes, while he himself superintended the warden's duty, and duly saw that all communication was cut off between the parties by dint of bolt and bar.

CHAPTER XXXV.

“What though the plain judge conscience makes no show,
But secretly to her dark sessions comes,
Not as read law doth to arraignment goe,
Or war to execution with loud drums.”

GONDIBERT.

When the king re-entered the prison room of Welles, he found the captive immersed in thought. The feverish flush of agitation had succeeded the paleness produced by long confinement and severe bodily suffering, while the gloom that lowered on his brow, and the indignant brightness of his eyes, as he flashed them sternly on the king, showed that his musings had not disposed him to take discreet advantage of the golden opportunity that now presented itself, of pleading his cause personally to his sovereign.

“We are about,” said the king, “to perform the unwonted office of father confessor to a lady; but before we may venture to shrive her free, we must first hear confession from you, therefore speak boldly and conceal nothing. We trust that we are merciful as well as just. What still sullen and silent? Nay, then, if our graciousness is despised and slighted thus, there be other means—”

“I never did aught that could be construed into matter of treason but once,” said Welles, after a long pause, “and that is a far by-gone

matter, a forgotten thing ; and related but to concealing and harboring a forlorn fugitive from royal wrath."

"There is not a more treasonable crime," cried the king eagerly, "and since you have begun to make a clean breast, let us hear first of this by-gone matter, as you please to call misprision of treason, while it is yet in your remembrance. It does, indeed, nearly concern us to know by what means our traitors and rebels do elude our royal vengeance. Said I not ever that the present was not your first matter of offence?" he continued, in a tone of self-congratulation at his own discernment.

"It is well known to your highness, that whatever be my offences, my family suffered great things in the royal cause of Lancaster. It is idle to pretend to mistake me for any other man than what I am, the Viscount Welles, and likewise Baron of Willoughby, the unfortunate son of the unfortunate Sir Robert Welles, who, like his father and his grandfather, perished on a scaffold for preserving his fealty to the falling fortunes of the Red Rose. It is also well known that the possessions of our ancestors were confiscated by the victorious Edward of York, and I, in consequence, brought up in poverty and obscurity. It is also well known—"

"Hold, hold!" cried the king, "you do impute to me much knowledge that I possess not; I wist not till this moment that Sir Robert had a son—and if you be the man, wherefore did you not apply to parliament for justice as to your title and estates?"

"Because," returned Welles, indignantly, "before I was sufficiently recovered from wounds received at Bosworth, where out of love to you, and your cause, I fought in the ranks, you had granted mine estates to the Duke of Buckingham, the son of a man whose wavering faith merited not such high reward from you, and I vowed never to apply for favor or reward to a king, who could so cruelly forget the unprecedented services and sufferings of my family—a family who deserved not that their last descendant should be injured by the representative of Lancaster."

"Now," exclaimed Henry, "it doth pass my patience, that it should be expected for my royal brain and memory to be as full of descents as a herald's chart; and that every descendant of noble houses, which have suffered for love of the Red Rose, if they live not in my remembrance, should be malcontent, because there happeneth to be other matter in my head than their pedigrees, forsooth, when there were one hundred and twenty attained nobles in my first parliament besides

my royal self. If you have met with wrong you have only to thank your own perverse temper, and the over-rating of the consequence of your family in supposing that their names and services must perforce live in men's memories. Had you prayed for your right, and then humbly waited our royal pleasure and leisure, you might have been happy in your fair inheritance even now, in place of wearing fetters in the tower. But on with your confession of misprision of treason; perhaps if you bear yourself humbly and confess freely, we may consider the services of your family in some sort of extenuation of that heavy guilt."

A slight smile of almost contemptuous meaning glanced over the features of Welles as he proceeded. "Before the consummation of events which terminated so happily for this nation—aye, and for some in presence, who were once as destitute and friendless as the unhappy Welles, I dwelt with my widowed mother, in a lonely hovel on Atherstone Moor. Your highness wots of every rood of land for miles round that spot, where the sun of your greatness was either to rise in such brightness over benighted England, or to set in blood and leave the land to the tenfold darkness of the iron sway of the third Richard."

"Go on," said the king, "you can speak passing well when it lists you."

"Aye, but I am about to change my strain," returned Welles, "and I question much whether that which follows will be so daintily framed to please the royal ear."

"Proceed," said the king, "and note that it will be your wiser policy to avoid insolent license of speech, which I perceive that ever and anon you are disposed to indulge in; but even this may be forgiven, provided you reveal the full and unreserved truth."

"Since your highness is graciously pleased to desire the truth,—by St. George you shall hear the truth without reserve."

"But how shall I be assured that you speak the veritable fact, and use no curious device or concealment?" said the king.

"May it like your highness, I will produce so unimpeachable a witness that I lie not, as shall instantly convince you of the truth of my assertion."

"Well, then, trifle no longer with my commands, but speak outright the things whereof you do as but darkly hint," cried the king impatiently, and Welles, bending a look of singular meaning on the face of the monarch, proceeded.

"It is doubtless a very perilous thing, as well as a decided matter

of treason to conceal, aid, or abet any person against whom an act of attainder has past—”

“You, therefore, do not attempt to plead ignorance of the penalty, in extenuation of your grievous offence,” interrupted the king, eagerly.

“On the contrary, my liege, I was fully aware of the personal risk I incurred when I ventured to afford shelter, repose, and succor to an unfortunate outlaw.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Henry, “and who was the traitor whom you dared to aid?”

“He was, my liege, a friendless orphan, an attainted and proscribed fugitive, who, having returned unrecalled from exile and dreary wanderings in a foreign land, and being hard pressed by his powerful enemies, had raised the standard of insurrection.”

“And you, false traitor, knew all this, and yet presumed to abet so notorious a traitor to the crown!—for although you presume to dally with my impatience, and delay declaring the name of the vile outlaw, yet I do shrewdly guess him to be no other than Edmund de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk.”

“No,” responded Welles, with a laugh, which had something of triumph in its meaning, “the outlaw in question was not Edmund de la Pole—certes, there be more outlaws of his house than he.”

“Then it was his brother Lincoln, who fell at the field of Stoke,” cried the king.

“The man I succoured was born to a higher destiny than either of these luckless brethren, and if your highness will graciously be pleased to wait awhile, I will promise to speedily bring home to your own bosom a full conviction who this outlaw was, whose life I was indeed guilty of preserving, although I knew his desperate fortunes full well. I was aware that he was a proscribed man, on whose head a price was set, that would have been a temptation to one even less needy than myself. I deem that the enterprise in which he had embarked was a hopeless one; nor was I ignorant that in assisting this unfortunate man, I incurred the penalty of a traitor’s death, and I was well assured that could I have been base enough to have betrayed him to those who thirsted for his blood, I should have found a short and easy road to royal favour.”

“Aye, trust me but you would,” interrupted the king, “had you

but smothered your weak scruples, and done a deed that would have given you a claim on royal gratitude. The fairest earldom England could boast, and wealth in proportion, might have been yours."

"They had never been at thy disposal if I had, ungrateful and forgetful Henry!" said Welles, sternly and reproachfully regarding the king. "Had I followed the base and selfish policy you prescribe, that head, in place of wearing the royal diadem of England, would have been long since a fleshless blackening scull over the gates of Leicester."

"How now, sirrah!" cried the king, giving way to passion, "you do deal in more riddles than the Sphinx, and this last seems a passing insolent one withal. Explain, without delay, to what passage in my life you presumptuously allude."

"I allude, my liege, to that eventful night which preceded the battle of Bosworth, when a certain proscribed and landless earl, in advance of his handful of adventurers (called, per courtesy, his army) was, by mischance in the darkness, separated from all his followers, and being in complete ignorance of the face of the country, wandered in utter bewilderment, for hours, in the perilous vicinity of Richard's outposts, not daring to enquire the way to his own head quarters, lest his French accent should betray him, as one of the foreign adventurers to some of Richard's party. Perchance your highness may deign to remember the lonely cottage on Atherstone Moor, where he, at length, when rendered desperate by weariness, exhaustion, and uncertainty, ventured to apply for information, and to request a cup of cold water for the love of the virgin; and when he found the inhabitants of that hovel to be of a different stamp from what their wretched abode promised, her notwithstanding his characteristic caution, hesitated not, in this his dire necessity, to reveal his perilous name to the widow and her son."

A flood of crimson suffused the features of the king, as Welles proceeded, and he at last exclaimed,—“Ha! light breaks in upon me! yet your features live not in my remembrance.”

"I can produce a convincing proof of my identity," rejoined Welles, "if indeed the mighty sovereign of these proud realms will deign to recognise this simple cross of carved ebon, which the proscribed Earl of Richmond took from his mailed breast on the tented plain of Redmore (ere the fearful field of Bosworth was fought) and gave as a token to the youth, who had faithfully led him to the Lancastrian entrenchments, instead of smothering all weak scruples, (I quote royal

words) and guiding the unfortunate prince, who confided in his honor, to ruin and ignominious death in the camp of Richard; and by such deed earning the high rewards which the reigning tyrant would have showered profusely on the man who had placed the last hope of Lancaster in his merciless grasp."

The rigid features of the king were not only moved but utterly convulsed with strong agitation, as he took the token in his trembling hand, and gazed upon it long and earnestly, until his attention became fixed and absorbed. It seemed as though the sight of this simple token had revived, as if by a spell, feelings long since smothered by the deceitfulness of grandeur and worldly greatness. The joys, the sorrows, the perils and eventful scenes of his persecuted youth, the half-forgotten past, with all its varied lights and shades, rushed in a flood upon his memory, recalled by the strong power of ideal associations; and the cold and calculating politician, the ambitious and haughty monarch, felt, for a short space, as he was wont to do in the cloudy morning of his life, when in the cloistered shades of Vannes.

"Yes," he said, as he audibly pursued the train of thought which accident had aroused, "it is the same that was my companion in days long since departed. The very cross which my royal uncle, the sainted Henry of Lancaster, gave me, when his prophetic voice foretold that I should inherit the royal diadem, that thorny crown, which he foresaw was passing from him and his princely issue for ever. Alas! how many sore afflictions and past trials does this relic of former times recall. How oft, blessed image of the crucified Lord, hast thou been my only solace, and sole consolation, when I, though but a guiltless boy, was deprived of my mother's tender cares, and rudely driven forth an exile and fugitive in a foreign land. When even the calm obscurity of the convent shade was denied me at a time, when, forgetful of the lofty destiny which the hallowed lips of the royal seer had predicted, I only sighed to be permitted to veil beneath the monkish cowl, that brow which was doomed to wear the royal circlet of England. But the restless and merciless man who had shed the blood of the holy Henry, thirsted too fiercely for mine, to permit me the poor privilege of burying my claims and distinctions in the waveless calm of a cloister. Ah! dear abode of peace and tranquility! Days of solemn sweetness! Hours of learned leisure, and spiritual purity—for what have I exchanged ye? But I was driven thence by the jealous fury of mine enemies! My poor life was made matter of traffic, by contending princes!

I was bought and sold. The sacred wall of the convent, which affords shelter to the robber and murderer, was no sanctuary for me! The daggers of assassins pursued me even to the altar of God, and the shrine of our lady. I was hunted as a partridge on the mountains, and driven from every city of refuge. for no other offence, but that the blood of Lancaster flowed in my veins. But I have had retribution for my wrongs, on the pitiless tyrants, who roused at length the slumbering demons of hatred and ambition in my bosom, and made me what I am for my heart was then unruffled by sinful passions, and my hands unstained by blood. Oh, blessed, blessed days!" he continued, pressing his clasped hands over his eyes, "would that I could exchange that royal diadem of England, to recall ye, and be once again what I then was. But the past, no one can retrace, except in troubled and accusing thought!"

"Yet the future is in our own power, and that, royal Henry, is still your own, to shape and purpose as you will," said Welles.

The king started at the sound of his voice, which roused him from an absorbing waking dream.

"Traitor!" exclaimed he, angrily, "who made thee of the secret counsel of thy lord?"

"Even the mightier despot, conscience, who possesses the power of unlocking thy frozen bosom, and unscaling thy cautious lips, until they have poured forth, despite thyself, thine undissembled feelings," returned Welles, sternly. "Nay, never lay hand on thy dagger, Lord of England. It is not by adding another crime to the black account, which even now conscience arrayeth against thee, that thou canst hope to lull to sleep the restless spirit, which in the secret depths of thy heart doth evermore accuse thee."

There was an evident struggle in the mind of the king, to suppress the angry feelings which this speech had excited. At length he said, in a softer tone, "Welles, you have been my preserver!"

"Aye, or I had never worn these marks of royal gratitude," interrupted Welles, indignantly shaking his fetters.

"For which you have but to thank your own perverse pride," returned the king, "which moved you, instead of presenting yourself before me, and claiming the reward of your important services, to brood in sullen displeasure over what you were pleased to deem my ungrateful neglect, till you were induced in the wayward discontentment of your spirit, to league with traitors, and sully the lustre of your former

loyalty, by becoming an emissary of the foul impostor Warbeck, and an active agent in carrying on a secret and treasonable correspondence, between him and the ladies of York."

"Now by the blood of my father and grandfather, martyrs to the cause of Lancaster—it is false!" cried Welles fiercely.

"Ha! dost thou presume to give the lie direct to majesty?"

"Yes! if majesty condescends to repeat the falsehoods of a calumnious villain."

"Have you no fear of consequences, when you presume to contradict the assertion of your sovereign bluntly, like an untaught varlet?" said the king.

"No! for I am a reckless man, made desperate by injuries, and weary of a base world!" returned Welles, passionately, covering, as he spoke, his face with his hands, while the convulsive heaving of his bosom gave silent testimony of the workings of a wounded spirit.

The king, notwithstanding the selfish apathy which had become almost a constitutional part of his character, was touched with emotion as he gazed on his forlorn captive, and remembered that but for him, he had himself fulfilled a darker destiny than that which it was in his power to inflict upon the unhappy Welles. He paused, and surveyed his prisoner closely, and hard as was his heart, it smote him when he remarked the traces of hopeless melancholy, which years of unmerited sufferings had legbily written on his open and manly brow; when he noted his pallid cheek, and the languor of attitude, so evidently the effect of the recent bodily tortures, that he had remorselessly caused to be inflicted upon him, and his conscience silently reproached him for his injustice and cruelty. While he gazed on the faded and heart-stricken victim of his jealous caprices, remembrance, which was now forcibly awakened, recalled vividly to his mind, the blooming, energetic, and heroic youth, to whose generous fealty he owed not only the diadem of England, but life itself. He felt convinced that Lord Welles was the same person as his young guide, though altered, it is true, by the lapse of years and the iron hand of sorrow. And how had the Sovereign of England repaid the vast debt of gratitude he owed him?—his own heart shrank from the enquiry, yet pride and stern reserve prevented the acknowledgment of the wrong he had wrought, although it almost rose to his lips as Welles raised his large dark eyes; on whose shadowy fringes a perceptible moisture yet hung, and looked upon him with an expression of mingled sorrow and anger.

“Come, Welles,” said he, “you are, I see, disposed to indulge in sullenness of mood, which must never be shown to kings. I am neither so forgetful of past services, or vengeful of present offences, as mine enemies do affirm, and since I forgave the impostor Simnel, whose rash emprise did, in truth, shake my very throne, it were hard if I refused my royal grace and pardon to a valiant adherent, who has in evil hour fallen away from his loyalty.”

“When I call to mind one instance in which I have swerved in my faith and liege duty from your highness, then, perhaps, I may crave pardon; I wis there be some, if we speak of pardon, that need mine, seeing that my services have been repaid but by chains and tortures.”

“You are lofty in your language, my Lord Welles,” said the king, “but I deem you will find it a difficult matter to refute the charge of having traitorously carried a token from Cecil of York to yon impostor Peterkin Warbeck.”

“Whoever doth bear witness of the same, doth lie foully in his throat,” replied Welles, “and I demand to do battle against my accuser, whom I will fight in the lists, if it please you, with no other defence on my breast than my linen shirt—were he armed cap-a-pie.”

“I doubt me not but that you have desperate hardihood enough to make such encounter good,” replied the king, “yet our royal wisdom is pleased to rate trial by battle at a lower value than some of our predecessors have done, deeming it but as proof which of the combatants’ heads will bear the hardest knocks, rather than which of the twain speaketh the truest words. For this matter it is in vain for you to gainsay it, since Warbeck doth boast himself of possessing the jewel in question, which he displays as one of the proofs of his identity with the murdered Duke of York, to whom it pertained formerly; and this very toy was recently in the possession of Cicely Plantagenet, as I can bring witness to prove.”

