

When they arrived on the open heath,¹ where Gurth might have had some trouble in finding his road, the thieves guided him straight forward to the top of a little eminence, whence he could see, spread beneath him in the moonlight, the palisades of the lists, the glimmering pavilions pitched at either end, with the pennons which adorned them fluttering in the moonbeam, and from which could be heard the hum of the song with which the sentinels were beguiling their night-watch.

Here the thieves stopped.

"We go with you no farther," said they: "it were not safe that we should do so. Remember the warning you have received: keep secret what has this night befallen you, and you will have no room to repent it; neglect what is now told you, and the Tower² of London shall not protect you against our revenge."

"Good-night to you, kind sirs!" said Gurth. "I shall remember your orders, and trust that there is no offense in wishing you a safer and an honest trade."

Thus they parted; the outlaws returning in the direction from whence they had come, and Gurth proceeding to the tent of his master, to whom, notwithstanding the injunction he had received, he communicated the whole adventures of the evening.

The Disinherited Knight was filled with astonishment, no less

¹ Old English, *heth* ("waste land"), a tract of scrubby land.

² One of the most historic buildings in London, on the left bank of the Thames, between the Custom House and St. Katherine's Docks, about twenty minutes' walk from the Royal Exchange; originally a feudal fortress and a palace, then a state prison, and now a government storehouse and armory. It covers a space of twelve or thirteen acres, consisting of a central donjon or keep ninety-two feet high, and walls sixteen feet thick, known as the White Tower, and built in the time of William the Conqueror, surrounded by barracks, armories, etc., of modern date, inclosed within a double line of fortifications, the outer a little lower than the inner, and the whole encompassed by a moat called the "Tower Ditch," now dry, but still able to be flooded by the garrison. The other principal towers of the pile are the Bloody Tower, called so from the murder of the princes, sons of Edward IV.; Wakefield Tower, in which the prisoners from the field of Wakefield (1460) were confined; the Bell Tower; the Beauchamp Tower; the Boyer Tower.

at the generosity of Rebecca, by which, however, he resolved he would not profit, than that of the robbers, to whose profession such a quality seemed totally foreign. His course of reflections upon these singular circumstances was, however, interrupted by the necessity for taking repose, which the fatigue of the preceding day, and the propriety of refreshing himself for the morrow's encounter, rendered alike indispensable.

The knight, therefore, stretched himself for repose upon a rich couch with which the tent was provided; and the faithful Gurth, extending his hardy limbs upon a bear-skin which formed a sort of carpet to the pavilion, laid himself across the opening of the tent, so that no one could enter without awakening him.

CHAPTER XII.

MORNING arose in unclouded splendor, and ere the sun was much above the horizon, the idlest of the most eager of the spectators appeared on the common, moving to the lists as to a general center, in order to secure a favorable situation for viewing the continuation of the expected games.

The marshals and their attendants appeared next on the field, together with the heralds, for the purpose of receiving the names of the knights who intended to joust, with the side which each chose to espouse. This was a necessary precaution, in order to secure equality betwixt the two bodies who should be opposed to each other.

According to due formality, the Disinherited Knight was to be considered as leader of the one body, while Brian de Bois-Guilbert, who had been rated as having done second-best in the preceding day, was named first champion of the other band. Those who had concurred in the challenge adhered to his party, of course, excepting only Ralph de Vipont, whom his fall had rendered un-

fit so soon to put on his armor. There was no want of distinguished and noble candidates to fill up the ranks on either side.

On the present occasion, about fifty knights were inscribed as desirous of combating upon each side, when the marshals declared that no more could be admitted, to the disappointment of several who were too late in preferring their claim to be included.

About the hour of ten o'clock the whole plain was crowded with horsemen, horsewomen, and foot-passengers, hastening to the tournament; and shortly after, a grand flourish of trumpets announced Prince John and his retinue.

About the same time arrived Cedric the Saxon, with the Lady Rowena, unattended, however, by Athelstane. This Saxon lord had arrayed his tall and strong person in armor, in order to take his place among the combatants, and, considerably to the surprise of Cedric, had chosen to enlist himself on the part of the Knight Templar. The Saxon, indeed, had remonstrated strongly with his friend upon the injudicious choice he had made of his party; but he had only received that sort of answer usually given by those who are more obstinate in following their own course than strong in justifying it.

His best, if not his only reason, for adhering to the party of Brian de Bois-Guilbert, Athelstane had the prudence to keep to himself. Though his apathy of disposition prevented his taking any means to recommend himself to the Lady Rowena, he was nevertheless by no means insensible to her charms, and considered his union with her as a matter already fixed beyond doubt by the assent of Cedric and her other friends. It had therefore been with smothered displeasure that the proud though indolent Lord of Coningsburgh beheld the victor of the preceding day select Rowena as the object of that honor which it became his privilege to confer. In order to punish him for a preference which seemed to interfere with his own suit, Athelstane, confident of his strength, and to whom his flatterers, at least, ascribed great skill in arms, had determined not only to deprive the Dis-

inherited Knight of his powerful succor, but, if an opportunity should occur, to make him feel the weight of his battle-ax.