“But suppose that the jewel, of which Perkin doth boast himself, should be a forgery like unto himself, and that the Lady Cicely can produce the true one?” replied Welles.

“In that case,” said the king, “I shall right joyfully pronounce you all acquitted of the treasonable enterprize with which you are charged, and gladly make amends to you, my Lord Welles, for my long delay in rewarding you for your worthy services to our royal person. But methinks you look but coldly on our gracious promises, as if you doubted the will or power of Henry of Richmond to serve his friends.”

"I am aware, my liege, that you have much to bestow that might excite the eager wishes of ambitious men;—but worldly wealth and honors have of late grown worthless in my sight. Your highness has been pleased to afford me leisure and opportunity, in this dreary solitude, to rate them at their proper value."

"There be other things in my gift besides those which you are, in your perverse mood, now minded to undervalue"—replied the king, vexed at the reproachful tenor of the viscount's speech.

"I have neither hopes, or wishes which your highness either can or will gratify," said Welles with a sigh

"My observation beguiles me strangely if you have not," returned the king; then fixing his eyes intently on the face of Welles, he continued, "You love Cecil of York."

The pallid hues, with which hopeless love, captivity, and bodily sufferings, had overspread the cheek of Welles, yielded to a momentary suffusion of the brightest crimson, and for the first time he lowered his eyes beneath the penetrating glance of his sovereign as he replied—

"And if your highness in reality deemed me guilty of such presumption, I wot well you would require no farther warrant for placing my head over the Bridge Tower."

"You are mistaken," said the king, lowering his voice, and approaching nearer to Welles, "in supposing that we rate the nieces of the late bloody usurper, Richard of Gloucester, so highly. As sisters of our own by marriage, we are bound to consider and treat them as members of the royal family, but it is no part of our policy to match them with regal husbands. Indeed for motives of state we had once the intent of enforcing them to remain unmarried, lest in future times their posterity should attempt to distract the succession of our royal issue, albeit, these maidens did unite in perversely refusing to imitate the ensample of their youngest sister, the Lady Bridget, when that wise and holy virgin took the veil at Dartford. Late events have, however, opened mine eyes, to the imprudence of suffering damsels of their age and spirit, to remain without being either wedded or veiled, and I have come to the determination of bestowing them in marriage as discreetly as I may, seeing that if I provide them not with suitable spouses forthwith, they will presently set about choosing for themselves, and as their choice will doubtless fall on malign and evilly disposed persons, it would, peradventure, be the cause of much turmoil and embarrassment to our royal person and government. Therefore, my Lord Welles, as we would ra-

ther see these sisters of our queen wedded to our friends than our foes, and as we hold ourself bounden in princely gratitude to show our sense of the personal obligation we owe you, we are minded to unite our fair sister Cecil to you in wedlock, provided that she can clear herself and you from all suspicion of treason, in the matter of the aforesaid jewel; and that you are disposed to return to the hereditary loyalty of your house, changing your present haughty and sullen mood for one of cheerful allegiance and dutiful affection to ourself and government; and at the same time considering the restitution of your estates, and the princely bride we offer you, as a reasonable compensation for the hard measure which certain of our ministers deem it expedient (albeit we own on too slight grounds) to deal unto you; for which we can now only express our royal regrets, and do our best to make you a fair amend."

The voice of Welles faltered with contending emotions as he replied—"My gracious liege, I have no words by which I can express my sense of your goodness, and believe me it is nought but the restraint of these bones, and the present disability of my enfeebled limbs to perform their office, that prevents me from casting myself at your royal feet, to perform my loyal devoir, and, at the same time, to crave your pardon for the insolence of speech in which I have so perversely indulged."

"Truly," replied the king, "that last consideration is right well remembered, seeing that at divers times the malapert boldness of your replies and rejoinders, had nearly passed our patience, and brought you in peril of extreme punishment. What! the angry colour mounting to your cheek again! Nay, my Lord Viscount, there is no occasion for your haughty spirit to take fire! We do own that we have sinned somewhat against you, and therefore borne more meekly than is our wont, sundry bitter words and angry reproaches, choosing to exchange forgiveness and cry quits;—and now, brave Welles, it will rest with the testimony of the Lady Cicely, whether we may indeed fulfil our wish of rewarding you for your past services, by allying you in the bonds of brotherhood with our royal person. What, ho! Master Warder! conduct hitherward my Lord of Devonshire and his page, and likewise bring the key that unlocks the fetters of the prisoner, who abideth in this room."

CHAPTER XXXVI

“Fair Christabelle, that ladye bright,
 Was had forthe of the towre,
 But ever shee droopeth in her minde,
 As, nipt by an ungentle winde,
 Doth some faire lillye flowre.”

SYR CAULINE.

Notwithstanding the stern gravity which usually characterised the demeanour of Henry the Seventh, there was a certain sly satisfaction visible in his features, when he observed the confusion of the disguised princess, and the air of painful perplexity with which the Earl of Devonshire entered his presence.

“Come hither, my lady Cicely!” said the king, after a pause, “and declare what you have to say, that may prevent the Viscount Wellés from dying a traitor’s death, of which it appeareth that he has incurred the penalty for conveying a certain jewel of inestimable value, an heirloom of the crown, and part of the royal regalia withal, which your young brother, Duke Richard, was wont to wear in his ducal bonnet. Now, Sir Ralph Swillington doth swear that he saw this jewel in your possession not more than six months ago, and he also vouches that this misguided nobleman, the Lord Welles, was, when in his malcontent humours, worked upon by certain seducements and wiles of yours, to convey it safely to the impostor, Perkin Warbeck— and I lament me

to say, that the words of Swillington are fearfully corroborated by Warbeck's wearing the jewel publicly, putting forth its possession as one of the strongest evidences of his identity with your murdered brother, Richard of York."

"The jewel of which the Fleming doth boast possession, is like unto himself, a counterfeit, my dread lord," replied Cicely, "and it was for the purpose of disproving the vile tale, coined by Swillington's malice, that I sought this place."

"Words of denial come of course on such occasions, sister mine, but, my Lady Cecil, what witness can you bring to disprove Sir Ralph Swillington's assertion?" observed the king.

"Even the witness of the jewel in question, my liege, which beareth as you may behold, unquestionable evidence of the innocence of myself and my Lord Welles."

So saying, she drew the jewel from her bosom, and on her knee presented it to the king; then rising, and retreating a step backward, she folded her arms across her bosom, and awaited in composed and dignified silence his reply.

Henry was rejoiced to receive into his own hand a token which had given him more mental uneasiness than he chose to avow; yet when he beheld the blaze of costly gems of which this jewel was composed, the master passion of the rapacious prince outweighed every political consideration, and his eyes sparkled with a vivacious animation that the princess had not believed him capable of feeling; while, lost to every emotion but avarice, he counted the value of his prize.

"Twelve diamonds, each worth ten thousand crowns, or I am no judge of jewels! six sapoires! such as no potentate in Europe can parallel, save the emperor! A carbuncle of inestimable worth, besides emeralds, amethysts, and rubies, not to mention some very goodly pearls, which, although not of equal value with the stones, are in no wise to be despised. The craft of the goldsmith who wrought this toy, though passing excellent in its kind, I reckon not, seeing that the device is nought, yea, stark nought! being imagined by Richard of Cambridge, when he wedded the Lady Anne Mortimer, and quaintly set forth by this emblem, his foul intent of distracting the rightful succession by his surreptitious and abominable claims on the crown in pretended right of the said Anne."

"I have oftentimes wondered," said the Earl of Devonshire, "that so able a politician as Henry the Fourth suffered that lady to wed with

any other than himself, or his eldest son; but Providence doubtless ordered it otherwise, or the elder branch of the house of Lancaster had doubtless reigned at this day, and England had still groaned under the feudal yoke of her overweening barons, and never known the blessings of freedom which she, under the present glorious government, enjoys."

"Ah, subtle traitor!" cried the king; "speak you these fair words to excuse yourself from the fine which your late offences have so richly deserved? We were loth to visit one who has done for us such worthy service, from his youth upward, with the heavier penalty of the law."

"If your grace have designs against my purse," returned Devonshire, smiling; "all I can say is, a God's name take it. But when you threat me with the penalty of the law, I make bold to say, that no action of mine has incurred it, and that your highness knows full well."

"Go to, sir earl! I stand amazed at your impudent hardihood!" said the king; "in what light do you suppose I can view your audacity, in aiding and abetting the escapade of this wayward lady, from Havering Bower, and subsequently introducing her into this ward, to hold conference with a prisoner of state? You would, I trow, find it a hard matter, with all your cool daring, to face these things out before a jury of your peers."

"Before a quest of peers, as before your highness, I should plead in my defence, if called to serious account for this matter, that, finding your royal ear had been abused by the false accusation of an arch villain, and the life of a noble and innocent gentleman in danger from the same, and likewise that the falsehoods of Sir Ralph Swillington respecting the jewel you now hold in your hand, did fearfully endanger your royal highness's government, by giving color to one of the cunning devices of the enemy, I being one of your trusted counsellors, and seeing the disquiet this story caused to your royal mind, determined, as in duty bound, to search this matter to the bottom, which could only be effected by personal communication with the Lady Cicely, who hath, I trust, satisfactorily cleared herself and Viscount Welles from misprision of treason."

"Questionless she hath," replied the king, "and we most unfeignedly rejoice to see the imputed plague spot of treason cleared away from the Lord Welles, whom we shall for the future cherish and hold most lovingly; but my Lord of Devon, you have yet to explain wherefore you presumed to bring the Lady Cicely Plantagenet to London, and to our fortress of the tower, without our royal leave and warrant."

“The Lady Cicely was not minded that any hand should deliver that jewel to your highness but her own. That you have received it safely, may St. Edward be lauded ! for doubtless the prudent and courageous step she hath taken in seeking your highness at all risks, for this important purpose, hath saved more heads than one. The experience of last week showeth that your highness holdeth the lives of your most faithful servants but lightly. For my own part, I never pass the head of the poor Sir William Stanly, on the Bridge Turret yonder, without certain uneasy sensations, which incline me to feel if mine be still safe on my shoulders.”

A shade of portentous gloom darkened over the brow of Henry at these words, and with a sort of inward shudder he replied—

“Think yourself happy, William Courtenay, that not only your own services at Bosworth Field, but those of a long line of loyal ancestors, plead in extenuation of offences of a much more suspicious nature than those for which I took his life, and be warned by his fate how you tamper with the wrath of kings, and above all,” continued the king, speaking with white lips and a difficult utterance ; “I do charge you never to mention *his* name again in my presence, or by word, look, or sign, to allude to his death—and now you have enforced me to speak on that unhappy subject, I will give orders for a thing that it irked me to speak about. Bid some of your people, Devonshire, to take down the head from the Bridge Tower. It did blast my sight, glaring on me with staring eyes and open mouth, as I came hither in my barge from Sheene—I marvel what fool set it there !”

A fearful silence pervaded all present, while the workings of the muscles in Henry’s face showed that conscience was inflicting one of her paroxysms on him ; but the Earl of Devonshire, who considered that his master was undergoing some wholesome and seasonable castigation, was not willing that he should lose one whit of the needful punishment,—and asked bluntly—

“And where will your highness be pleased that the head should be bestowed ?”

“Away with it, so that mine eyes behold it not again !” cried the king, fiercely ; “and speak of somewhat else instantly or yours shall take its place !”

“Since your highness insist on such an immediate change of converse, on pain of so heavy a penalty, I can imagine nothing better than to

ask whether the mischievous and malicious perjuries of Sir Ralph Swillington are to remain unpunished!"

"It would best become you, Courtenay, to look to your own matters," said the king, who had, by violent effort of his habitual self-command, somewhat recovered his composure. "But since Sir Ralph Swillington hath spoken falsely of the sister of our queen, and abused, by devising various slanderous tales, the place of trust and confidence with which we honored him, we shall doubtless, for love of justice, inflict some heavy mulct on him, such as shall prove a severer punishment than exile or incarceration."

"Amen!" responded the earl; "and thus shall his villanies become profitable to the privy purse, which is likely to thrive in these treasonable times."

But this speech did not reach the king's ears; as the royal mind was instantly absorbed in contemplation of expected gain.

"Courtenay," said the king, taking out his tablet and pencil, and assuming a tone of confidence. "You have lately been in the vicinity of Swillington's manors; what fine, think you, they would reasonably bear?"

"I should think, my liege, that the old knave, considering how well he has filled his coffers with the perquisites of office, would hardly grudge to pay five thousand marks to save his neck from the gallows."

"Five thousand marks my Lord of Devon! beshrew my heart, but you are overmuch his friend in your calculation. Doth not scripture tell us, 'everything a man hath he will give for his life?' and Swillington is wealthy, my lord; aye, you and I are poor men in comparison with him. He has, too, as you do truly observe, made himself amenable to the gallows by his shameless perjuries. Five thousand marks, say you? By Croesus! it is too little! I shall note down ten thousand against him, which, if he pay not, the law shall have its own course, and then I get all."

Henry then marked down, with much satisfaction, in his tablets, the amount of the fine he had determined to extort. For some minutes he was deeply engaged in adding the amount to several other intended mulcts, and computing with miserly delight the sum total. Then relinquishing with a sigh the indulgence of these contemplations, he turned to the princess, saying—

“And now, fair sister, I pray you to satisfy me how this goodly appanage to the crown jewels came into your possession !”

“Alas !” replied the Lady Cicely, with tearful eyes, “it was a last token of affection from my sweet brother York, who, from his very cradle, distinguished me with more love than he did his other sisters, though tenderly attached unto all. He gave it to me on that fatal day, when our unfortunate mother was beguiled with flattering words into the resignation of the princely boy, to our false-hearted uncle, Richard of Gloucester. Often have I bethought me, when remembering the solemn sadness of my young brother’s last farewell, that he felt a secret presentiment of the dark destiny which he was departing to fulfil. The fair boy restrained his tears from flowing, until he approached to exchange adieus with me, when, clasping me about my neck, and tenderly kissing me, he said, ‘God knoweth, sweet sister Cecil, whether you and I may ever meet again, save when the last trump shall gather all the children of men together, when I trust we shall know each other, and that our converse may have been so purely ordered, in our passage through life, that we may behold one another with joy,—in the meanwhile, gentle Cecil, forget me not in your prayers to God, and crave in my behalf the intercession of your patron saint, St. Cecilia—and, dear maiden, should you never see your loving brother, Richard Plantagenet, again, I pray you to keep this jewel as a memorial of him who will never prove forgetful of you.’ He took the jewel from his bonnet as he spoke, my liege, and with his own hands secured it among the plaitings of my bodice. Judge of the care with which I perserved the parting gift of that dear brother, who you well know was only lured from our arms to fill a dark and nameless grave !”

She covered her face with her hands, and wept passionately as she concluded. The king, whose heart was occasionally touched by the sight of female grief, took her hand with some appearance of kindly interest in her affliction, and said—

“Yours is a sad story, fair sister, and most movingly told withal and we have, before now, yielded our sympathy to the mournful fate of the fair princes, whose deaths we were the happy instrument of avenging on the foul butcher, Richard of Gloucester, in the red field of Bosworth, where he paid the earthly forfeit of his crimes beneath our victorious arm. Therefore take comfort, maiden, and let all by-gone sorrows be forgotten, or remembered but as a contrast to the happiness which now awaits you as the bride of Lord the Welles, who

we hope will prove deserving of the honor of being shortly rendered our brother, by his approaching marriage with you."

The Lady Cicely had experienced that day every alternation of despondence, terror, grief or suspense, and had supported herself with a greater degree of firmness than might reasonably have been expected from one so circumstanced; for everything in the shape of evil she was prepared, but the good so unlooked for, and so suddenly declared, overcame her spirits;—the figures of the king, Devonshire, and even of her beloved Welles, swam giddily before her eyes, and while her ears yet rang with the king's words of joyful import, she became insensible to their meaning, and sunk fainting on Henry's shoulder.

"Go to!" said the king, looking with some consternation on her pallid features, and hastily removing the page's cap and plume, in order to give her air. "Here is a vagary of this love-sick maiden, whom we thought to delight with our consent to her espousal of the very man whom she so rashly coveted to be her helpmate, when the least step toward such a purpose would have been death to him and ruin to herself! My Lord Welles! a truce I pray you to your lamentations, she will do passing well, anon! and, meantime, do you distraet us with the coil you keep up."

"Shall I fetch my Lady Digby and some of her maidens to the assistance of the princess?" asked the Earl of Devonshire, looking anxiously on the insensible Cicely.

"And so to have her make a notable gossip's tale of the matter?" replied Henry. "No! no! my lords, ye who be experienced bachelors are sore affrayed at this freak of my Lady Cicely's. God wot! when ye shall have been wedded as long as I, ye will become familiar with the whims of womankind. Lo you there! she breathes, and the life-blood returns to her lips! We shall need none of Lady Digby's aid, forsooth, seeing that my Lady Cecily is not attired so as to have tight boddices to unlace, nor girdle clasps, nor ribbon knots to loosen. Nor would I for our near kindred to the damsel, that she should be seen in this quaint array by other eyes beside the present company, who, for their own sakes, will prove discreet; but if we admit women to our secret council, we shall forthwith, have both court and commons discoursing of the matter, till it will be so rife in men's mouths, that the minstrels will make immediate poesies thereof, setting forth 'The woeful captivitie of the heire of Welles, together with the trewe love of the constante princesse, who being moved by the relation of the crueltie of

the hard-hearted kinge, against her loving fere, doffed kirtle and bod-dice, and donned doublet and hose, and came to comfort him in his woeful imprisonment in the Towre, being aided in her flight from Havering Bowre by the faithful and discreet peere, the stoute Earl of Devon, which noble flowre of courtesie did bringe bothe life and limbe in jeoparde with the king's highness by his services to trewe love in distress.'"

"Your highness is minded to make pleasantry of this matter," observed the Earl of Devonshire, looking down and smiling, "for I cannot believe that I stand in any personal danger from your wrath on this occasion."

"Courtenay," said the king, "we do believe that you love us well, and for that reason, and the stainless fealty of your line to Lancaster, I have overlooked not only your presumptuous intermeddling in matters which concern you not, but also much contumacious insolence, within the hour; but I counsel you, my Lord of Devon, to mingle a little seasonable reverence for majesty with your affection for Henry of Richmond. You do presume too much in private hours, on once having been my companion in arms, and bosom friend, before I wore the regal circlet. How fares our gentle sister now?" he continued, interrupting himself, and addressing the Lady Cicely, who had at length unclosed her eyes, and was looking from him to Welles in utter bewilderment.

"Speak, sweetest love! and tell me that you confirm his highness's most gracious intent of making you mine?" cried Welles, gazing passionately on her.

"Aye, my lord, you are right to put the question to herself, for perchance, she may according to the natural perversity of her sex, change her mind, and refuse to take you for a spouse, seeing that I have willed it so," said the king.

"Your highness is pleased to make yourself merry at my expense," replied the princess, casting down her eyes and blushing, "but it is from my Lord Welles that you must look for demur, for I remember me, that he was wont to cherish certain scruples of conscience which forbade him to love the daughter of his hereditary foe."

"Oh, brave!" cried Henry, "a man had not need be nice in such matters in times like these, or ourself had still remained a bachelor, seeing that the hands of our queen's father (whose guilty soul may God assoilsie) were stained with the blood of all my race. Four great un-

cles, God wot, and one of them our honored sovereign, the sixth Henry, with trembling hands, in obedience to the king's command, was unlock who doth now, from his glorious height of beatitude, behold his murderer's grievous torments in purgatory. Take note, my masters, that out of loving respect to our princely spouse, and this gentle lady, his guiltless daughters, we mention no worse abiding-place for the imperishable and wretched soul of the bloody-minded Edward of York !”

“Go to, my liege !” replied the princess, weeping ; “is it the part of a Christian man to denounce such fiery judgments against the souls of others ? For, if He in whose sight we have all sinned, be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who may abide the searching of his displeasure ? And though I pretend not to deny that my royal father was a man who acted according to the violent temper of the times in which it was his unhappy lot to hold a place, that exposed him to many temptations, yet I venture to hope that his death-bed repentance, which was deep and sincere, together with the benefit of the many pious masses, which he appointed to be sung for that purpose, may have given his soul grace !”

“Amen, amen—God speed it out of its doleful abiding-place !” rejoined the king, who gratified his unquenchable animosity, against the memory of the persecutor of himself and all his race by delivering the aforesaid homily, respecting the woeful condition of the soul of his warlike predecessor and father-in-law.—“Come, fair sister,” he continued, “dry your tears, and set about assisting your sometime master, the Earl of Devonshire, in freeing my Lord Welles from those bonds, which prevent him from performing his lover-like devoir at your feet. That done, we will adjourn to the closet of your sister, our loving queen, who will be blithe to see you, and will, I doubt me not, afford you much needful counsel, concerning the choice of your bridal gear, of which (although times be hard, and ourselves in great want of money) we shall take the whole cost and charge upon our own shoulders, and doubt not but you shall be endowed with goodly store of princely tiring.—As for this precious owche, which you have done worthy service in discreetly keeping, till you could deliver it to me, to whom it of right appertaineth, you shall have the satisfaction of seeing it worn publicly, by your brother's natural heir—your loving nephew, Henry, Duke of York, the right royal son of your sister and myself.”

The latter part of this harangue, although it called a sly smile to the lip of the Earl of Devonshire, was scarcely heard by the Lady Cicely, to

whom Welles, unrestrained by the presence of the king, was *sotto voce* pouring forth the most passionate expressions of his tenderness, as he with trembling hands, in obedience to the king's command was unlocking the heavy fetters with which his noble form was loaded. No sooner was that performed, and Welles had shaken the chains clinking to the stone floor, than the Lady Cicely Plantagenet suffered her affianced bridegroom to lead her to the feet of the king, and united in returning to that arbiter of their destinies, those thanks which he eagerly expected, and certainly did deserve, for the unwonted grace with which he had treated them.

Many circumstances had combined to put the monarch into a more gracious humour than usual, despite the bold truths he had heard from, Welles, and the twinges he had ever-and-anon received from conscience in the course of the dialogue. The manner in which he had gained possession, and appropriated to himself, without either question or remonstrance from the owner, so valuable a cluster of gems as the brooch he then held in his hand, which every minute he turned about to admire the size, beauty, and exquisite lustre of the precious stones, of which it was composed; and above all the heavy fine which he meant to exact from Sir Ralph Swillington, gave him infinite pleasure in anticipation.

"We are not sorry to be spared the painful task of signing, more death-warrants," said Henry, casting one of his peculiar looks at Welles and Devonshire, when the whole party were assembled in the queen's withdrawing-room. "In lieu of setting our hand and seal to such solemn and melancholy instruments, we are now about instructing our queen's chamberlain, Sir Fabian de Spencer, to proceed presently with an honourable retinue, to our palace of Havering in the Bower, to the purpose of escorting from thence our fair sisters, the Ladies Anne and Catherine Plantagenet, who we intend shall grace with their presence the Lady Cicely's bridal. Doubtless these princely maidens will hear the tidings of our gracious intentions in favour of their sister with the more joy, as her escapade (if indeed unknown to them) must have given them many serious thoughts, as soon as she was missed, which was at eight of the clock this morn. We were duly advertised of the same by high, moon, and much we stood amazed at her rashness and contumacity, but we wist not then who was the Paladin that protected her."

"Since I proved so discreet and trusty a guardian to the Lady

Cicely, my liege," said the Earl of Devonshire, "I do humbly and earnestly crave that you will depute to me the office of conducting her fair sisters hitherward."

"Have you not heard me appoint Sir Fabian de Spencer to that duty? and am I wont to alter my purpose, or withdraw my favours from those on whom I have once bestowed them?" replied the king. "Sir Fabian de Spencer might, with as good a face, demand to supersede you in some high devoir, belonging to your office of Master of the Ordnance, and were he to do so, we should presently see you fire and fume in great wrath, even if so be you were in our royal presence, yet you scruple not at endeavouring to supplant him in his peculiar office of squiring dames to court, for which he is more excellently qualified than any man in my dominions."

Sir Fabian de Spencer was of course charmed with the office to which he was appointed, and the Earl of Devonshire, with a heavy heart and jealous eye, saw his former colleague set forth on the morning, at break of day, with a gallant retinue, for Havering in the Bower.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Maria once told me, she did affect me; and I have heard herself come thus near, that should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion."

SHAKSPEARE.

We will not dwell on the alarm and anxiety of the royal ladies at Havering in the Bower, when they discovered the loss of their sister, whose disappearance filled not only them, but the Lady Killingsworth, with inexpressible consternation, the more especially as her bed had evidently been unoccupied the preceding night. Baldwin, who could have thrown some light on the business, and who doubtless would

have relieved them from some of the alarm they suffered for the personal safety of the fair fugitive, was the very person instantly despatch to London, by Sir Ralph Swillington, to carry the news of her escape to the king. In the meantime, Swillington himself fell under the animadversions of the royal sisters, who strongly suspected him of having either murdered or spirited away the Lady Cicely, and although perfectly innocent of all concern in her absence, he felt so much perturbation lest the king should impute to him any share in the departure of the errant damsel, that he contrived to exhibit all the confusion and embarrassment of a guilty man.

The day passed heavily away, and all parties returned to their several apartments, generally impressed with an alarming suggestion which had separately presented itself to each person's mind, although no one dared to give utterance. The evident depression of spirits under which the princess had for some time been labouring, recurred to all and the first step resolved on next morning was, that a particular search should be commenced among all the ponds and streams, in the immediate vicinity of the palace. At the time when the general distress and terror had reached its climax, Sir Fabian de Spencer and his gallant retinue made their appearance.

"Fair and princely blossoms of the bower," said the gaily attired courtier, as he saluted, with a low reverence, the royal maidens, whose presence he entered with an air of peculiar self-satisfaction, "our most gracious sovereign lord, the king, greets you by me, and requires that you shall, with all convenient speed, don your riding tire and wend to court, under the guard and special protection of the most devoted of your servants, even my poor self, Sir Fabian de Spencer, knight of Wallingford."

"To be forthwith committed to the tower, and there kept in close ward, I venture to gness," said the Lady Anne.

"Now out upon it, lovely ladies ! that you should so far impugn my knightly courtesy, as to suspect that I would come hither to do so ungentle an office."

"Nay, Sir Fabian de Spencer, such be the usual nature of the errands, which you are wont to visit Havering in the Bower," said Catherine,

"Five upon such unkindly remembrance, royal lady ! I had flattered myself with the hope that the courtesies shown unto you, by myself and the Earl of Devonshire, had won your pardon for the unwilling mission, which it was his highness's pleasure to put upon us, and certes all circumstances considered, it was as well that his grace sent

no sterner reporters to search into the matter, of which, doubtless, royal lady, you retain a sufficient remembrance."

"And have you returned to Havering to taunt us respecting your concealment of that paper, Sir Fabian?" said Catherine, reddening.

"Beauteous lady! you wrong me deeply, by the thought that I would on any provokement or trial of patience from you, to whom my services are vowed, so far forget my bounden duty as to make ungentle allusions to that circumstance, which even if my lord of Devon could be unknighly enough to betray, myself would deny his assertion at point of lance. Not that I would insinuate so vile an intention on the part of my friend Courtenay, who is a very honorable gentleman, and one who, I am confident, will prove a discreet and well affectioned brother unto this fair company. Albeit his years are some slight disparagement to him, in the matter of the marriage he is about to contract."

"What riddle is the man discussing?" said the princess Anne, turning to Catherine with a look of wonder.

"Nay, sister Anne, you must refer to Sir Fabian himself, for the explanation of his meaning," replied Catherine, whose varying complexion denoted the disturbance and confusion that his words had occasioned.

"Well," continued De Spencer, "if your fair sister object not to his mature age, far be it from me to dwell on the circumstance, and bring to public recollection, the number of years the stout earl hath counted but this I must make bold to say, that he hath twelve in advance of me, and I bring in evidence that I served as his squire at Bosworth, which doth make the matter plain."

"But what is all this to us," interrupted the Lady Anne impatiently, "I wis that my father's daughters are no wise concerned with the ages of either of ye, and ye might both have doubled that of Methuselah, for any note we should have taken of the matter."

"Madam, I defy the insinuation!" returned De Spencer, much ruffled, "I was verily born in the same year—yea—on the same day as her royal grace, my sovereign lady, the queen, whose chamberlain I have the honor to be."

"Have the kindness, Sir Fabian, to waive the topic of your age, which as the Lady Anne pertinently observes, concerns us not, and tell us, if you are really in the secret, wherefore the king commands us so suddenly to London?" asked Catherine.

"For what other purpose should it be, but the joyous one of gracing with your most beauteous presences, the bridal of your sister, the

Lady Cicely?" replied Sir Fabian.—"Nay, now you are jesting, and most cruelly too!" answered Catherine bursting into tears, "since the Lady Cicely disappeared from Havering Bower, no later than yesterday, or even afore, and we at present know not of her fate. From the hour in which we missed her, the Lady Anne and myself have been a prey to the most frightful apprehensions on her account."

"I would, sweet Lady Catherine, that it were my happy lot to relieve all the sorrows that may ever befall you, as easily as I can the present," replied De Spencer, "for on the word of a knight banneret, I do affirm, that I saw the Lady Cicely yesterday, in the queen's withdrawing-room, at Westminster Palace, when I attended my royal mistress there, and received his highness's commands, to conduct you and my Lady Anne thither, to be present at the marriage of the princess."

"'Tis passing strange!" sighed Catherine, turning to the window, to conceal the agitation which despite her high spirit moved her even to tears.

"Aye, strange indeed, that a man of his age and sun-burned complexion, should have won the favor of so fair a princess," rejoined De Spencer. "I wis, fair Catherine, that your choice would have been differently directed; for I remember me well you did in our first interview, commend my complexion, which, in truth, the ladies of the queen's bedchamber do oft times praise as passing excellent. Yea, even Mistress Alice Pennington herself doth ever woo me for receipts of rare confections, pastes and washes, so that her skin may equal mine (fie upon me! for drawing such an inference) and yet the comely hues of her cheek, and the whiteness of her hands rival pinks and jasmims."

Here Catherine, malgre the mingled mortification and anguish that oppressed her heart, was so struck with the exquisite ridicule of this burst of vanity, that she laughed, even while the tears swam in her eyes, long and violently, to the great consternation and displeasure of Sir Fabian, who though somewhat accustomed to her vagaries, was scarcely prepared for conduct which he considered so truly extraordinary; and there he stood swinging his plumed and jewelled cap in his hand, and essaying to compress his smooth and faintly marked eyebrows into something like a frown of offended dignity.

When Catherine had somewhat composed herself, and dried off from her damask cheeks the tears that flowed from mingled emotions

Sir Fabian continued—"Albeit, fair madam, you are pleased to treat the discourses of a courtly knight with (as I must needs think) most unseasonable mockery, yet I would fain know if there be aught in my Lord of Devonshire that doth in outward excellence outshine the personal endowments with which (although I set forth the same who should not) it hath pleased nature to adorn me? and it hath been my successful study from my youth upward to improve the same, with all discreet use of art, so that the ladies of the queen's presence are wont to call me the paragon of courtiers. Much of the revenue of my fair estate and manor of Wallingford do I expend in rich jewels and sumptuous parralling for mine own adornment—likewise in brave gifts for the beauteous ladies who do affect my company. Yea, the merchants, whose ships bring home rich scarfs and squares from Ind do know me for a constant customer, and overmore coupliment me with the first sight of all their wares. And I have now in my possession a golden-flowered tiffany of such exquisite material, and so rarely wrought with choice needlework, that the fair lady on whom it may list me to bestow it, as a *gage d'amour*, shall when arrayed in the same, outshine the Lady Cicely in her bridal bravery. Now, fairest Catherine, that sumptuous and inestimable robe shall be your own, together with all the rich jewels of my late honored lady mother newly set in fair devices, if you will bestow one smile on the suit of me, Sir Fabian de Spencer."

"And who is the princely bridegroom that Henry of Richmond has so suddenly selected to receive the hand of the royal daughter of England?" asked the Lady Anne.

"Who should he be but William of Devonshire, the gallant peer with whom she fled from Havering, under cover of night, and in the guise of a page?" replied Sir Fabian.

"Now, out upon you for an utterer of insolent follies!" exclaimed Catherine passionately, "what warrant have you for affirming such calumnies of the royal Cicely of York?"

"Beauteous lady! these discourteous words do not alter the truth, and I do protest unto you that George Petworth, my Lord of Devon's junior squire, told Mistress Alice Pennington, of the queen's bedchamber, how he aided his lord and Sandys in bringing up the Lady Cicely from Havering Bower, and how they being sorely let, and hindered by press of people, before Aldgate were fain to turn about and boune them to Devonshire house, at Stobenhithe, where they rested them a

space, and after that, his lordship took her by water to the tower, seeking King Henry, and having found him, by lucky chance, in a gracious mood, they flung themselves at his feet, and with a moving confession of their faithful loves and secret courtship, they wrought upon him to consent to their speedy espousals; my Lord of Devon promising to stand a fine of ten thousand marks for having won the love of the king's kinswoman without first craving royal permission for that purpose."