De Bracy, and other knights attached to Prince John, in obedience to a hint from him, had joined the party of the challengers; John being desirous to secure, if possible, the victory to that side. On the other hand, many other knights, both English and Norman, natives and strangers, took part against the challengers, the more readily that the opposite band was to be led by so distinguished a champion as the Disinherited Knight had approved himself.

As soon as Prince John observed that the destined queen of the day had arrived upon the field, assuming that air of courtesy which sat well upon him when he was pleased to exhibit it, he rode forward to meet her, doffed his bonnet, and, alighting from his horse, assisted the Lady Rowena from her saddle, while his followers uncovered at the same time, and one of the most distinguished dismounted to hold her palfrey.

"It is thus," said Prince John, "that we set the dutiful example of loyalty to the Queen of Love and Beauty, and are ourselves her guide to the throne which she must this day occupy.—Ladies," he said, "attend your queen, as you wish in your turn to be distinguished by like honors."

So saying, the prince marshaled Rowena to the seat of honor opposite his own, while the fairest and most distinguished ladies present crowded after her to obtain places as near as possible to their temporary sovereign.

No sooner was Rowena seated, than a burst of music, half drowned by the shouts of the multitude, greeted her new dignity. Meantime the sun shone fierce and bright upon the polished arms of the knights of either side, who crowded the opposite extremities of the lists, and held eager conference together concerning the best mode of arranging their line of battle and supporting the conflict.

The heralds then proclaimed silence until the laws of the tourney should be rehearsed. These were calculated in some degree

to abate the dangers of the day,—a precaution the more necessary, as the conflict was to be maintained with sharp swords and pointed lances.

The champions were therefore prohibited to thrust with the sword, and were confined to striking. A knight, it was announced, might use a mace¹ or battle-ax at pleasure, but the dagger was a prohibited weapon. A knight unhorsed might renew the fight on foot with any other on the opposite side in the same predicament; but mounted horsemen were in that case forbidden to assail him. When any knight could force his antagonist to the extremity of the lists, so as to touch the palisade with his person or arms, such opponent was obliged to yield himself vanquished, and his armor and horse were placed at the disposal of the conqueror. A knight thus overcome was not permitted to take further share in the combat. If any combatant was struck down, and unable to recover his feet, his squire or page might enter the lists and drag his master out of the press; but in that case the knight was adjudged vanquished, and his arms and horse declared forfeited. The combat was to cease as soon as Prince John should throw down his leading-staff or truncheon. Any knight breaking the rules of the tournament, or otherwise transgressing the rules of honorable chivalry, was liable to be stripped of his arms, and, having his shield reversed, to be placed in that posture astride upon the bars of the palisade, and exposed to public derision, in punishment of his unknighly conduct. Having announced these precautions, the heralds concluded with an exhortation to each good knight to do his duty, and to merit favor from the Queen of Beauty and of Love.

This proclamation having been made, the heralds withdrew to

¹ A kind of war-club for dealing heavy blows, designed especially to fracture armor; of a great variety of forms; carried frequently by horse-soldiers at the saddle-bow by a thong running through the upper part of the handle. The thong, wound about the wrist, also served to prevent the loss of the weapon in dealing a blow. The head of the club was commonly of metal, and was often spiked.

their stations. The knights, entering at either end of the lists in long procession, arranged themselves in a double file, precisely opposite to each other, the leader of each party being in the center of the foremost rank,—a post which he did not occupy until each had carefully arranged the ranks of his party, and stationed every one in his place.

It was a goodly, and at the same time an anxious, sight to behold so many gallant champions, mounted bravely and armed richly, stand ready prepared for an encounter so formidable, seated on their war-saddles like so many pillars of iron, and awaiting the signal of encounter with the same ardor as their generous steeds, which, by neighing, and pawing the ground, gave signal of their impatience.

As yet the knights held their long lances upright, their bright points glancing to the sun, and the streamers with which they were decorated fluttering over the plumage of the helmets. Thus they remained while the marshals of the field surveyed their ranks with the utmost exactness, lest either party had more or fewer than the appointed number. The tale was found exactly complete. The marshals then withdrew from the lists, and William de Wyvil, with a voice of thunder, pronounced the signal words, *Laissez aller!*¹ The trumpets sounded as he spoke; the spears of the champions were at once lowered, and placed in the rests; the spurs were dashed into the flanks of the horses; and the two foremost ranks of either party rushed upon each other in full gallop, and met in the middle of the lists with a shock, the sound of which was heard at a mile's distance. The rear rank of each party advanced at a slower pace to sustain the defeated, and follow up the success of the victors of their party.

The consequences of the encounter were not instantly seen; for the dust raised by the trampling of so many steeds darkened the air, and it was a minute ere the anxious spectators could see the fate of the encounter. When the fight became visible, half the knights on each side were dismounted, some by the dexterity

¹ "Let go! Go!"

of their adversary's lance, some by the superior weight and strength of opponents, which had borne down both horse and man. Some lay stretched on earth, as if never more to rise; some had already gained their feet, and were closing hand to hand with those of their antagonists who were in the same predicament; and several on both sides who had received wounds by which they were disabled, were stopping their blood with their scarfs, and endeavoring to extricate themselves from the tumult. The mounted knights, whose lances had been almost all broken by the fury of the encounter, were now closely engaged with their swords, shouting their war-cries and exchanging buffets as if honor and life depended on the issue of the combat.

The tumult was presently increased by the advance of the second rank on either side, which, acting as a reserve, now rushed on to aid their companions. The followers of Brian de Bois-Guilbert shouted, "*Ha! Beau-seant! Beau-seant!*"¹ For the Temple! For the Temple!" The opposite party shouted in answer, "*Desdichado! Desdichado!*" which watchword they took from the motto upon their leader's shield.

The champions thus encountering each other with the utmost fury, and with alternate success, the tide of battle seemed to flow now towards the southern, now towards the northern, extremity of the lists, as the one or the other party prevailed. Meantime the clang of the blows and the shouts of the combatants mixed fearfully with the sound of the trumpets, and drowned the groans of those who fell and lay rolling defenseless beneath the feet of the horses. The splendid armor of the combatants was now defaced with dust and blood, and gave way at every stroke of the sword and battle-ax. The gay plumage, shorn from the crests, drifted upon the breeze like snowflakes. All that was beautiful and graceful in the martial array had disappeared, and what was now visible was only calculated to awake terror or compassion.

¹ *Beau-seant* was the name of the Templars' banner, half black, half white, to intimate that they were candid and fair towards Christians, but black and terrible towards infidels.

The ladies encouraged the combatants not only by clapping their hands and waving their veils and kerchiefs, but even by exclaiming, "Brave lance! Good sword!" when any successful thrust or blow took place under their observation.

And between every pause was heard the voice of the heralds exclaiming, "Fight on, brave knights! Man dies, but glory lives! Fight on! Death is better than defeat! Fight on, brave knights! for bright eyes behold your deeds!"

Amid the varied fortunes of the combat, the eyes of all endeavored to discover the leaders of each band, who, mingling in the thick of the fight, encouraged their companions both by voice and example. Both displayed great feats of gallantry, nor did either Bois-Guilbert or the Disinherited Knight find in the ranks opposed to them a champion who could be termed their unquestioned match. They repeatedly endeavored to single out each other, spurred by mutual animosity, and aware that the fall of either leader might be considered as decisive of victory. Such, however, was the crowd and confusion, that during the earlier part of the conflict their efforts to meet were unavailing; and they were repeatedly separated by the eagerness of their followers, each of whom was anxious to win honor by measuring his strength against the leader of the opposite party.

But when the field became thin by the numbers on either side who had yielded themselves vanquished, had been compelled to the extremity of the lists, or been otherwise rendered incapable of continuing the strife, the Templar and the Disinherited Knight at length encountered hand to hand with all the fury that mortal animosity, joined to rivalry of honor, could inspire. Such was the address of each in parrying and striking, that the spectators broke forth into a unanimous and involuntary shout expressive of their delight and admiration.

But at this moment the party of the Disinherited Knight had the worst, the gigantic arm of Front-de-Bœuf on the one flank, and the ponderous strength of Athelstane on the other, bearing down and dispersing those immediately exposed to them. Find-

ing themselves freed from their immediate antagonists, it seems to have occurred to both these knights at the same instant that they would render the most decisive advantage to their party by aiding the Templar in his contest with his rival. Turning their horses, therefore, at the same moment, the Norman spurred against the Disinherited Knight on the one side, and the Saxon on the other. It was utterly impossible that the object of this unequal and unexpected assault could have sustained it, had he not been warned by a general cry from the spectators, who could not but take interest in one exposed to such disadvantage.

"Beware, beware, Sir Disinherited!" was shouted so universally, that the knight became aware of his danger, and, striking a full blow at the Templar, he reined back his steed in the same moment, so as to escape the charge of Athelstane and Front-de-Bœuf. These knights, therefore, their aim being thus eluded, rushed from opposite sides betwixt the object of their attack and the Templar, almost running their horses against each other ere they could stop their career. Recovering their horses, however, and wheeling them round, the whole three pursued their united purpose of bearing to the earth the Disinherited Knight.

Nothing could have saved him except the remarkable strength and activity of the noble horse which he had won on the preceding day.

This stood him in the more stead, as the horse of Bois-Guilbert was wounded, and those of Front-de-Bœuf and Athelstane were both tired with the weight of their gigantic masters, clad in complete armor, and with the preceding exertions of the day. The masterly horsemanship of the Disinherited Knight, and the activity of the noble animal which he mounted, enabled him for a few minutes to keep at sword's point his three antagonists, turning and wheeling with the agility of a hawk upon the wing, keeping his enemies as far separate as he could, and rushing now against the one, now against the other, dealing sweeping blows with his sword, without waiting to receive those which were aimed at him in return.