Catherine did more than smile, for she again laughed so immoderately, as to alarm the Lady Killingworth, who seeing that her charge was influenced by other feelings, besides her apparent mirth, led her from the apartment, leaving Sir Fabian in a pitiable state of perplexity, doubting whether to attribute such extravagant merriment to disdain of his suit, or excessive glee at her own good hap, in hearing that so accomplished a knight, adorned with so many gifts of fortune and nature, and of so liberal a disposition withal, courted her acceptance.

The interval of time during which the ladies were making preparations for their departure, from Havering in the Bower, was employed by Sir Fabian de Spencer, in issuing the most particular and elaborate orders for the ceremonial of their journey. After the minutest circumstance were arranged to his satisfaction, and finding time hang heavily on his hands, he returned to the withdrawing room, and taking up the Lady Catherine's lute, he bestowed much pains in tuning it—then playing a scientific prelude, and sang to an accompaniment of his own composing, the following song:—

With hawk and hound, to gay green wood,
 With sprightly blast of horn,
 I went to wend in merry mood,
 At early peep of morn.

But hawk, and hound, and merry horn,
 And dew bespangled grove,
 Are sad to him who rues the scorn
 Of beauteous lady love.

In bloody fields I couched my lance,
 In fierce and deadly fight,
 And won my sovereign's favoring glance,
 And eke the spurs of knight.

But all the fame that valor yields,
 Can lend no true delight,
 To him who sighs in courts or fields,
 For love of lady bright.

“I marvel much how the royal maidens stand affected to sweet poesies?” cried Sir Fabian, as he concluded the last flourish of his symphony. “This is a passing good lute and daintily adorned with devices, so as to be worthy the hand of a princess. But, alas! my Lady Catherine hath neither the craft in music nor sensibility to the melodious warbling of a voice of harmonious and skilful attunement, as some ladies, who have hung with delight on my roundelays. Here be her virginals, an instrument which I affect not, holding its use among the fopperies of the age. I remember me, yon sighing and melancholic lad, Edwin Sandys, had skill in touching that instrument of small compass. Ah! here is a poesy of his inditing, adapted to its use, and inscribed (fie upon the presumption of the youngster!) to no other than my Lady Catherine; but I trow she hath better judgment in the excellence of regularly meted rhymes, than to approve of such skipping versicles, as these, which be neither Lydian, Sapphic, Alcaic, nor Doric.” He then read aloud as follows:—

Oh, sweet complaining flute!
 Soft shell and pucelet lute!
 And tuneful viol's thrilling string,
 Your most delightful concords bring,
 And with rare harmonies attend the lays,
 Your love lorn master pours in beauteous Catherine's praise.

Oh rose! whose fragrance wocs the summer's gale,
 While hangs upon thy breast the gemmy dew,
 Why look thy colors faded, dim and pale,
 And all thy glowing beauties faint of hue?
 Oh rose! thou hast diminished of thy pride,
 Since Catherine's damask cheek excelled thy bloom,
 And, oh! as she disdains to be my bride,
 Be thine sweet rose, to strew my early tomb.

Oh spotless lily! who mayst ne'er compare
 With her white bosom, or unsullied truth,
 Droop thy fair head in grief, for that despair
 Which saps my blighted life in morn of youth.
 Oh, stately cypress! who doth emulate
 Her princely form, thy funeral branches wave,
 Wet with autumnal showers, to weep my fate,
 And cast a pensive shadow o'er my grave.

“Out upon it! I wonder much how a maiden of my Lady Catherine’s sprightly temper and conversation, can endure such lachrymal ditties to lie upon her lute stand,” said Sir Fabian; “however, I will look over my book of original poesies, and cull something from thence that shall make her cast these follies of the boy Sandys to ‘the moles and bats,’ and conserve mine with a loving care.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

“He called him down his merry men all,
By one, by two, by three,
Lord William who used to be the first of all,
The last of all came he.”

OLD BALLAD.

It is but doing justice to Sir Fabian de Spencer, to record that he conducted the royal sisters to the court at Westminster, with all the care and solemn courtesy that their sex and high rank demanded.

A few weeks previous to this time, and what delight would this journey have afforded to the Princess Catherine, who now, with a listless eye, surveyed all that once would have excited her spirits to the highest pitch. But the idle gossip of Sir Fabian de Spencer had clouded her brow, and filled her heart with bitter feelings.

“Had he wooed and wedded any other maiden but Cicely of York,” thought she, “I could have borne his loss as beseems a woman who scorns to droop for love-lorn sorrow. Aye, I would have joyed to appear as the brightest lady in the courtly circle, so that the recreant should ask himself whether the fair, for whom Catherine Plantagenet was forsaken, had more radiant glances, or lovelier smiles than hers?”

but alas ! it is mine own sweet sister who has falsely stolen him, and how can I use woman's power or woman's wiles to punish him ?”

Impressed by such thoughts as these, she returned the pensive greetings of the queen, her sister, the ever melancholy Elizabeth; in a manner almost consonant to her own, and with a chilling damp, repelled the caresses of Princess Cicely, who flew to welcome her, and sobbed out her overflowing joy on her bosom.

“ Oh Cicely !” she thought, “ who would have deemed that you could rob me of the only object of my love ?”

“ What tears and sadness, sweet Kate !” cried the princess kissing the wet cold cheek of Catherine. “ Know you not, my best-loved sister, that I shall need all your cheerful spirits to support mine at my approaching nuptials ?”

“ Surely the presence of my Lord of Devon will be all sufficient for that purpose !” returned Catherine, coldly.

“ Nay, gentle Catherine, be not offended at the regard I bear to the noble earl, which you will frankly own he has richly deserved when you have heard all, despite of your ancient bickerings !” said the princess bending a look full of grateful and partial meaning on the Earl of Devonshire, who stood leaning against one of the window recesses of the apartment with folded arms, gazing in thoughtful silence on the group. Catherine, following the direction of her sister's eye, met those of the earl fixed on her, with an expression that brought the truant roses to her cheek, but pangs of jealousy and sorrow pierced her heart at the same moment, with so many bitter feelings, that it required a rally of all her pride and high spirit to restrain her tears, which seemed as though they would overflow her cheeks, in spite of all her efforts to the contrary. It was, therefore, a positive relief to her when the ladies of the queen's bed-chamber approached to request her and Princess Anne to retire, for the purpose of putting off their riding attire, and robing for their presentation at the court, held at noon. Before the earl could approach the Princess Catherine to pay his embarrassed greetings, she had retreated with this bevy of noble damsels, by whom she was so completely surrounded, during her attiring for her first introduction to the court of her brother-in-law, that the Lady Cicely was prevented from obtaining a few minutes' private conversation with her which would undoubtedly have explained all mistakes.

In the mean time the news spread on every side, that the king intended to select husbands for the lovely daughters of Edward IV. from among

those of his nobles who had found favor sufficient in his sight to receive the high honor of an alliance with his family.

The reputed beauty of the princesses and the name they bore ; that name of Platagenet still adored by Englishmen, notwithstanding the fatal losses the country had suffered during the ferocious contests of her royal race, occasioned many competitors for the honor of their hands, particularly for that of the Princess Catherine, who had been celebrated through the courtly circles, by the impassioned and popular verses of young Lord Sandys ; and although perfectly unknown to some of her noble suitors, yet in that romantic age imagination almost played the part of real passion. The formality and solemn reserve that usually characterised the presence-chamber of Henry VII. gave way before a lively spirit of expectation. Those who were candidates for royal brides, with all their relations, friends, and dependants, looked forward with the most animated feelings to the coming hour, and those who had no pretensions to aspire to the hands of princesses, or who were already wedded, could not help being excited by the interest which the approaching scene was calculated to inspire.

When the princesses were informed that the king was enthroned and waited to receive them, Catherine felt her subdued spirits rise to meet the occasion, and she resolved, whatever feelings of sorrow and injury were lurking at the bottom of her heart, to go through the trying scene at hand, where she must meet the eyes alike of the triumphant foes and dejected friends of her house, with the lofty bearing of a princely Platagenet.

Nevertheless, on her way to the room of state, seeing the Earl of Devonshire close by her side, she did not scruple to lend a gracious ear to the speeches of Sir Fabian de Spencer, who had changed his riding-dress for attire of the most showy magnificence ; and by his sedulous attention to the Princess Catherine, succeeded in his aim of making the courtly circle believe that some sort of secret intelligence existed between them.

The Earl of Devonshire beheld this with subdued indignation, and more than once muttered between his shut teeth—"Contemptible pop-injay ! Well, if she *can* love *him*, wherefore should it trouble me ?"

But trouble him it did, nor could he conceal his agitation, till the lord chamberlain, meeting the princesses, with his staff of office ushered them into the presence of the king ; and Sir Fabian was forced to

exchange his amorous fopperies for the solemn and discreet bearing which his duty near the queen required.

The king rose from his chair of state at the approach of the fair sisters, neither of whom he had seen since their childhood, and after saluting them with an air of condescending graciousness, without appearing to notice the reluctance with which the Lady Anne submitted to the ceremonial, which the form of presentation demanded, he said—

“It joys me, fair cousins, to perceive that the infantine charms which adorned your childhood are ripened into womanly beauties, and we doubt not that your mental graces are rich in proportion to your outward loveliness.”

“They had need be so, since it pleases your highness to try the strength of our minds and characters by flattering speeches,” replied the Lady Catherine, speaking with her usual vivacity, and flashing on Henry one of her brightest glances.

“Report hath declared, fair lady, that you are ready of wit and quick of speech, withal,” returned the king, who was by no means, notwithstanding the austere gravity of his character, insensible to the power of beauty, and Catherine’s witchery of manner. “An’ I were a bachelor,” continued he, “dearly should I rue the merry glance of those bright eyes. But, beauteous Catherine, instead of wasting their radiant beams on married men, flash them round the circle, and see if you can like any noble present for a spouse.”

“My liege,” said Catherine, casting a haughty look on the Earl of Devonshire as she spoke, “I am not free to choose, seeing that I am under contract of marriage to the Prince of Spain, whose bridal ring was placed on my finger in my seventh year, and in proof that I consider myself as his wedded wife, I wear the ring about my neck since my finger has outgrown its span.”

“Yea, fair sister,” replied Henry, “but the infant hath since refused to fulfil the contract for lack of the princely dowry your father promised with you.”

“Then tell the niggard that dowerless Kate Platagenet scorns him, and tramples on the bridal ring and broken faith of Spain !”

She loosened the ring from the ribbon that hung round her neck, as she spoke, and casting it on the ground, set her foot on it, with as lofty an air as if she were queen-regent of England, instead of being the friendless dependant on the caprices of the hereditary foe of her house.

A murmur of applause ran round the circle, and those nobles, who had before gazed with admiration on the princely beauty, were still more captivated with the display of that noble spirit which would not bow beneath circumstances that so forcibly reminded her of her fallen fortunes.

"You are then minded, beauteous Catherine," resumed Henry, "to give up all thoughts of foreign alliances; and following the discreet example of the Lady Cicely, who is about to obey the dictates of her affection, and wed the Lord Viscount Welles—you will, I doubt not, make an English noble happy by the gift of your heart and hand."

The assertion of the sovereign was not to be doubted—Catherine heard but those words in Henry's speech that related to her sister's marriage. Devonshire was then her own! and Catherine herself again! although she felt the sudden revulsion of her feelings suffuse her face and even her bosom with unwonted crimson. She essayed to raise her conscious eyes, but met the searching glance of the Earl of Devonshire, and her confusion became overpowering. She would have retreated behind the chair of the queen, her royal sister, but the restraint of court etiquette acted as a fetter to bind her to the spot; and she stood with downcast eyes and cheeks covered with blushes, while the king again spoke.

"We have, fair sisters, taken into brotherly consideration, the lonely estate of your maiden condition, and, on advice of our council, have come to this conclusion—that it is indispensable for you either to accept fitting husband forthwith, or immediately to assume the veil and retire into a convent, following the example of that holy and saintly virgin, the Lady Bridget your sister. Now, which alternative do you choose!"

Catherine, without raising her eyes from the ground, replied very demurely—"Of the two evils, I prefer a husband to a veil."

"Tis well," said the king, smiling, "we could have answered before hand which would be your choice." Then turning to the Lady Anne he continued, "our premier peer, Howard, Duke of Norfolk, sues for your fair hand, beauteous lady. He is son to him who fell at Bosworth, foully upholding the wrongful quarrel of your uncle Richard; but take note, gentle sister, that I mention not that circumstance to the disparagement of the present duke, who is one of our loving nobles. Yea! we hold him as one of the pillars of our throne!"

"My lord," replied the princess, with her usual haughtiness, "since

it is your pleasure that I am to be either veiled or wedded to an English peer, certes, I prefer marriage to a state of personal restraint in a convent or elsewhere, and therefore do accept the Duke of Norfolk."

The duke immediately advanced to pay his compliments to his bride, elect, and the king, after presenting him in form to his Juno-like princess, turned to Catherine.

"And now, fairest Catherine, you will, it seems, have more difficulty in your choice, for your suitors are manifold. Cast your eyes to the left of the throne, where be six of my nobles distinguished by blue scarfs, which they wear for the love of you, seeing that by some means fame has proclaimed from Havering Bower, that blue is the color you do most affect. These noble persons are all candidates for your hand, and you are free to make happy which of them you list by your election."

The heart of Catherine beat highly and tumultuously, and a brighter blush than she had yet worn suffused her cheek, when her quick eye discovered, even by the single, stolen, glance that she took of her suitors, that the Earl of Devonshire was one of the six who wore her colors; but, yielding of the spirit of coquetry that was natural to her character, she said to the king:—

"My gracious liege, I am so completely a stranger to the lords and gentles of your court, that to enable me to make a discreet choice, it is needful that the names and titles of my noble wooers should be declared unto me ere I decide on so important a matter."

"Fair sister, your request is most reasonable, and we shall take upon ourself the province of informing you concerning their respective claims to your notice. He who you may observe is haughty of carriage and weareth so rich a collar of jewels, is Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, related both to yourself and us, by descent from the third Edward; he is son to the unfortunate Duke Henry, who was beheaded by your uncle Richard."

"I like him not, my liege, pass we to the next."

"That golden-haired and fair complexioned gentleman, with such reflective eyes and sweet seriousness of brow, is Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, whom men do call the shepherd Lord, on account of his being concealed, when a boy, in shepherd's weeds, from the fierce search of your father, who thirsted to revenge on him the death of the young Earl of Rutland, slain at Wakefield by the stout earl, father of this gentleman, who is the descendant of a long line of redoubtable warriors.

“I will have none of his house,” replied Catherine, “for I should much fear me that this pastoral peer would, if wedded to a daughter of York, prove a very wolf in sheep’s clothing.”

“Beshrew my heart, maiden, but you are passing difficult of choice in a helpmate. But what say you to the next—I cry him mercy for not placing him afore Clifford, since he is mine own much honored uncle, Jasper Tudor, Duke of Bedford, and whilom Earl of Pembroke, a prince of the French blood royal, in right of his mother, Catherine of France, widow of the fifth Henry of glorious memory. Also, the noble Jasper is like myself, a descendant of that first and most illustrious of British heroes, Arthur Pendragon, and a line of Welsh princes, to boot, besides a most curious and undoubted descent, which he, like myself, doth derive from the aboriginal kings, who swayed the sceptre of this island, many years prior to the invasion of the Romans under Julius Cæsar. Therefore, fair sister, I do earnestly commend him to your consideration.”

“And will your highness, in event of my choosing the noble Lord of Pembroke, demean yourself to me with all the loving respect and deference that may be expected from a dutiful nephew?”

“In all things, fair Catherine, we will hold you most reverently as our lady-aunt. You will be the first lady in the land next to our queen, and entitled to walk at her left hand, and to take precedence of every female, of whatever rank she may be, the queen alone excepted. Therefore, if your choice indeed, incline you to the princely Jasper, I counsel you to waive all superfluity of maiden bashfulness, and say so boldly, that he may be exalted in the eyes of my court by the preference of so fair a damsel.”

An arch smile played over the features of Catherine at these words, but mustering all the gravity she could command, she replied—“In truth, my liege, the advantage the Earl of Pembroke offers, is sufficient to induce a more discreet lady than myself to listen to his suit, but the dignity of gray hairs must be added unto me before I could esteem myself a suitable bride for a man of your uncle’s reverend years.”

“Fie, fie, fair cousin!” said Henry, “you do most widely mistake the matter of my Lord Pembroke’s age. On the honor of a king we do affirm unto you that it exceedeth not fifty-five years; he is a well-favored widower of that date—in sooth, men who know not his *anno domini*, do scarcely account the noble lord hath passed his fortieth summer—

besides, for the healthful red and white, he hath the finest color of any man at court—being in his favor and complexion a true ancient Briton. I pray you, look at him again, before you say nay.”