But although the lists rang with the applauses of his dexterity, it was evident that he must at last be overpowered; and the nobles around Prince John implored him with one voice to throw down his warder,¹ and to save so brave a knight from the disgrace of being overcome by odds.

"Not I, by the light of Heaven!" answered Prince John. "This same springal,² who conceals his name and despises our proffered hospitality, has already gained one prize, and may now afford to let others have their turn." As he spoke thus, an unexpected incident changed the fortune of the day.

There was among the ranks of the Disinherited Knight a champion in black armor, mounted on a black horse, large of size, tall, and to all appearance powerful and strong, like the rider by whom he was mounted. This knight, who bore on his shield no device of any kind, had hitherto evinced very little interest in the event of the fight, beating off with seeming ease those combatants who attacked him, but neither pursuing his advantages nor himself assailing any one. In short, he had hitherto acted the part rather of a spectator than of a party in the tournament,—a circumstance which procured him among the spectators the name *Le Noir Faineant*, or the Black Sluggard.

At once this knight seemed to throw aside his apathy when he discovered the leader of his party so hard bested;³ for, setting spurs to his horse, which was quite fresh, he came to his assistance like a thunderbolt, exclaiming in a voice like a trumpet-call, "*Desdichado*, to the rescue!" It was high time, for, while the Disinherited Knight was pressing upon the Templar, Front-de-Bœuf had got nigh to him with his uplifted sword; but ere the blow could descend, the Sable Knight dealt a stroke on his head, which, glancing from the polished helmet, lighted with violence scarcely abated on the chamfron of the steed, and Front-de-Bœuf rolled on the ground, both horse and man equally stunned by the fury of the blow. *Le Noir Faineant* then turned his horse upon

¹ Emblem of authority; truncheon.

² Young man.

³ Placed in peril; beset.

Athelstane of Coningsburgh; and, his own sword having been broken in his encounter with Front-de-Bœuf, he wrenched from the hand of the bulky Saxon the battle-ax which he wielded, and, like one familiar with the use of the weapon, bestowed him such a blow upon the crest that Athelstane also lay senseless on the field. Having achieved this double feat, for which he was the more highly applauded that it was totally unexpected from him, the knight seemed to resume the sluggishness of his character, returning calmly to the northern extremity of the lists, leaving his leader to cope as he best could with Brian de Bois-Guilbert. This was no longer matter of so much difficulty as formerly. The Templar's horse had bled much, and gave way under the shock of the Disinherited Knight's charge. Brian de Bois-Guilbert rolled on the field, encumbered with the stirrup, from which he was unable to draw his foot. His antagonist sprung from horseback, waved his fatal sword over the head of his adversary, and commanded him to yield himself; when Prince John, more moved by the Templar's dangerous situation than he had been by that of his rival, saved him the mortification of confessing himself vanquished by casting down his warder and putting an end to the conflict.

It was, indeed, only the relics and embers of the fight which continued to burn; for of the few knights who still continued in the lists the greater part had, by tacit consent, forborne the conflict for some time, leaving it to be determined by the strife of the leaders.

The squires, who had found it a matter of danger and difficulty to attend their masters during the engagement, now thronged into the lists to pay their dutiful attendance to the wounded, who were removed with the utmost care and attention to the neighboring pavilions, or to the quarters prepared for them in the adjoining village.

Thus ended the memorable field of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, one of the most gallantly contested tournaments of that age; for although only four knights, including one who was smothered by

the heat of his armor, had died upon the field, yet upwards of thirty were desperately wounded, four or five of whom never recovered. Several more were disabled for life; and those who escaped best carried the marks of the conflict to the grave with them.

It being now the duty of Prince John to name the knight who had done best, he determined that the honor of the day remained with the knight whom the popular voice had termed *Le Noir Faineant*. It was pointed out to the prince, in impeachment of this decree, that the victory had been in fact won by the Disinherited Knight, who, in the course of the day, had overcome six champions with his own hand, and who had finally unhorsed and struck down the leader of the opposite party. But Prince John adhered to his own opinion, on the ground that the Disinherited Knight and his party had lost the day but for the powerful assistance of the Knight of the Black Armor, to whom, therefore, he persisted in awarding the prize.

To the surprise of all present, however, the knight thus preferred was nowhere to be found. He had left the lists immediately when the conflict ceased, and had been observed by some spectators to move down one of the forest glades with the same slow pace and listless and indifferent manner which had procured him the epithet of the Black Sluggard. After he had been summoned twice by sound of trumpet and proclamation of the heralds, it became necessary to name another to receive the honors which had been assigned to him. Prince John had now no further excuse for resisting the claim of the Disinherited Knight, whom, therefore, he named the champion of the day.

Through a field slippery with blood, and encumbered with broken armor and the bodies of slain and wounded horses, the marshals of the lists again conducted the victor to the foot of Prince John's throne.

"Disinherited Knight," said Prince John, "since by that title only you will consent to be known to us, we a second time award to you the honors of this tournament, and announce to you your

right to claim and receive from the hands of the Queen of Love and Beauty the chaplet of honor which your valor has justly deserved." The knight bowed low and gracefully, but returned no answer.

While the trumpets sounded, while the heralds strained their voices in proclaiming honor to the brave, and glory to the victor, while ladies waved their silken kerchiefs and embroidered veils, and while all ranks joined in a clamorous shout of exultation, the marshals conducted the Disinherited Knight across the lists to the foot of that throne of honor which was occupied by the Lady Rowena.

On the lower step of this throne the champion was made to kneel down. Indeed, his whole action since the fight had ended seemed rather to have been upon the impulse of those around him than from his own free will; and it was observed that he tottered as they guided him the second time across the lists. Rowena, descending from her station with a graceful and dignified step, was about to place the chaplet which she held in her hand upon the helmet of the champion, when the marshals exclaimed with one voice, "It must not be thus: his head must be bare." The knight muttered faintly a few words, which were lost in the hollow of his helmet, but their purport seemed to be a desire that his casque might not be removed.

Whether from love of form or from curiosity, the marshals paid no attention to his expressions of reluctance, but unhelmeted him by cutting the laces of his casque, and undoing the fastening of his gorget.¹ When the helmet was removed, the well-formed yet sun-burnt features of a young man of twenty-five were seen amidst a profusion of short, fair hair. His countenance was as pale as death, and marked in one or two places with streaks of blood.

Rowena had no sooner beheld him than she uttered a faint shriek; but at once summoning up the energy of her disposition, and compelling herself, as it were, to proceed, while her frame

¹ Armor for protecting the throat.

yet trembled with the violence of sudden emotion, she placed upon the drooping head of the victor the splendid chaplet which was the destined reward of the day, and pronounced in a clear and distinct tone these words: "I bestow on thee this chaplet, Sir Knight, as the meed of valor assigned to this day's victor." Here she paused a moment, and then firmly added, "And upon brows more worthy could a wreath of chivalry never be placed."

The knight stooped his head and kissed the hand of the lovely sovereign by whom his valor had been rewarded, and then, sinking yet farther forward, lay prostrate at her feet.

There was a general consternation. Cedric, who had been struck mute by the sudden appearance of his banished son, now rushed forward, as if to separate him from Rowena; but this had been already accomplished by the marshals of the field, who, guessing the cause of Ivanhoe's swoon, had hastened to undo his armor, and found that the head of a lance had penetrated his breastplate and inflicted a wound in his side.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE name of Ivanhoe was no sooner pronounced than it flew from mouth to mouth with all the celerity with which eagerness could convey and curiosity receive it. It was not long ere it reached the circle of the prince, whose brow darkened as he heard the news. Looking around him, however, with an air of scorn, "My lords," said he, "and especially you, Sir Prior, what think ye of the doctrine the learned tell us concerning innate attractions and antipathies? Methinks that I felt the presence of my brother's minion,¹ even when I least guessed whom yonder suit of armor inclosed."

"Front-de-Bœuf must prepare to restore his fief² of Ivanhoe,"

¹ A person held in favor or esteem.

² Land held from a lord by feudal tenure (see Note 3, p. 2).

said De Bracy, who, having discharged his part honorably in the tournament, had laid his shield and helmet aside, and again mingled with the prince's retinue.

"Ay," answered Waldemar Fitzurse, "this gallant is likely to reclaim the castle and manor¹ which Richard assigned to him, and which your Highness's generosity has since given to Front-de-Bœuf."

"Front-de-Bœuf," replied John, "is a man more willing to swallow three manors such as Ivanhoe than to disgorge one of them. For the rest, sirs, I hope none here will deny my right to confer the fiefs of the Crown upon the faithful followers who are around me, and ready to perform the usual military service,² in the room of those who have wandered to foreign countries, and can neither render homage nor service when called upon."

The audience were too much interested in the question not to pronounce the prince's assumed right altogether indubitable. "A generous prince, a most noble lord, who thus takes upon himself the task of rewarding his faithful followers!"

Such were the words which burst from the train,—expectants, all of them, of similar grants at the expense of King Richard's followers and favorites, if indeed they had not as yet received such.

Waldemar, whose curiosity had led him towards the place where Ivanhoe had fallen to the ground, now returned. "The gallant," said he, "is likely to give your Highness little disturbance, and to leave Front-de-Bœuf in the quiet possession of his gains. He is severely wounded."

"Whatever becomes of him," said Prince John, "he is victor of the day; and were he tenfold our enemy, or the devoted friend of our brother, which is perhaps the same, his wounds must be looked to. Our own physician shall attend him."

A stern smile curled the prince's lip as he spoke. Waldemar

¹ Land about the castle.

² "Usual military service" refers to one of the conditions on which fiefs were held in accordance with the feudal system.

Fitzurse hastened to reply that Ivanhoe was already removed from the lists, and in the custody of his friends.