“My liege,” said Catherine, “a fair and florid man was ever my aversion. A complexion like unto your own is more according to my ideas of manly beauty, therefore, I crave pardon for passing by my Lord of Pembroke, who beareth not enough semblance to your grace to please me.”

“Well, maiden !” said the king, whose mortification at the rejection of his uncle, was somewhat softened by the terms in which Catherine had slyly couched her refusal, “your arc, I doubt me, somewhat of a saucy jilt-flirt, whom my uncle, at his years, is much better without.”

“I protest unto your grace that my rejection of his addresses proceeds from motives of loving kindness, for verily it pitied me to think of a man of his years and reverence being endowed with a countess of my temper ; and now, in the name of St. Bride, whom I deem to be the patroness most proper to invoke on the present occasion, let us finish discussing my noble suitors, for there are three more of them, Grace De Dieu—and who be they ?”

“That gentleman of the majestical figure, bold brow, and fearless bearing, wearing the honored order of the garter, is a peer of great account, even my oft-victorious general, the valiant John de Vere, Earl of Oxford. He is past the bloom of youth, and the many hardships he hath encountered, and the wounds he hath taken, in the stern conflicts of our rival roses, together with the heavy captivity he endured, when confined in Hammes Castle, so many years by your father, has served to print untimely furrows on his manly brow. Yet there is not a maiden in England but might deem herself honored by counting him among her wooers, on account of his rare qualifications of mind and person—as for his worldly gear—fair cousin,” continued the king, in a low, confiding, satisfied tone, which showed that he was entering on a subject dear to his heart, “we can only say in proof of his great wealth, that not six months back, I mulcted him in a fine of twenty thousand marks, for his coutumacious boldness, in arraying his servants, followers, and retainers, to the number of twelve thousand, in the liveries and badge of his family, under pretence of doing me honor, forsooth, on my departure from his castle of Henningham, in Essex, but in reality to show me that he esteemed himself superior to the law I had just established, abolishing that

slavish mark of the feudal system, and forbidding my nobles, knights, and gentles, to impose the same on their fellow subjects, on pain of heavy fine (my favorite mode of punishment.) Well, my fair sister, it pleased my Lord of Oxford to break my statute before my very face, and as I might not endure such daring disobedience, I was fain to make an ensample of the mighty earl, as men do call him, and considering the importance of his rich estates, and manors, and fair forests, we deemed that a fine of such magnitude would just reach his means of payment, and might peradventure act as a wholesome check on his presumptuous spirit, and serve to clip his wings withal, which were soaring at too towering a height for a subject, methought—but, behold! the earl, after venting his spleen in expressions of a nature too contumacious to be repeated here (which I forgave, seeing he was suffering under the affliction of so heavy a payment) produced the gold, and cast it down with as much careless contempt, as if he had been emptying bags of pebbles at my feet.”

“On my word, I am charmed with the account your grace gives of the wealth and spirit of the noble earl, whose person and bearing I like passing well, yet my choice falls not on John de Vere, Earl of Oxenford,” said Catherine.

“Oh, then it must be fain to rest on the youngest of your suitors the gentle Edwin, Baron Sandys, who hath perchance won your heart, by his sweet poesies and skill on divers instruments of music. Men call him, in regard of these rare endowments, the noble minstrel and the Swan of Winandermere.”

“My liege, I have ofttimes hung delighted on the magic strains of the gifted Sandys, and in consideration that I am passing well acquainted with his worth and high excellence, I could almost say, I lament me that it is not in my power to smile upon his suit.”

“Gramercy, fair Catherine, that is more than you have vouchsafed to say, by way of softening your rejection to any of the noble candidates for your hand, and since you are so coy and difficult of choice withal, methinks, you are like to wear the maiden garland till it withers. Unless your heart inclineth you to him who has placed himself as the list of your wooers. Albeit not the least in rank or reckoning—the thrice valiant Courtenay, Earl of Devonshire, whose nobility of presence and loftiness of character do cast his fellow nobles into the shade. We do esteem him as the flower of our peerage and the pride of our court—yea, he is the man, who, above all others, has as-

sisted us in softening the iron temper of the times, by turning men's minds to the encouragement of commerce and the promotion of the liberal arts. Soldier and statesman, gifted with all the talents that can make a nation terrible in war, and blessed in peace. Courtenay is perhaps the only man who has played a conspicuous part in the fearful contest of the rival roses, and preserved his name unsullied by a single crime; and since he hath held such high office in the state, he hath been honorably distinguished by his forgetfulness of every selfish interest for love of the public weal; and for that reason, is emphatically called by the commons the *good* Earl of Devonshire. He hath won the warlike laurel and the peaceful olive with equal grace, and now, fair Catherine, that he assumes the myrtle wreath for love of you, will you be the only Englishwoman ungrateful for the services he hath rendered his country, or insensible to the value of a heart like his?"

Catherine stole one timid glance at the man whom the king delighted to honor, and Courtenay needed no second summons to advance and throw himself at her feet, saying as he did so—

"Tell me, lady of my heart, that my gracious sovereign has not pleaded my cause in vain! Speak but one word, and let that word assure your faithful Courtenay that he is the favored object of your choice."

Catherine bent an expressive look on her majestic lover, who was kneeling at her feet, as she replied—

"I had told you that before, if you had not left Havering Bower without vouchsafing me the courtesy of an adieu!"

"Ah! Catherine, Catherine, who was to blame in that matter?"

"Hold hold! no recrimination, no rejoinders, my Lord of Devon," interrupted the king; "affairs stand well as they are. We do perceive this to be the happy termination of an ancient love-quarrel; and that it may so continue discuss the matter no farther, since even if the argument be continued, twelve hours of the Abbey clock, we will answer for the victory remaining on the side of my Lady Catherine; for by the specimen we have had of her powers of speech, we doubt not Devonshire, that she will contrive to convince you that she has been sorely wronged and aggrieved by your difference, whatever it might be."

"My liege," replied Catherine, willfully misunderstanding him, "your guess is a shrewd one; I was vilely aggrieved, seeing that I was, in the course of one short hour wooed and faithlessly deserted, even without the ceremony of one poor adieu! I marvel much what moves me to receive the recreant again, without having inflicted suitable punishment?" she

continued, bending her bright eyes on the earl, with more tenderness in their expression than she had yet permitted to become visible.

“No punishment?” said the earl. “Were my sufferings nothing, think you, when I saw you so coolly discussing with his highness, the merits and claims of my numerous rivals, and all without vouchsafing me a single look?”

“Nay, there you wrong me, Courtenay! I did cast one look upon you, though you observed me not; and you may know that I did by this token—it was at the time when you had nearly demolished the fringe of your left glove, while the king’s highness was earnestly commending unto my notice the majestic person and great qualifications of my Lord of Oxenford.”

“Say no more, fair sister, but give him your hand; we do not doubt but his punishment has been sufficient since he has had his heart in your keeping, for much we marvelled what ailed our firm, even-minded statesman, since his return from Havering Bower. We often thought him distraught, but now the riddle is out—make haste and wed him with all discreet speed, that he may serve me as he was wont to do, before he was bewitched by your bright glances. And now we will do our best to expedite the reverse of my Lord Welles’s attainder, and the restoration of his estates, that the threefold bridal may take place as early as possible. Then, my lords we will take the field for the purpose of putting down the present foul rebellion which doth distract our merry England with its gloomy influence.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

At Walsingham my vows I've paid ;
 At Waltham eke and Coloraine ;
 And to St. Thomas I have prayed,
 Who near the Holy Road was slain."

STRUTT.

More than once had King Henry the Eighth started and frowned at certain passages in the Abbess of Ely's narrative, wherein his father's foibles were discussed with a degree of freedom which doubtless the holy lady would have spared, could she have guessed who was among her auditors. Nevertheless his curiosity had been so vehement to hear the sequel of his aunt's love adventures, that he had by a gesture checked Wolsey's intention of interrupting the story, and signified, by an aside, to that wary minister, his intention of hearing it to an end ; but when it was concluded, his wrath broke forth in these words—

"Death of my life ! Lady Killingworth, one would think that you had been too well versed in the guarded reserve of those who have the secret histories of princes in their keeping, to make them public for the divertisement of strangers."

"I have related nothing to the discredit of any one but Sir Ralph Swillington," replied the abbess, meekly, "nor aught but the truth, which may be spoken at all times."

"But not in all placés, ha! my Lady Abbess. By the mass," continued the king, "there is no stopping old women's tongues—and 'tis well there was no worse to be told."

Here the superior of the Crouched Friars, where the pilgrims were sojourning, sharply rebuked the king for the irreverent speech he had addressed to the holy Lady of Ely, enjoining him by way of penance, to walk barefoot from Barsham (a village in Norfolk, near the shrine) to the chapel of Walsingham.

To the surprise of Queen Catherine and Wolsey, who looked for a fearful ebullition of wrath on his part, King Henry submitted to this reproof with unwonted humility, and declared his intention of performing the penance, unless the Lady of Ely should, of her own free will offer to remit it. This, a single word, whispered in her ear by Wolsey, induced her to do immediately, and the royal pilgrimage left the hospitable house at Linton, and wended on their way in high spirits on the following morning.

For their next resting place, Wolsey, who had resumed the conduct of the party, caused them to diverge a little from the direct road into Norfolk, for the purpose of introducing them to the magnificent monastery of Soham, where St. Felix first fixed the diocesan seat of the East Angles in 630, before he removed the bishop's see to Dunwich.

At a short distance from Soham, the pilgrimage, with all its motley group of followers, which increased hourly on the road, crossed the little Ouse into Norfolk, and halted at Wattering, where is situated the first Walsingham cross that was wont to claim the devotions of pilgrims from the metropolis and the southern counties. Here began a series of aves, prayers, and ritual ceremonies, which increased in length and importance at every succeeding station as they approached the "holy land," as it was called in those days. Every regular pilgrim stage was marked by a beautiful Gothic cross, many of which are still in existence. At these stations, monastic accommodations of a most hospitable nature were to be had, at no other cost than the trouble of each individual dropping a pilgrim's penny (bearing the impress of the Virgin and Child, and on the reverse the representation of the fine east window of Walsingham Priory church) into the boxes at the door-posts, placed in each convent on the Walsingham Way, for the reception of these

pilgrims' tokens, which were afterwards shown to the archdeacons, in proof to the bishop that such a number of pilgrims had been entertained there, and well satisfied with the hospitality they had received.

On the evening of the seventh day, our pilgrims arrived at the royal manor-house of Walsingham, which was the property of Henry the Eighth, in right of his mother, Elizabeth of York, who inherited it as heiress of the Clares, Earls of Gloucester.

The following day, the king, the emperor, and the two queens, with their little train, followed by the heterogeneous mixture of supernumeraries, whom they had acquired by the way, entered the church, and proceeded to the holy shrine of our Lady of Walsingham, where they performed their vows, and duly offered their gifts in proper form.

When all orthodox ceremonials had been performed at our lady's shrine, the pilgrims proceeded to the "Wishing Wells" with eager alacrity, each devoutly persuaded of the efficacy of the potent draught in procuring the heart's dearest wish. King Henry was the first who approached this far-famed fount of hope, where, kneeling he swallowed an overflowing bumper of the water, and wished with all the energy of his soul that a son might be born unto him, who might live to succeed him on the throne of England. This wish was fulfilled in the person of the early-lost Edward the Sixth.

Queen Catherine followed with the intention of wishing the very same thing, but somehow the remembrance of her only child, the Princess Mary, intruded, just as she was raising the cup to her lips and instead of wishing for a son, she earnestly desired that her daughter might inherit England, and become by marriage Queen of Spain; which her daughter, the bigoted and unhappy Mary the First, certainly did.

The emperor was going to wish something of great importance connected with the conclusion of the treaty, which occupied so much of his attention; but at the critical moment of drinking, he chanced to observe that one of the seams in the embroidered glove that covered the hand in which he held the cup, was unsewn, and his Spanish love of etiquette made him unconsciously wish that some compassionate lady would mend the unseemly rent for him.

"Out upon it!" cried he, flinging down the cup in a pet; "I have lost the opportunity of wishing for a kingdom, through the vile stitchery of a paltry Ghent glover; for lo! you, my masters, this unlucky fracture caught mine eye while I was drinking the blessed water, and my

natural love of order impelled me to wish it might be mended by some fair lady in presence."

This confession was received by all the pilgrims with a shout of laughter; and Master Goose, the tailor, bustling up to the emperor, in the hope of gaining a profitable job, begged "that he would vouchsafe him the honor of repairing the fault of his naughty glover."

"Nay, Master Goose, by your leave," interposed the fair Boleyn, "the gallant pilgrim has expressed his wish of having the glove mended by the hand of a lady, therefore shall I do myself the pleasure of sewing it, while I wait for my turn to drink at the wishing well."

The emperor of course expressed much gratitude to the lovely sempstress, to whom he was indebted for the speedy accomplishment of his foolish wish; for she immediately opened an aguiler, or needlecase, which contained a selection of needles and silks, and taking her thimble from the pretty gold case in which it hung suspended, with her mirror and other toys, to her girdle, she instantly sewed up the unlucky slit in the imperial glove, and presented it with a demure curtesy to Charles the Fifth.

Mary of France, and her husband the Duke of Suffolk, mean time, had drunk of the fated well, and heartily united in the ambitious wish that a descendant of theirs might eventually be named as a successor to the throne of England; and in the fulness of time this wish was fatally brought to pass, for their grand-daughter, the lovely and saintly Jane Grey, was not only named heiress to the crown, but actually exercised the sovereign authority for—ten days.

Wyatt had resolved to wish that his love for Anne Boleyn might be prosperous; nevertheless, it happened that he was deeply engaged at that very hour with a madrigal in her praise, which he had finished save one stubborn rhyme, which baffled his minstrel skill; involuntarily this subject crossed the youthful poet's brain, while the cup was at his lips; he wished to complete his poem, and scarcely had he drunk his draught when the right word darted into his head.

He cast a wistful glance on the lady of his heart, as she approached the well, and took the cup in her hand; it was the hope of Wyatt that her wish might repair the mischance of his own, and when she resigned her place by the well side to Wolsey, he softly approached and asked her, in a tender whisper, what she had wished.

Anne Boleyn audaciously proclaimed aloud "that she had wished to be a queen."

"A queen, forsooth!" muttered the cardinal, who was raising the cup to his lips, with a desire of no less magnitude in his heart than that of wearing the papal tiara, when the bold avowal of the presumptuous beauty who had so often crossed his plans with his royal master, reaching his ear, at that moment, instead of desiring the success of his own ambitious project, he imprecated a wish of the most deadly import upon her, a wish that was in the course of a few brief years only too fearfully fulfilled on the devoted head of his fair enemy.

Mistress Abigail Trudget wished for a fourth husband, and Master Goose, the tailor, when she confided the same to him, confessed that he had desired to be the man on whom her choice might fall. Both these parties obtained their wish, for they were married in the parish church of Walsingham as soon as their banns had been duly proclaimed.

The Abbot of Glastonbury wished to be presented to Cardinal Wolsey, and gained his desire within the hour. The Abbess of Ely, who had been suffering some alarm, ever since she had learned the quality of the pilgrims before whom she had related the tale of the Royal Sisters, wished most sincerely that no evil consequences might result from her imprudence, and was perfectly satisfied by the king's gracious assurance, that he had been too well amused by the love affairs of his royal aunts to cherish any displeasure against her, for having unwittingly made him acquainted with so much family history, which he furthermore declared had been more entertaining to him than all the stories that had been related by the other pilgrims. He even went so far as to add, "that he had serious thoughts of awarding the prize to her."

"Softly, softly, brother mine," interposed the lively dowager of France; "methinks in common justice, you ought to recollect that though the pilgrimage be ended, the pilgrims have not yet bouned them to their several homes, and ere the prize be awarded, you ought to hear Sir Thomas Wyatt, my good Lord of Suffolk, and fair mistress Anne, relate the pleasant romaunts which they have prepared for your divertisement—to say naught of my poor self, or of them who have added themselves to our company, who have promised to amuse us with their tale, while we journey homeward from the holy land of Walsingham."

"Adso! my fair mistress," said squire Goggs, who had just knelt down by the blessed well, when the royal beauty took up the word. "I would you had held your peace, and said naught of your romaunts that remain to be told, for here have I, inadvertently wishing to hear

them, lost mine errand, for I have travelled all the way from Granta Grange, Cambridgeshire, for the purport of wishing at this here well, to obtain a certain young gentlewoman, in the present company, for my wife—and lo you now! mine intention is *right on* gainsayed, unless mistress Anne, (as I note she is called) hath been kind enough to wish somewhat regarding me, that may answer the same purpose.”

“Gramercy, my worthy sir!” said the fair Boleyn, with affected simplicity, “what should that be?”

“That you might have the good hap of wedding a rich Cambridgeshire squire, my pretty mistress,” returned Mathew Goggs, with a very loving regard.

“Alack,” she replied, “if the truth must be told, I believe I wasted, the opportunity of gaining such preferment, by desiring that which is not very likely to come to pass. I deem that your own wish of hearing the tales told, by the homeward bound pilgrims, was a far more profitable and pleasurable one to yourself, and very likely to come to pass withal—but as to wedding a demoiselle of my breeding, in good sooth, I wish you better luck in a helpmate, for to my shame be it spoken, I can neither brew, nor bake, nor make butter or cheese, and therefore should prove, I fear, a very unsuitable yoke for a Cambridgeshire squire.”



NOTES.

HISTORICAL NOTES TO THE PILGRIMAGE.

On the 26th of May, 1522, the Emperor Charles V. arrived in England, at Dover, and departed in great state from Southampton on July the 6th, the same year. His stay was upward of five weeks, and it was the second visit he paid to England. During this time there is a notation, in an ancient chronology belonging to Norwich, which says—"The Emperor Charles V. came to this city,"—but as he neither embarked nor arrived by an eastern port, in any of his English visits, the supposition has been made, with much probability, that he passed through without state, on a religious journey either to or from the far famed Lady Chapel of Walsingham.

Hall and Holingshead thus describe his manners and deportment at the time of this long visit.

"During the emperor's stay in England, which was about five weeks, he so won the affections of the whole court by his civilities, caresses and presents, that he was almost sure of leaving none but friends,

about the king. He lost no means of gaining the good will of the English, and effected this by making the Earl of Surry admiral of his fleet. While Charles was passing his time in England, Surry sailed with the formidable forces of the united English and Flemish fleets under his command, and made two fierce descents on the coasts of France, did great mischief, and brought away large booties from Cherbourg and Morlaix." The last of these predatory battles was fought on the 1st of July, and on the 6th Lord Surry was riding with the united fleets triumphantly at Southampton, where Charles embarked with great pomp and rejoicing; and the allied fleets, commanded by the victorious English admiral, conveyed him with imperial state to Spain.

Walsingham was then the most celebrated Lady shrine in the world "Our Lady of Loretto" had begun to dispute the palm with the blessed Mary of Walsingham, yet the chapel of Loretto was only a babe, in comparison with the antiquity of that at Walsingham. The legends do not pretend that the chapel and shrine were conveyed from Dalmatia to Loretto till the year 1300, and at that era kings and nobles, from north and south, were performing pilgrimages to the holy land of Walsingham. Never was this shrine in higher popularity than during, the earlier years of Henry VIII.'s reign. His devotion had probably been directed to it, by his favourite Wolsey's predilection for his native East-Anglia, the inhabitants of Norfolk and Suffolk, always considering themselves as one people. Catherine, perhaps, out of love to her husband, was a devotee to his favorite saint; and honours and pilgrimages multiplied round the shrine of Walsingham, on account of the royal partiality, till a reverse happened to the saint through the king's caprice. A few succeeding years brought the Reformation, and the Virgin was cast from her high estate, her chapel was desecrated, and she was ignominiously trundled to Chelsea, where she was burnt by the orders of Thomas Cromwell.

This outrage sat heavier on the conscience of Henry than many a worse thing. Sir Henry Spelman says, that the dying tyrant repented him, sorely, of the mischief that he had done to our Lady of Walsingham, and bequeathed his soul to her. Great doubts must have existed among the catholic party, whether the Lady of Walsingham would be troubled with the care of it. Catherine of Arragon, great, good and saintly as she really was, consoled her breaking heart, by likewise leaving her soul to the keeping of the Lady at Walsingham, and two hundred nobles to be given by a pilgrim, in her name, in charity, on

the road thither. It is curious to note the effect of early association on the minds of this dissevered pair.

The common people had an odd conceit that the galaxy, or milky-way, in the heavens, was placed there by Providence, to point to this Norfolk abode of the Virgin, and this starry track was called by them "Walsingham-way." But Walsingham-way was likewise a celebrated road on earth, leading through Norfolk to that favoured spot, much frequented by pilgrims. At every town on the Walsingham-way, was erected a cross, which pointed out the approach to that sainted ground. Some of these crosses are still to be seen, and are very elegant in their architectural construction.

Walsingham Chapel was founded in the year 1061, by the widow of Ricoldie de Faverchos, in honour of the Virgin Mary; it was in all things minutely resembling the Santa-Casa, at Nazareth, that very abode of the Virgin Mary, regarding which, the legend was afterward invented, declaring that the house where the Virgin Mary dwelt, in Nazareth, was carried, bodily, by angels from Nazareth, when the Arabs gained possession of the country, and after some wanderings, was finally settled in Italy, at Loretto. This tale was evidently framed to counterbalance the immense popularity of the Walsingham Chapel, which was only asserted to be the model of the Virgin's dwelling-house. Three hundred years afterward, pious frauds got more impudent, and the Italians built the Chapel of Loretto, in a lone place, in a night or two, and swore that it was transferred by angels. The country-people, who saw it appear one morning, on a place that had been vacant very lately, were ready to bear witness, that the chapel had been brought whole, and set down there. Both these celebrated buildings were low roofed little oratories at first, such as suited the humble dwelling of the Virgin Mother, in her native place, but both were magnificently added to by the devotion of the pilgrims.

It ought to be distinctly understood that the wonderful attraction of the Walsingham Chapel, was entirely owing to its being the model of this far-famed dwelling-house at Nazareth, a spot of the highest sanctity, to crusaders and pilgrims to Palestine; and when the Mahomedans got possession of the real Nazareth Chapel, the gross idolatry of the time imagined that the Virgin transferred her personal abode to Norfolk, in the house that was the fac simile of her own, now desecrated by Arab infidels. Soon after the erection of the Chapel at Walsingham, Godfrey de Faverches, the son of the pious foundress, added a

magnificent priory, for canons of the order of Saint Augustine. A century after, the Plantagenet kings showered gifts and grants on Walsingham Priory—Henry III, Edward I, Edward II, and his evil wife Isabel, were votaries and pilgrims, besides being benefactors to a great extent. Notwithstanding the fierce war between England and Scotland, Robert Bruce ventured into Norfolk on a pilgrimage, after he was crowned king, and so did his queen Margaret. Henry IV, and Henry VI, made pilgrimages here; but the shrine was never more frequented than a few years before its fall, being the favourite place of devotion of Henry VIII, and his queen, Catherine of Arragon.

Besides the model of the Santa-Casa, or holy-house of the Virgin at Nazareth, there was a splendid new chapel, built in 1420, dedicated to the annunciation of the Virgin Mary, and this was as the first, adjoining the stately priory, built by Godfrey de Faverches, but not in it. The last chapel was called by William of Worcester, in 1460, 'The new work of Walsingham.' Erasmus, who also visited this celebrated place in the reign of Henry VIII, notices that this part was in an unfinished state. He observes,—“The church is splendid and beautiful, but the Virgin dwells not in it, that veneration and respect is only granted to her son. She has her church so contrived as to be on the right hand of her son,—but neither in that does she live, the building not being finished.” He then proceeds to mention the first founded chapel, saying that “it was built of wood, pilgrims are admitted through a narrow door at each side. There is but little or no light in it, but what proceeds from wax-tapers, yielding a most pleasant and odoriferous smell,—but if you look in you will say it is a seat of the gods, so bright and shining as it is all over with jewels, gold and silver.” Erasmus, in his colloquy, gives a very satirical description of the superstitions and mummeries practised at this place.

A representation of a famous miracle, performed by our Lady of Walsingham, was seen by Erasmus, engraven on copper, and nailed to the gate of the priory, where it is supposed still to remain walled up. It is a wonder no industrious antiquary has ever made a pilgrimage to grub for it. An old MS. thus relates the miracle:—“Near the entry into the close of the priory, was a very low, narrow wicket, 'not past an ell high,' and but three quarters in breadth, and a certain nobleman, who was likewise a knight, Sir Rauf Boutetourt, armed cap-a-pie and on horseback, being, in days of old, pursued by a cruel enemy, and in the utmost danger of being taken, made full speed for this gate, invoc-

ing the Lady of Walsingham for deliverance, whereupon he immediately found himself and his horse within the close and sanctuary of the priory, in a safe asylum, and so fooled his enemy."

Erasmus likewise mentions among the relics, a joint of Saint Peter's finger, as large as that of the Colossus at Rhodes.

The priory seal bore on one side the effigy of the virgin, seated with her infant son in her arms, on the reverse the beautiful window and west end of the church, which still remains a noble ruin.

Near to the east end of the priory is a semicircular arch, in a mass of masonry, annexed to the *wishing-wells*.

There is a stone square, with steps, descending to two uncovered wells, called the "wishing wells,"—the devotees, to our Lady of Walsingham, believed that who ever was admitted to drink of these waters, obtained what their hearts most desired, if wished while the cup was at their lips.

When the image of the virgin was pulled down by the order of Cromwell, as above mentioned, there was insurrection in that part of Norfolk, but it was soon quelled. The inhabitants anticipated, what really happened, that the town of Walsingham would fall into decay after the resort of the rich pilgrims ceased. The prior and some of the monks, were pensioned on the surrender of the lands and revenues but the sub-prior, George Gisborrow, and fifteen of the monks were hanged, certainly not for being concerned in this insurrection, for they were executed before it happened; perhaps their fate roused the indignation of the people.

The popularity of this shrine of Walsingham is fully shown in one of our most ancient pieces of poetry. The ballad alluded to, gave rise to the ballad of the Friar of Orders Gray, quoted by Shakspear. He likewise quotes the Walsingham ballad, and the first verse is introduced by Beaumont and Fletcher, in their mock drama of the Knight of the Burning Pestle, as a thing of great antiquity. As it is seldom met with in a complete state, it will be an acceptable conclusion to this note:—

"As we came from the holy land
Of blessed Walsingham,
Oh, met ye not with my true love
As by the way ye came?"

How should I know your true love,
That have met many a one,
As I came from the holy land,
That have both come and gone ?

“My love is neither white nor brown,
But as the heavens fair,
There's none that hath her form divine,
Either in earth or air.

“Such a one did I meet, good sir,
With an angelic face,
Who like some beauteous queen appear'd,
Both in her gait and grace.

“Yes, she hath clean forsaken me,
And left me all alone,
Who whilome loved me as her life,
And called me her own.

“What is the cause she leaves thee thus,
And a new way doth take,
That whilome loved thee as her life,
And thee her joy did make ?

“I, that loved her all my youth,
Grow old as now you see,
Love liketh not the falling leaf,
Nor yet the withered tree.

“For love is like a careless child,
Forgetting promises past,
He is blind and deaf whene'er he list,
His faith is never fast.

“His fond desire is fickle found
And yields a trustless joy,
Won with a world of toil and care,
And lost with great annoy.

“Such is the love of woman-kind
Of Love's fair name abused,
Beneath which many vain desires
And follies are excused.

“But true love is a lasting fire,
Which viewless vestals tend,
That burns for ever in the soul,
And knows no change or end.”

The Friar of Orders Gray, if critically examined, will be found to be, not an alteration or more modern edition of the Walsingham ballad, as is erroneously supposed, but an answer to it, or rather a continuation of the drama.

The lady of whose fickleness such bitter complaints are made by her lover in the above, and of whose pilgrimage to this far-famed shrine he is so bitterly jealous, is represented in the Friar of Orders Gray, in a penitent state searching for her lost lover. Her enquiries are something similar to those in the Walsingham ballad, only instead of a Walsingham pilgrim, she meets the man himself, and he, with a little excusable deception, torments her with a feigned description of his own death and burial.

The only discrepancy is his own account in the Walsingham ballad of his venerable age, yet this may be only a lover's vagary, in tormenting himself by self-depreciation, since the contumacious fair one is represented in the very pride of her charms, who could not have been much younger than her lover, who says, “I have loved her all my youth!” and of course her years did not stand still while his were fleeting away.

From these exquisite relics of ancient national poetry, may be gathered the frequency of Walsingham pilgrimages, and that the district in which that shrine stood, was termed the holy land, as if it had been Jerusalem or Palestine.

Since these notes were sent to press, the author has received from the amiable and accomplished Countess of S——, the following additional curious particulars, collated and abridged by a friend of hers, no trifling task, be it acknowledged, for a young lady of rank and fashion, to search through ancient folios, and gather here a little and there a little, in order to throw a light on the antiquities of East Anglia, and the history of our country.

WALSINGHAM PRIORY.

THE widow lady of Ricoldie de Faverches, dwelling in Walsingham Parva, founded there, on or about the year 1061, a chapel in honor of the Virgin Mary, in all respects like the Sancta Casa, at Nazareth, where the virgin was saluted by the angel Gabriel, on a visit of the virgin enjoining thereto. This lady was not, however, the foundress of the priory: her son Geoffry, or Galfridus de Faverches, founded it, granting a charter of perpetual endowment, of which the following is a translation:

“To all the faithful of the holy church, which is in Christ, Godfrey of Faverches, sends greeting. Be it known to ye, that I have given and granted in perpetual alms, to God, Saint Mary, and to Edwy my priest, for the purpose of establishing, for the welfare of my soul, and my relations and friends, that religious order which he may choose, the chapel which my mother founded at Walsingham, in honor of the everlasting virgin, together with the possession of the church of All Saints in the same town, and all its appurtenances, as well in lands as tenths, rents, and homage, and in everything which the aforesaid Edwy possessed, on the day when I undertook my journey to Jerusalem.—And namely, twenty solidi to be paid yearly, out of my demesne, for two parts of the tithes of my demesne. And, also, the land of ‘Snaimges,’ which Harvis gave to God, and to the aforesaid chapel, namely,

the half acre in the town of 'Snaimges,' which lies next to the lands and house of 'Thery,' and eight acres in the fields of the same town, with part of the meadow belonging to the same lands.

"And to the intent that the said Edwy and his successors, having entered into a regular life, may without interruption, hold them (*viz.*, the lands, &c.) in perpetual right, according to ecclesiastical possession, I confirm and corroborate this my gift and grant, by the attestation of my deed and seal, in honor of God and the blessed Maria, the everlasting virgin.

"Witnessed by Alanus Presbyter de Turnfud."

The above deed may have been the fabrication of the monks, who frequently resorted to such methods to secure and increase their possessions, but it serves to prove the *supposed* origin of the priory, before the reign of Edward I. A royal charter of this monarch confirms Geoffry's gifts with those of other persons, at the same date. A previous charter of Henry III confirms many similar donations, but does *not* specify the grants of Geoffry de Faverches. Until he vowed a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Edwy was his only clerk, who possessed the tithes and other profits for life, attached to the Church of All Souls. This Edwy was probably the first prior, and doubtless suggested *this* undertaking to his lord, for the benefit of his soul.

There are two other deeds, confirming the grants of Faverches,—the first by Roger de Branart, the second by Roger Earl of Clare, in whose family the patronage of the priory was long vested. Elizabeth de Burgo, Countess of Clare, founded here, in 1346, a house of Grey Friars, or Friars Minor, to which the prior objected as spoiling his trade. (She is the same with the foundress of Clare Hall, Cambridge.) They obtained a right of free warren, in the reign of Edward I. Among the privileges possessed by the priors, was that of a mortuary of every parishioner of the Parish of Walsingham, of the second best animal, and if there was but one then of that.

At its dissolution, which happened in the thirteenth of Henry VIII, the possessions amounted to 391*l.* 11*s.* 7*d.* yearly, according to Dugdale; 446*l.* 14*s.* 4*d.* according to Speed.

The last prior was Richard Vowell, prior of Lees, in Essex, who subscribed with several canons, to the king's supremacy, September 18th, 1534. In August 4th, 30th, Henry VIII, he surrendered the possessions of the priory and received a pension of 100*l.* yearly.

From the liberality of devotees and various grants Walsingham

priory at one period, attained a higher degree of prosperity than most others in England, and the extent and magnificence of the buildings, were commensurate with the dignity and opulence of the establishment. (The site was shortly after sold to Thomas Sidney, Esq., for the sum of 90*l*.)

So great was the fame of our Ladye of Walsinghame, that foreigners of all nations came on pilgrimage to her shrine, in-so-much, that the number of her devotees and worshippers, seemed to have equalled those of our Lady of Loretto, in Italy, and in the days of darkness and superstition, when priests and monks, enslaved, not only the consciences, but purses of the English laity. "They who had not made a pilgrimage, and an offering at our Dame of Walsinghame's shrine, were looked upon as impious and irreligious." The priory church was a grand and very spacious structure, consisting of a nave, two side aisles, a choir, a chapel dedicated to Saint Mary, and a great tower in the centre of the church.