"I was somewhat afflicted," he said, "to see the grief of the Queen of Love and Beauty, whose sovereignty of a day this event has changed into mourning. I am not a man to be moved by a woman's lament for her lover; but this same Lady Rowena suppressed her sorrow with such dignity of manner that it could only be discovered by her folded hands and her tearless eye, which trembled as it remained fixed on the lifeless form before her."

"Who is this Lady Rowena," said Prince John, "of whom we have heard so much?"

"A Saxon heiress of large possessions," replied the Prior Aymer, "a rose of loveliness and a jewel of wealth, the fairest among a thousand, a bundle of myrrh and a cluster of camphire."

"We shall cheer her sorrows," said Prince John, "and wed her to a Norman. She seems a minor, and must therefore be at our royal disposal in marriage.—How sayst thou, De Bracy? What thinkst thou of gaining fair lands and livings by wedding a Saxon, after the fashion of the followers of the Conqueror?"

"If the lands are to my liking, my lord," answered De Bracy, "it will be hard to displease me with a bride; and deeply will I hold myself bound to your Highness for a good deed, which will fulfill all promises made in favor of your servant and vassal."

"We will not forget it," said Prince John: "and that we may instantly go to work, command our seneschal presently to order the attendance of the Lady Rowena and her company; that is, the rude churl her guardian, and the Saxon ox whom the Black Knight struck down in the tournament upon this evening's banquet.—De Bigot," he added to his seneschal, "thou wilt word this our second summons so courteously as to gratify the pride of these Saxons, and make it impossible for them again to refuse; although, by the bones of Becket,¹ courtesy to them is casting pearls before swine."

¹ Sir Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, a celebrated English prelate, born in London about 1117; assassinated at Canterbury Cathedral

Prince John had proceeded thus far, and was about to give the signal for retiring from the lists, when a small billet was put into his hand.

"From whence?" said Prince John, looking at the person by whom it was delivered.

"From foreign parts, my lord, but from whence I know not," replied his attendant. "A Frenchman brought it hither, who said he had ridden night and day to put it into the hands of your Highness."

The prince looked narrowly at the superscription, and then at the seal, placed so as to secure the floss-silk¹ with which the billet was surrounded, and which bore the impression of three fleurs-de-lis.² John then opened the billet with apparent agitation, which visibly and greatly increased when he had perused the contents, which were expressed in these words:—

*"Take heed to yourself, for the Devil is unchained!"*³

The prince turned as pale as death, looked first on the earth and then to heaven, like a man who has received news that sentence of execution has been passed upon him. Recovering from the first effects of his surprise, he took Waldemar Fitzurse and De Bracy aside, and put the billet into their hands successively. "It means," he added in a faltering voice, "that my brother Richard has obtained his freedom."

"This may be a false alarm or a forged letter," said De Bracy.

Dec. 29, 1170, by four knights, who, acting on a hasty exclamation of Henry II. against the archbishop, thought they were doing him a service by ridding him of his troublesome archbishop. Henry, horror-stricken at the act, declared himself guiltless of complicity in it. Becket was canonized as St. Thomas of Canterbury in 1173, and for three centuries his shrine was a pilgrimage for Englishmen (see Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*).

¹ Floss silk; untwisted silk.

² Lilies; the royal arms of France.

³ The author brings in at this place, dramatically (though not historically), the communication which Philip of France wrote John when he heard that Richard's ransom had been fixed (see Introduction, p. vii.).

"It is France's¹ own hand and seal," replied Prince John.

"It is time, then," said Fitzurse, "to draw our party to a head, either at York or some other central place. A few days later, and it will be indeed too late. Your Highness must break short this present mummery."²

"The yeomen and commons," said De Bracy, "must not be dismissed discontented for lack of their share in the sports."

"The day," said Waldemar, "is not yet very far spent. Let the archers shoot a few rounds at the target, and the prize be adjudged. This will be an abundant fulfillment of the prince's promises, so far as this herd of Saxon serfs is concerned."

"I thank thee, Waldemar," said the prince; "thou remindest me, too, that I have a debt to pay to that insolent peasant who yesterday insulted our person. Our banquet also shall go forward to-night as we proposed. Were this my last hour of power, it should be an hour sacred to revenge and to pleasure. Let new cares come with to-morrow's new day."

The sound of the trumpets soon recalled those spectators who had already begun to leave the field; and proclamation was made that Prince John, suddenly called by high and peremptory public duties, held himself obliged to discontinue the entertainments of to-morrow's festival; nevertheless, that, unwilling so many good yeomen should depart without a trial of skill, he was pleased to appoint them, before leaving the ground, presently to execute the competition of archery intended for the morrow. To the best archer a prize was to be awarded, being a bugle-horn mounted with silver, and a silken baldric richly ornamented with a medallion of St. Hubert,³ the patron of silvan sport.

¹ Philip of France.

² Empty sport.