Connected with it was a charter house, which communicated by a passage, with the cloisters,

These formed a square of fifty four paces, supported on all sides by pointed arches, resting on octangular columns.

The refectory was a large and lofty building.

But the chief beauty and glory of Walsingham priory, was the chapel, dedicated to the Annunciation of the Virgin ; this chapel was a separate building from the church, and distinct also from the chapel dedicated to the blessed Virgin. In this chapel was placed the famous image of our Lady of Walsingham. The foreign princes and nobles who performed pilgrimages hither, were supposed by the commonality, to be guided by the Galaxias or Milky-way, said (and as they were taught by their weak credulity to believe) to have been placed in the heavens by Providence to point out the particular residence of the Virgin, thence this starry course was generally, in ancient times, called the "Walsingham-way."

Near the priory church was a stone bath, with steps descending, and two uncovered wells called the "wishing wells," of which it is said, that the devotees of the Lady of Walsingham were taught to believe that whomsoever was permitted to drink of these waters, might obtain what they *then* wished for *sans* fee.

In 1538, at the suppression of the religious houses, by the special

mission of the Lord Cromwell, Vicar General, he caused the image of the Virgin to be brought to Chelsea, where it was committed to the flames.

The seal of this house bore on one side, the effigy of the Virgin seated with the child Jesus in her arms, and on the reverse, the front, or west end of the priory church. The lady was patroness both of the abbey and priory.

The following similar passages are taken from some of the Monkish Legends:

“King Edward III, with his brother, the Earl of Cornwall, founded the Monastery of Maidstone, in Kent, and obtained leave of Pope Clement VI, to build *these friars* a house in Walsingham.”

“*These friars*” are the Franciscans; the permission may have been obtained, but it does not appear elsewhere, that the house was ever built, therefore, although remarkable, the extract is of too vague a nature, to permit of much importance being attached to it.

The rank and number of our Lady of Walsingham’s worshippers were equally conspicuous; Henry III, March 24th, and 26th year of his reign, previously to an expedition to Gascony; King Edward I, two visits in his 25th year, Edward III, October 6th, in his 9th year. In the 35th year of Edward III, John de Montfort, Duke of Britany, had the king’s *liberate*, to the chamberlains and treasurer of the exchequer to deliver 9*l.* for the expense of his journey to Walsingham, and back to London. In the 38th year of Edward III, David Bruce, King of Scotland, had a protection to come here, with thirty horse in his retinue. Moreover, Isabel, Countess of Warwick, in 1439, bequeathed her tablet, with the image of our Lady, to the Church of Walsingham—also to the Lady there, her gown of *alyz* cloth of gold, with wide sleeves, and a tabernacle of silver, like in the timbre to that of our Lady of Caversham. Henry VII. mentions in his will, that had ordered an image of silver, gilt, and to be made and offered up to our Lady of Walsingham.

Henry VIII in his second year, rode here, and as appears in a MS. of payments, by the keeper of the privy seal, made an offering of 6*s.* 8*d.*

Sir Henry Spelman says it was reported that he walked barefoot from Barsham, and presented a necklace of great value. Soon after he banished the Virgin from her monastery and pulled it down; and on his death-bed, to appease her resentment, bequeathed his soul to her. "For he was so sensible of her wonderful goodness, how ready she was to remember small favors, and god-like to forget great injuries."

EXTRACTS FROM ERASMUS'S PEREGRINATIO.

The temple is striking and elegant, the virgin, however, does not dwell in it—but, in honor of her Son, yields it to him. She has her own temple, and is placed in it, in such a manner, that when the Son looks towards the west, she is on his right, and when he is turned towards the east, she is on his left. But this temple is not her abode, for the building is unfinished—the doors and windows are open, and the wind traverses it, in all directions;—and in the neighborhood is Ocean, the father of the winds. In this unfinished building is a narrow chapel, made of wood, and admitting worshippers, by narrow doors on each side. The light within is dull, and proceeds almost solely from the tapers—the most grateful odors delight the votaries. If you were to look in, you would really say that it was the seat of the gods, so brilliantly do all parts glitter with jewels, silver and gold. The regulars are not employed at the shrine, lest by the service of religion they should be alienated from religion, and while they serve the Virgin, should not consult her interest with proper zeal, only in the inner chapel, which I have already said to be the chamber of the Virgin, a certain canon stands at the altar, for the purpose of receiving and taking care of the gifts. Besides, a kind of pious modesty, tempts some who come hither to give, when some one watches them, although they would give nothing if the witness were absent, or to be more liberal in their dona-

tions when another is present, than if they had been alone. Nay, some are so devoted to the Holy Virgin that while they pretend to place a gift upon the altar, they retake with wondrous dexterity what another had laid down.

At the north side there is a certain gate in the wall enclosing the court so small that a person cannot enter without stooping. (*Here the Verger relates the story of Sir Rauf Boutetourt.*) Then the Verger showed him a plate of copper, nailed on the wall, with the image of this knight, in the very dress which was then in fashion among the English, and which we see in old pictures. (*How we should like to see the pictures that Erasmus calls old ones.*) There was another plate, on which was inscribed a description of the chapel, and its dimensions.

As it was deemed improper that any horse should afterwards tread upon this spot, which the knight had consecrated to the Virgin, an iron gate was placed in the gateway; it was to leave an aperture through which a pilgrim on foot could just pass. Towards the east of this there is another chapel full of windows, and there I afterwards went. Another Verger received me, and showed me the joint of a man's finger—I kissed it—and in answer to my enquiries, he told me that it was the finger of Saint Peter,—the joint was so large that it might have belonged to a giant. Before this chapel stood a house which, according to our guide, had been brought there in the winter, when all things were buried in snow, from some distant place. Under this hut were two pits full of water, supplied by a fountain consecrated to the blessed Virgin."

The water was singularly cold, and is said to possess great virtue in curing pains in the head and stomach.

After most cruelly cross-questioning and tormenting the unhappy Verger, and then consoling him by a present of a few groats, and apologies for their slowness of comprehensions, they inspected the relics of the Virgin.

"These relics are kept on the high altar, in which Christ is in the middle, and his mother, out of respect, on the right hand,—for the relics appertain to the mother. They are preserved in a crystal glass. The canon put on the surplice, knelt down and worshipped, and gave us afterwards the glass to kiss. We knelt down on the lowest step of the altar, and having paid our adoration to Christ addressed ourselves to his mother, in a prayer prepared by us for the occasion [the prayer

is given in the colloquy ;] when we had finished, the shower of the relics approached us without saying a word, holding out such a table as is presented to you by those who take toll on the bridges in Germany. We place in it some coins which he presented to the Virgin."

They went again to the chapel of our Ladye, made a prayer, kissed the altar, and retired.

"After dinner we went to the churches again, for I was anxious to see a record, to which in reply to my questions, the shower of relics had referred me. After hunting for a long time we at last found it but it was suspended at such a length that good eyes were required to read it, and mine are neither peculiarly powerful, nor peculiarly weak ; I therefore made Aldridge read it to me. It relates, that a certain William of Paris, a man of great piety, after having traveled many countries, especially zealous in collecting relics of saints, having diligently explored all the churches and monasteries, arrived at last at Constantinople,—when he was preparing to return home, his brother, who was a bishop in that city, made known to him that a certain nun possessed some relics of the Virgin. By some earnest and assiduous entreaties, he eventually persuaded her to yield half of them to him, and "having obtained possession of them," says Erasmus, "thought himself richer than Croesus." On his way homeward he fell sick, and finding himself in danger, delivered the relics to a Frenchman and faithful fellow-traveller, on condition that if he reached home safely, he should deposit them on the altar of the Holy Virgin, that is worshipped in Paris. "In that noble church, bordered on each side by the Seine, as if the river itself gave way in reverence to the divinity of the Virgin." William did not return, the Frenchman, too, died on the road, having previously delivered the relics to an Englishman, his traveling companion—who swore that he would execute the orders given by William.

"He reached Paris, and placed the relics on the altar in presence of the canons. Then he obtained half of them for himself, and moved by a divine impulse conveyed them to our Ladye beyond sea."

[To prevent doubts relative to the authenticity of this story, the very names of the bishops who were authorised by the pope to grant indulgences, extending to forty days, to such as should come to see the relics, and give some donation, are recorded on the tablets.]

Several other things are shown the pilgrims—Erasmus says, "If I

should proceed to mention the particulars, the day would not be long enough."

(The descriptions are compressed as the *Peregrinatio* occupies forty or fifty pages.)

"William, brother of Henry, King of England, gave land at Walsingham,—the aforesaid chapel was begun in the reign of Edward the Confessor, and canons regular put into it, in the reign of Wiliam the Conqueror." [*The order was Saint Augustine.*]

"Stephen Hales, Knt., and others, gave lands to establish a chantry here, in the chapel of Saint Anne, the same to consist of four chaplains, confirmed by Richard II,—other lands were also given for anniversaries, and confirmed by King Henry IV.

"†† One Robert Aldridge was Erasmus's interpreter."

NOTES TO THE SAXON WIDOW'S VOW.

The Ancient Town of Saxlingham, is now a small village, some miles from Norwich. In common with all towns whose name begun with the syllable *sax*, of which there are many in Norfolk and Suffolk it was a noted stronghold and distinguished place under the Saxon government of East-Anglia. Saxlingham signifies, "home of the Saxons." After the battle of Hastings, for the first year or two of William's violently established dominion, his bands of Norman adventurers dispersed themselves over the country, and laid siege to every place whose chief was hardy enough to hold out, while immunities and pretended confirmation of the ancient Saxon laws, were offered to those who submitted to the government of the Norman conqueror. Meantime his Norman captains were suffered to make private warfare, on their own accounts, and reduce as well as they could those who held out their castles, and on their subjugation, took the lands as their reward and dispossessed the former owners. Many of the Saxon chiefs held out, waiting for better times, imagining that the Norman invasion was like many a former Danish one, where the Saxons ultimately resumed their ancient power, and expelled the intruders, even after the loss of deadlier fights than that of Hastings.

Many were the private treaties entered into during these sieges which often ended in an intermarriage between the families of the

besieger and his enemy. On a circumstance of this kind the tale of the Saxon Widow's Vow is founded.

The most noted retreat of these Saxons,¹ who were too high-spirited to wear the Norman yoke, was in the Isle of Ely, and the famous Abbey of Croyland, a place impregnable both by nature and art, and defended above all by superstitious terrors and prejudices.

"It was founded by Saint Guthlake, a Saxon prince, who left off predatory warfare, conscience-stricken by its atrocity, at the age of twenty-four. The place selected for his retreat, was a solitary and almost inaccessible island, in the fens of Lincolnshire, which was withal, most grievously haunted by fiends. Here he built a hermitage—but the fiends were by no means pleased with the company of the holy man, and made a league offensive and defensive to expel him from their territories, and did every thing that could enter into their demoniacal imaginations to annoy him. They bounced through the chinks of his hut, and scoffed at him, not suffering him to say his prayers, for their shouts of rude laughter. Often when he ventured abroad, they bodily seized him, and plumped him into a neighboring pool, or whisked him through thorns and bushes, in fact there was scarcely a freak which they did not play this holy man. One night, when occupied as usual in prayers and vigils—it was very stormy—a whole legion of unclean spirits suddenly invaded his cell—they came through the door, through the chinks, through the roof, down the chimney, and out of the earth, like a dark cloud." Saint Felix gives a minute description of these visiters.

"They had," he says, "truculent aspects, terrible forms big heads, long necks, squalid beards, bat's ears, and flaming eyes, fetid breath and horse's teeth, shaggy hair, knotted knees, cat's claws and whisking tails, fire and smoke issued from grinning mouths, and they roared and howled clamorously."

Without delay these lovely creatures bound Saint Guthlake hand and foot, and taking him on their backs, conveyed him out of his cell; first they plunged him into the nearest mud-bath, and as a diversity dragged him through bushes and briars, and after spending the night in these amusements, commanded him to leave the hermitage, which they considered as their property.—Guthlake refused, whereupon they cudgelled him barbarously, and would actually have taken him home with them to the infernal regions, if Saint Bartholomew had not interfered, and commanded them to carry the saint back to his own cell.

Next day two of the fiends were heard howling and lamenting close by Saint Guthlake's bed, and when he demanded what ailed them, they said, "they wept because their power was broken." Nevertheless the poor saint had many notable skirmishes with them, before they fled from the marsh of Croyland.

Another time, when a saintly visiter had been writing in Saint Guthlake's cell, an impertinent crow flew away with his roll of parchment. The holy visiter lamented piteously, but Saint Guthlake told him "not to bewail, for the plunder should be returned," whereupon the thievish bird left the parchment on the heads of some reeds close by, where it was easily regained. Crows were Saint Guthlake's favorite companions; he tamed them, and they brought him food from a distance. From them the Isle of Crowland or Croyland was named. Many other birds were wonderfully familiar with him, and even the fish of the surrounding pools came at his voice.

Soon all sorts and conditions of people flocked to him to benefit by his prayers, among others his cousin, Prince Ethelbald, when persecuted by Coolred, King of Mercia, who thirsted to shed his blood, was sheltered in this retreat, where he remained in perfect security. Meantime a tender friendship was formed between the saint and the royal exile. Guthlake prophesied that Ethelbald would one day ascend the throne of Mercia, which he actually did, but some time after the death of Saint Guthlake,—hence arose the grandeur of Croyland. The gratitude of the royal Ethelbald caused the utmost honors to be paid to the tomb of his friend, who was buried near this simple hut, in his own island, in the year 714. Although the ground was of that marshy nature, that the foundation of the magnificent monastery could not be formed without vast piles had been driven into the earth, and covered with dry gravel, yet Ethelbald would not have his friend's bones transferred to a more favorable spot, but built, and endowed with extraordinary privileges, one of the finest abbeys in the world. In no place was the privilege of sanctuary so powerful, not only the precincts of the building, but the island and waters that surrounded it were holy, and a line of demarcation drawn twenty feet from the opposite shore stopped the pursuit of justice or vengeance.

The monastery founded by Ethelbald was destroyed by the Danes, but restored again with renewed splendor by King Edred.

Croyland is situated on the conflux of the rivers Nene and Welland, its three streets are separated by water courses, so that the people go

in boats to milk their cows at this day, and a proverb has survived from the Saxon times, which declares that all "the carts which come to Croyland, are shod with silver," which means to imply what is the case, that the fenny soil is impassable for carts for miles, neither does any corn grow within five miles of Croyland, though they have plenty of wild ducks and fish. The triangular bridge, built by monks, is scarcely to be rivaled in the world; it is formed by three segments of a circle meeting in one point, each base stands on a separate county, therefore here meet Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. All the great works of Croyland were a fine state of perfection, when the Saxon thanes successfully defended that and the Isle of Ely, for upwards of five years after the battle of Hastings, against all the puissance of the conqueror. Whoever was malcontent with the Norman government fled to these fortresses in the fens, the command of which seems to have been conferred by the election of the insurgents, and was presented generally to the last distinguished person who sought refuge among them, from the tyranny of William. The command of the island in the fens was successively reassumed by the Saxon earls, Morcar, Edwin, and Waltheof, and as these entered into convenient treaties with the conqueror, they came out of their retreat, and left the generalship of the Saxon strong-hold to the next in power and influence. The last commander was the valiant East Anglian Hereward, the nephew of the Abbot of Peterborough. He died in battle, defending the island of Ely and its dependencies against the famous attacks of William the Conqueror, who finding that the strong holds in the Lincolnshire fens must be captured at all events, threw all his strength on that object, and blockaded their rivers and creeks with a fleet of flat-bottomed boats; and built a mighty causeway of two miles long, over the fens, at the junction of which with the island, the gallant Hereward gave battle, and fell covered with wounds.

William was guilty of great cruelties to the prisoners whom he took in these fenny retreats.

Wisbeach and Belvoir Castles were built directly after the reduction of the Isle of Ely, to keep that district in awe.

NOTES TO WILLIAM RUFUS AND THE SALMON PASTY.

The penitence of William Rufus is curiously descanted on by the ancient chroniclers, whose tomes are full of those gossiping anecdotes, that display character, and lead their readers to form as lively an idea of the person and manners of a distinguished man, as if the individual stood before them. A dark shade falls on English history, when no longer illustrated in this manner, and in the wars of the Roses, the information is slight indeed, relating to monarchs that lived two centuries nearer our own times, compared to that which is afforded by the graphic pens of Robert of Gloucester, Piers of Langtoft, Fitz Stephen and William of Malmsbury, of events and characters in the era of the Norman princes.