³ Son of Bertrand, Duke of Guienne, a great sportsman, and, according to story, converted by a stag which carried between its antlers a gleaming cross. The stag, so goes the story, spoke to him, and besought him to turn from his merry life to the service of the Church. Hubert did so immediately, and later became Bishop of Lüttich, in 708. He died in 727. St. Hubert's Day, the 3d of November, marked the close of the hunting season.

More than thirty yeomen at first presented themselves as competitors, several of whom were rangers and under-keepers in the royal forests of Needwood and Charnwood. When, however, the archers understood with whom they were to be matched, upwards of twenty withdrew themselves from the contest, unwilling to encounter the dishonor of almost certain defeat; for in those days the skill of each celebrated marksman was as well known for many miles round him as the qualities of a horse trained at Newmarket¹ are familiar to those who frequent that well-known meeting.

The diminished list of competitors for silvan fame still amounted to eight. Prince John stepped from his royal seat to view more nearly the persons of these chosen yeomen, several of whom wore the royal livery. Having satisfied his curiosity by this investigation, he looked for the object of his resentment, whom he observed standing on the same spot, and with the same composed countenance which he had exhibited upon the preceding day.

"Fellow," said Prince John, "I guessed by thy insolent babble thou wert no true lover of the longbow,² and I see thou dardest not adventure thy skill among such merry men as stand yonder."

"Under favor, sir," replied the yeoman, "I have another reason for refraining to shoot besides the fearing discomfiture and disgrace."

"And what is thy other reason?" said Prince John, who, for some cause which perhaps he could not himself have explained, felt a painful curiosity respecting this individual.

"Because," replied the woodsman, "I know not if these yeomen and I are used to shoot at the same marks; and because, moreover, I know not how your Grace might relish the winning

¹ A town of England, in the counties of Suffolk and Cambridge, about thirteen miles east-northeast of Cambridge. The famous Newmarket races are held there.

² A bow about the height of a man; longbow in contradistinction to cross-bow.

of a third prize by one who has unwittingly fallen under your displeasure."

Prince John colored as he put the question, "What is thy name, yeoman?"

"Locksley," answered the yeoman.

"Then, Locksley," said Prince John, "thou shalt shoot in thy turn, when these yeomen have displayed their skill. If thou carriest the prize, I will add to it twenty nobles;¹ but if thou lovest it, thou shalt be stripped of thy Lincoln green, and scourged out of the lists with bowstrings, for a wordy and insolent braggart."

"And how if I refuse to shoot on such a wager?" said the yeoman. "Your Grace's power, supported as it is by so many men-at-arms, may indeed easily strip and scourge me, but cannot compel me to bend or to draw my bow."

"If thou refuseth my fair proffer," said the prince, "the provost of the lists shall cut thy bowstring, break thy bow and arrows, and expel thee from the presence as a faint-hearted craven."

"This is no fair chance you put on me, proud prince," said the yeoman, "to compel me to peril myself against the best archers of Leicester and Staffordshire, under the penalty of infamy if they should overshoot me. Nevertheless, I will obey your pleasure."

"Look to him close, men-at-arms," said Prince John. "His heart is sinking. I am jealous lest he attempt to escape the trial. — And do you, good fellows, shoot boldly round. A buck and a butt of wine are ready for your refreshment in yonder tent when the prize is won."

A target was placed at the upper end of the southern avenue which led to the lists. The contending archers took their station in turn at the bottom of the southern access, the distance between that station and the mark allowing full distance for what was called a "shot at rovers."² The archers, having previously determined by lot their order of precedence, were to shoot each

¹ A noble is a gold coin worth about \$1.61.

² A kind of rising shot at random.

three shafts in succession. The sports were regulated by an officer of inferior rank, termed the "provost of the games;" for the high rank of the marshals of the lists would have been held degraded had they condescended to superintend the sports of the yeomanry.

One by one the archers, stepping forward, delivered their shafts yeomanlike and bravely. Of the twenty-four arrows, shot in succession, ten were fixed in the target, and the others ranged so near it, that, considering the distance of the mark, it was accounted good archery. Of the ten shafts which hit the target, two within the inner ring were shot by Hubert, a forester in the service of Malvoisin, who was accordingly pronounced victorious.

"Now, Locksley," said Prince John to the bold yeoman with a bitter smile, "wilt thou try conclusions with Hubert, or wilt thou yield up bow, baldrick, and quiver to the provost of the sports?"

"Sith¹ it be no better," said Locksley, "I am content to try my fortune, on condition, that, when I have shot two shafts at yonder mark of Hubert's, he shall be bound to shoot one at that which I shall propose."

"That is but fair," answered Prince John, "and it shall not be refused thee. — If thou dost beat this braggart, Hubert, I will fill the bugle with silver pennies for thee."

"A man can do but his best," answered Hubert; "but my grandsire drew a good longbow at Hastings, and I trust not to dishonor his memory."

The former target was now removed, and a fresh one of the same size placed in its room. Hubert, who, as victor in the first trial of skill, had the right to shoot first, took his aim with great deliberation, long measuring the distance with his eye, while he held in his hand his bended bow, with the arrow placed on the string. At length he made a step forward, and raising the bow at the full stretch of his left arm, till the center or grasping-place was nigh level with his face, he drew his bowstring to his ear.