As to the rhyming chronicler, Robert of Gloucester, he assuredly fills the same place, in English poetry, that is attributed to Chaucer, for amidst the ruggedness of his constructions may now and then be perceived a line that rises into beauty, and sonorous harmony, and gives token of what English verse was afterwards capable.

The character of William Rufus, or the Red King, as he was called, had certainly a degree of humor, mingled with its ferocity. Robert of Gloucester places this prince's peculiarities in a very distinct point of view; this will be seen by the following extracts in which the obsolete words and black letter printing are altered, so as to be intelli-

gible to the general reader, while the characteristics of the writer remain. First the person of William is described :—

“Thick man he was enow, and not well long,
 Throughout red, with a great womb, well boned and strong,
 Reinable he was not of tongue, and of speche hasitive,
*Bofflying** and most when in wrath, ready in strife ;
 Stalward he was and hardy, and good knight through al thing
 In battaile or in tournament, ere that he was king ;
 Mercy had he none, ne no meekhede
But a tyrant tormenter in speche and in dede.”

The last of these lines, in which the character of William Rufus is so energetically summed up, is a proof that Robert of Gloucester, now and then, breaks upon us with a line, in which the rhythm and accent are good.

Soon after a dismal catalogue of the evil deeds of this “tyrant tormenter,” in which, by the way, a variety of oddities and humorous queer doings, are put down to his account as actual crimes—old Robert brings him to his sick bed at Gloucester.

“So that in his wickedness to Gloucester he wend
 And while he bided there—sickness God him send
 In the year of grace a thousand, fourscore and threteen ;
 It was then that he lay sick at Gloucester I wene,
 Then drad he sore of death, of his misdede thought sore,
 And behest God that he luther† wold be no more,
 And that he wolde to England, and holy church also,
 Be good and amend all he amiss did do.”

In the progress of this penitence, the king bestowed the vacant Archbishopric of Canterbury on Anslem, Abbot of Bec, a Norman ecclesiastic, of uncompromising piety and great influence and ability. The king had held the revenues of various rich sees and abbeys in his own hands, whereby the tenants were rackrented, and impoverished, the poor were unprovided for, and the magnificent buildings dilapidated. If the dignitaries of the Romish Church were munificently endowed with revenues, they distributed them most liberally, and many

* This word is still in use in Suffolk, it means loud talking indistinctly with anger.

† Luther is a Saxon word much used, it means all kinds of heinous profligacy.

grades of society felt the benefit of them, consequently the sees being kept vacant, and their revenues rapaciously appropriated by a lawless monarch, was a proceeding that occasioned great discontent throughout the country, and was considered a most heinous sin, and as such repented of, when a sudden fit of illness seized William at Gloucester.

We find that as the royal penitent recovered his health, he began to grow daring and impious, and bitterly repented giving away the rich sees of Canterbury and Lincoln, the revenues of which he continued to grasp till his dying day, nor could all the remonstrances of the titular Archbishop Anselm wring the money of holy church from his gripe. The only grant he ever made of a benefice without receiving the worth in cash from the best bidder, was the presentation to the poor monk, when the two rich ones were outbidding each other. This story is related by William of Malmsbury, and is made use of in this tale. It certainly shows William in the light of a humorist, as does likewise the well known anecdote of the Jewish convert.

William continued in his lawless career for three years after his illness at Gloucester, during which time his subjects, and above all others, the dispossessed ecclesiastics incessantly prayed for some signal punishment to befall him. Now and then, he was wofully scared by bad dreams that were dreamed both by himself and the discontented priests, that were about his court—moreover, he stood in especial awe of his sable majesty, devoutly believing that he would claim him of a sudden when his time was fulfilled. On this subject, Robert of Gloucester is very eloquent. It appears that the Red King had been troubled with a slight relapse; two or three days before his death in the New Forest, he had been annoyed by the appearance of the devil, and that Odo, Bishop of Winchester, had prescribed fasting and penance, as a preventive: after a short trial of this regimen, William not relishing fasting, ate a very good dinner, and drank freely, then finding himself in excellent spirits, took it into his head “to wend a hunting in the Newe Forest.”

That was in Southamptonshe, natheless he was in dread,
 To wend, for such visions be had seen, and for his luther deed.
 For the devil was there before him, and about him they say,
 In form of body and speche, also amid men of his countrey,
 So that the king was a drad, and believed for such a case,
 To wend not a hunting, this was while he fasting was.

But after meat when he had eaten, and y dronke well,
 He called one of his privy mates, cleped Walter Tyrrel,
 And a few oder of his men, and wolde ne longer bide,
 That he wolde to his game, 'tide what wolde betide,'
 For he was something fain, as his heart was best,
 He went him forth a hunting in the New Forest,
 So that he soon found a harte, he shot it himself anon,
 And the harte forth with the arrow fast away was gone.
 He pricked forth faste enow, toward the west right,
 His hand he held before his eyen, because of the sun light,
 So that this Walter Tyrrell that there beside was nigh,
 Wolde shoot another harte, that as he said, he sey [saw]
 He shot the king in at the breast, that never more he spoke,
 But the shaft that was within him, grisly in him breke,
 For on his face he fell down, *and died without speche,*
*Without shrift or housel, and there was God's wretch.**
 When Walter Tyrrell saw that he was dede anon,
 He dight him fast to flee, as fast as he might gon,
 In a Thursday it was, and the morrow also,
 After Lammas-day, that this deed was ado,
To Winchester, men bare him, al midst his green wound,
And ever as he lay, the blood welled to ground."

The strength of the last couplet will be acknowledged by all those who can appreciate graphic simplicity in heroic poetry, but old Robert continues, noting his speedy burial :

" At the morrow noon, he was y buried at Minster, I wis,
 Right before the high wened [altar] where his body yet is ;"

Robert does not mention the lack of grief at the funeral of William, in the quaint terms of Fitz Stephen, but he expressly says:—

At his burying was many a one, but weeping very few."

After so many prophecies of the final reprobation of the soul of this original character, the reader may be sure that the priests were favored by a sight of his spiritual torments. Accordingly Anselm saw a vision after his violent death, to this purport:—

" The Archbishoppe Anselm that beyond sea was,
 Said, ' that in a vision he saw of him the case,
 That he was before God y brought his doom to avonge,
 And that he was there doom to pain of hell strong.' "

* It appears that the shaft broke because the king fell on it. There is something terrifically minute in this description. Shakspeare perhaps had it in memory when he imagined the ghost in Hamlet.

Very soon after the funeral of William, the steeple of Winchester Cathedral fell down, which fall was attributed to the circumstance of this "unhouselled, unanealed, monarch being buried before the altar, but one of the chroniclers ventures to remark, "that perhaps it was occasioned by the unstableness of the building."

The corpse of William, notwithstanding the neglect and scorn with which he was hurried to the grave, was not robbed by his attendants, for in the last century, when his grave at Winchester was opened, a valuable ruby thumb ring was found among the relics of the tomb, perhaps in the extreme haste of his interment it had been forgotten, as the jewels and regalia buried with the royal or noble dead, were always of fictitious stones, in the making of which much skill was shown in those times.

The ghost of the Red King is believed to haunt the cloisters of Winchester Cathedral, and to the infinite awe of the Winchester boys, at least of those of the last generation.

NOTES TO THE GOTHIC COUNT.

In the eighth century, the Christian kings of Spain were confined to the narrow boundary of the rocky and impregnable province of Asturias, and that part of Leon which is likewise mountainous. As for the plan of Leon, the Christians held it on a very precarious tenure, being constantly liable to invasion from the Moorish cavalry. Both the Castilles and Arragon were, till a century afterwards, oppressed by the Moorish yoke. It was Alphonso the first son-in-law to the great Pelayo, or Pelegius, that finally freed the whole of Leon, which province took its name from the Lion banner, carried by these glorious liberators. After the death of the hero Alphonso, a severe struggle for the succession took place between the three sons who survived him and the worthless and treacherous Don Aurelia, having got rid of the other two, by murderous means, finally ascended the throne.

The kingdom of Leon, weakened by constant battles with the invading Moors, and subsequently by civil strife, was in such a state of exhaustion, as to submit to the imposition of a vile tribute of a hundred beautiful young women, to be paid yearly, as the price of peace. This infamous tribute was refused by his brave successor, Alphonso the Chaste, who obtained his surname from this circumstance. Don Aurelio died in the year 774, the same year in which the mighty Moorish Emir Aben Alfage assumed the sovereignty of Arragon, under the title

of King of Sansuenna, or Saragossa, as it was called by the Spaniards. It was the first independent kingdom erected by the Moors in Spain, as the Moorish chiefs before that time were vassals of the Arabian caliphs.

A descent from the Gothic conquerors of the peninsula, is still considered as the proudest lineage in Spain. Hence the great value all the inhabitants of the South of Europe place on fair complexion and light air, that *choime d'oro*, that the Spanish poets celebrated as enthusiastically as Petrarch himself, and consider the highest order of female beauty.

The virgin tribute was subsequently either allowed or discontinued by the successors of Don Alphonso the Chaste, according to their tame or warlike dispositions. Voltaire bitterly sneers at Alphonso the Chaste, for resisting this scandalous tax; he attributes its first impositions to Mauregat, who, for a time, usurped the throne from Alphonso, and paid the tribute of virgins for six years. Alphonso the Chaste, in 791, again ascended the throne, and once more freed the ladies of Leon, and for ever. Voltaire is incorrect in his chronology, as he often is. Aurelio had paid the tribute of maidens more than twenty years before Mauregat usurped the throne of Leon.

NOTES TO THE ROYAL SISTERS.

Havering Bower was a favourite hunting seat of Edward the Fourth ; he was sojourning at the Bower-palace, when he bestowed upon the citizens of London the famous privilege of hunting a stag from Epping Forest every Easter Monday, a privilege they still retain. This fact is recorded by Hall the Chronicler, from whose quaint-pages is likewise copied this brief but pretty enumeration of the fortunes of King Edward's younger daughters.

"Cecil, not so fortunate as fayre, firste wedded to the Viscounte Welles, after to one Kyne, and lived not in greate wealthe ;—Bridget professed herself a close Nonne at Sion. Anne was married to Lorde Thomas Hanwarde, after Erle of Surrey, and Duke of Northfolk. Katherine the youngest daughter was married to Lorde William Courtneye, sonne to the Erle of Devonshire, which long time tossed in either fortune, somtyme in wealth, after in adversite."

The Princess Cicely had been contracted to Henry of Richmond, in case of the death of her sister Elizabeth. She took a conspicuous part at her sister's coronation. She was very beautiful, like her mother.

The extraordinary vicissitudes of Henry the Seventh's early years cannot be exaggerated by romance—witness his own words, and the personal testimony of Philip de Comines.

“The Earl of Richmond told me,” says the statesman historian, “that from the time he was five years old, he had always been a fugitive or prisoner, he had endured a fifteen years’ imprisonment, in Bretagne, by the command of the Duke Francis, into whose hands he had fallen through stress of weather; when escaping with his uncle the Earl of Pembroke. “I was at Duke Francis’ court,” says Comines, “when they were seized.”

Viscount Welles inherited the martial name of Willoughby, from Joanna, heiress of the celebrated Lord Willoughby (who fought at Azincour.) In the reign of Henry the Sixth, the son of Lord Welles was summoned to parliament by the style and title of Lord Willoughby. Three generations of the noble family of Welles died martyrs to the cause of Lancaster, the death of the father of the hero of this tale sat heavily on the conscience of Edward the Fourth; he raved of him in his last illness, and fancied that his bed was covered with his blood. Sir John Paston reckons the Lord Welles and his son Lord Willoughby among the slain at Towton, but there were so many of this family destroyed in the wars of the Roses, that it is not easy to distinguish their persons. The grandfather of the Lord Welles, who appears in the Royal Sisters, was treacherously lured out of sanctuary, and beheaded by King Edward, because his son had summoned his great vassalage in Lincolnshire to aid Queen Margaret, in the eighth year of Edward’s reign. Sir Robert Welles heard of his father’s execution just before he encountered the king’s forces. Sir Thomas Dymoke was murdered at the same time with his friend and brother-in-law, Lord Welles, which facts so intimidated the Lincolnshire men, that they broke their ranks and fled, throwing away their coats of scaled armour that they might flee the faster, whence this field was called Lose-cote Field. Poor Sir Robert fought furiously, but with his friend Sir Thomas Delaund was surrounded, taken and dragged to the block, on the spot. More men were slain after Lose-cote Field by the executioner than by the sword—not above ten men were killed in the battle. This scuffle near Stafford, called Lose-cote Field, with its quaint name and curious traits of the times, is one of those obscure points of chronicle history which starts into life and memory if touched by the Ithurial spear of romance.—*See Hall’s Chronicle for Lose-cote Field.*

It was a fact that Henry the Seventh lost his way the night preceding the battle of Bosworth, in the manner described; and was sheltered

and saved from destruction by a poor shepherd lad. This is related by so many authors that the particulars would be superfluous.

In the second year of Henry the Seventh, the long series of plots and insurrections which troubled the ten first years of his reign, began with the rebellion of the Earl of Lincoln, who had been proclaimed heir to the throne in the last year of Richard the Third. Before "Stoke's red field" was fought, King Henry made a pilgrimage to Walsingham, in order to bribe the Ladye of the Norfolk shrine into propitious humor. Hall thus relates this fact:—

"And from thence [St. Edmund's Bury] the king went forth to Norwich, and tarrying there Christmas day, departed after to Walsingham, and comyng there to the churche of our ladye, prayed devoutly, and made supplication to Almighty God, that by his divine power, and through the intercession of our ladye, he might eschew the snares and privy workings of his enemys, and preserve himself and his country from the imminent daungier, and to reduce again the streyinge shepe to their right folde and true shepherd, his orisons finished, from thence, by Cambridge, he returned shortly to London."

The fortunate termination of the manifold plots that thickened round the king, was entirely attributed to the intervention of the Lady of Walsingham, and from that time for at least half a century, she was considered as the tutelary goddess of the Tudor dynasty. Nor did she preside alone over the fortunes of the royal family; witness this original letter, extracted from the Paston papers.

Judge Yelverton, in 1450, ascribes all his success in life to our Lady of Walsingham. Being a Norfolk man, one is not surprised. This is one of the Paston letters:

"To my right worshipful Cosen, John Pasto.

"I recommend me unto you, thanking you as heartily as I can for myself, especially for that ye do so much for our lady's house at Walsingham, which I trust ye do the rather for the great love that ye deem I have thereto; for truly if I be come to any worship or welfare, and discharge of mine enemies' danger, I ascribe it all unto our lady."

The Paston papers frequently refer to this celebrated eastern shrine.

Sir John Paston writes to his wife Margaret, as a bit of news, in 1561—

A Worsted man of Norfolk [a native of the town of Worsted, which has given its name to part of the woollen trade] that sold worsted at Winchester, *say* that my Lord and Lady of Norfolk were on pilgrimage to our Ladye of Walsingham on *foot*."

This is, perhaps, the most curious extract produced by the research made for the purposes of illustrating this romance. "My Lord and Lady of Norfolk" were the last princely line of Mowbray, extinct in their little daughter Anne, married in her third year to Edward the Fourth's unfortunate little son Richard Duke of York; their business at Walsingham was to wish for an heir male.

The adventurers of this princely pair, on their pedestrian pilgrimage, were doubtless well worthy the attention of the curious could they be found.

HISTORICAL NOTES TO THE PILGRIMAGE.

The secret cause of all this devotion to the Norfolk shrine may be certainly traced to the Wishing Wells, a superstition, may be, of an early pagan origin, since it has survived the catholic worship, for these wells are still resorted to by young people in Norfolk, who often make parties thither, and among the magnificent ruins, half in play, half in earnest, drink of the waters, in the faith "that their heart's dearest wish, let them ask it and have."

Pilgrims' pennies, or tokens, are often found near the doorways among the ruins of convents on the Walsingham Way. Strictly speaking, pilgrims ought to carry no other coin. They obtained a supply of these from the convent connected with the shrine to which they were vowed. These were boxes like salt-boxes, affixed to the doorposts of the station houses where the pilgrims lodged, and these pennies were dropped therein, in token that the pilgrims had met with hospitable refecton and kind treatment. Sometimes the receptacle for the pilgrims' tokens was built in the pillar of the door; many were lately found at St. Margaret's Priory, near Flixton, Suffolk, near the doorway of the ruins. It was considered a great injury and disgrace, if these tokens were withheld, as they were collected by the archdeacons, and sent to the metropolitan as a proof of the hospitality afforded to pilgrims bound to certain celebrated shrines.

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