¹ Since.

The arrow whistled through the air, and lighted within the inner ring of the target, but not exactly in the center.

"You have not allowed for the wind, Hubert," said his antagonist, bending his bow, "or that had been a better shot."

So saying, and without showing the least anxiety to pause upon his aim, Locksley stepped to the appointed station, and shot his arrow as carelessly in appearance as if he had not even looked at the mark. He was speaking almost at the instant that the shaft left the bowstring, yet it alighted in the target two inches nearer to the white spot which marked the center than that of Hubert.

"By the light of Heaven!" said Prince John to Hubert, "an thou suffer that runagate¹ knave to overcome thee, thou art worthy of the gallows!"

Hubert had but one set speech for all occasions. "An your Highness were to hang me," he said, "a man can but do his best. Nevertheless, my grandsire drew a good bow" —

"The foul fiend on thy grandsire and all his generation!" interrupted John. "Shoot, knave, and shoot thy best, or it shall be the worse for thee!"

Thus exhorted, Hubert resumed his place, and, not neglecting the caution which he had received from his adversary, he made the necessary allowance for a very light air of wind which had just arisen, and shot so successfully that his arrow alighted in the very center of the target.

"A Hubert, a Hubert!" shouted the populace, more interested in a known person than in a stranger. "In the clout,² in the clout! A Hubert forever!"

"Thou canst not mend that shot, Locksley," said the prince with an insulting smile.

"I will notch his shaft for him, however," replied Locksley.

And letting fly his arrow with a little more precaution than before, it lighted right upon that of his competitor, which it split to shivers. The people who stood around were so astonished at his wonderful dexterity that they could not even give vent to

¹ Renegade; a wanderer.

² The center mark of a target.

Hastings. Had his modesty not refused the trial, he would have hit the wand as well as I."

Hubert shook his head as he received with reluctance the bounty of the stranger; and Locksley, anxious to escape further observation, mixed with the crowd, and was seen no more.

The victorious archer would not, perhaps, have escaped John's attention so easily, had not that prince had other subjects of anxious and more important meditation pressing upon his mind at that instant. He called upon his chamberlain as he gave the signal for retiring from the lists, and commanded him instantly to gallop to Ashby and seek out Isaac the Jew. "Tell the dog," he said, "to send me before sundown two thousand crowns. He knows the security, but thou mayest show him this ring for a token. The rest of the money must be paid at York within six days. If he neglects, I will have the unbelieving villain's head. Look that thou pass him not on the way, for the slave was displaying his stolen finery amongst us."

So saying, the prince resumed his horse, and returned to Ashby, the whole crowd breaking up and dispersing upon his retreat.

CHAPTER XIV.

PRINCE JOHN held his high festival in the Castle of Ashby. The castle and town of Ashby at this time belonged to Roger de Quincy, Earl of Winchester, who during the period of our history was absent in the Holy Land. Prince John in the mean while occupied his castle, and disposed of his domains without scruple, and, seeking at present to dazzle men's eyes by his hospitality and magnificence, had given orders for great preparations, in order to render the banquet as splendid as possible.

The purveyors¹ of the prince, who exercised on this and other

¹ Those having in charge the providing of food.

occasions the full authority of royalty, had swept the country of all that could be collected which was esteemed fit for their master's table. Guests also were invited in great numbers; and, in the necessity in which he then found himself of courting popularity, Prince John had extended his invitation to a few distinguished Saxon and Danish families, as well as to the Norman nobility and gentry of the neighborhood.

It was the prince's intention, which he for some time maintained, to treat these unwonted guests with a courtesy to which they had been little accustomed; but, although no man with less scruple made his ordinary habits and feelings bend to his interest, it was the misfortune of this prince that his levity and petulance were perpetually breaking out, and undoing all that had been gained by his previous dissimulation.

In execution of the resolution which he had formed during his cooler moments, Prince John received Cedric and Athelstane with distinguished courtesy, and expressed his disappointment, without resentment, when the indisposition of Rowena was alleged by the former as a reason for her not attending upon his gracious summons. Cedric and Athelstane were both dressed in the ancient Saxon garb, which, although not unhandsome in itself, and in the present instance composed of costly materials, was so remote in shape and appearance from that of the other guests that Prince John took great credit to himself with Waldemar Fitzurse for refraining from laughter at a sight which the fashion of the day rendered ridiculous. Yet in the eye of sober judgment the short, close tunic and long mantle of the Saxons was a more graceful as well as a more convenient dress than the garb of the Normans, whose undergarment was a long doublet, so loose as to resemble a shirt or wagoner's frock, covered by a cloak of scanty dimensions, neither fit to defend the wearer from cold nor from rain, and the only purpose of which appeared to be to display as much fur, embroidery, and jewelry work as the ingenuity of the tailor could contrive to lay upon it.

Nevertheless, the short cloaks continued in fashion down to