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 purveyors[1] 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

the time of which we treat, and particularly among the princes of the House of Anjou. They were therefore in universal use among Prince John's courtiers, and the long mantle which formed the upper garment of the Saxons was held in proportional derision.

The guests were seated at a table which groaned under the quantity of good cheer. The numerous cooks who attended on the prince's progress, having exerted all their art in varying the forms in which the ordinary provisions were served up, had succeeded almost as well as the modern professors of the culinary art in rendering them perfectly unlike their natural appearance. Besides these dishes of domestic origin, there were various delicacies brought from foreign parts, and a quantity of rich pastry, as well as of the simnel bread[1] and wastel cakes,[2] which were only used at the tables of the highest nobility. The banquet was crowned with the richest wines, both foreign and domestic.

With sly gravity, interrupted only by private signs to each other, the Norman knights and nobles beheld the ruder demeanor of Athelstane and Cedric at a banquet to the form and fashion of which they were unaccustomed; and, while their manners were thus the subject of sarcastic observation, the untaught Saxons unwittingly transgressed several of the arbitrary rules established for the regulation of society.

Thus Cedric, who dried his hands with a towel, instead of suffering the moisture to exhale by waving them gracefully in the air, incurred more ridicule than his companion Athelstane when he swallowed to his own single share the whole of a large pasty[3] composed of the most exquisite foreign delicacies, and termed at that time a "Karum-pie." When, however, it was discovered by a serious cross-examination that the thane of Coningsburgh (or franklin, as the Normans termed him) had no idea what he had been devouring, and that he had taken the contents of the Karum-pie for larks and pigeons, whereas they were in fact bec-

[1] Fine wheat-flour bread. [2] Fine white cakes.

[3] A sort of meat pie.

caficoes[1] and nightingales, his ignorance brought him in for an ample share of ridicule.

The long feast had at length its end; and, while the goblet circulated freely, men talked of the feats of the preceding tournament,—of the unknown victor in the archery games, of the Black Knight whose self-denial had induced him to withdraw from the honors he had won, and of the gallant Ivanhoe who had so dearly bought the honors of the day. The topics were treated with military frankness, and the jest and laugh went round the hall. The brow of Prince John alone was overclouded during these discussions. Some overpowering care seemed agitating his mind, and it was only when he received occasional hints from his attendants that he seemed to take interest in what was passing around him. On such occasions he would start up, quaff a cup of wine as if to raise his spirits, and then mingle in the conversation by some observation made abruptly or at random.

"We drink this beaker," said he, "to the health of Wilfred of Ivanhoe, champion of this passage of arms, and grieve that his wound renders him absent from our board. Let all fill to the pledge, and especially Cedric of Rotherwood, the worthy father of a son so promising."

"No, my lord," replied Cedric, standing up, and placing on the table his untasted cup, "I yield not the name of son to the disobedient youth who at once despises my commands and relinquishes the manners and customs of his fathers."

"'Tis impossible," cried Prince John with well-feigned astonishment, "that so gallant a knight should be an unworthy or disobedient son!"

"Yet, my lord," answered Cedric, "so it is with this Wilfred. He left my homely dwelling to mingle with the gay nobility of your brother's court, where he learned to do those tricks of horsemanship which you prize so highly. He left it contrary to my wish and command; and in the days of Alfred that would have been termed disobedience, ay, and a crime severely punishable."

[1] Small birds, highly prized as delicacies.

"Alas!" replied Prince John with a deep sigh of affected sympathy, "since your son was a follower of my unhappy brother, it need not be inquired where or from whom he learned the lesson of filial disobedience."

Thus spake Prince John, willfully forgetting that of all the sons of Henry II., though no one was free from the charge, he himself had been most distinguished for rebellion and ingratitude to his father.

"I think," said he after a moment's pause, "that my brother proposed to confer upon his favorite the rich manor of Ivanhoe."

"He did endow him with it," answered Cedric; "nor is it my least quarrel with my son, that he stooped to hold as a feudal vassal the very domains which his fathers possessed in free and independent right."

"We shall then have your willing sanction, good Cedric," said Prince John, "to confer this fief upon a person whose dignity will not be diminished by holding land of the British Crown.—Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf," he said, turning towards that baron, "I trust you will so keep the goodly barony of Ivanhoe that Sir Wilfred shall not incur his father's displeasure by again entering upon that fief."

"By St. Anthony!" answered the black-browed giant, "I will consent that your Highness shall hold me a Saxon, if either Cedric or Wilfred, or the best that ever bore English blood, shall wrench from me the gift with which your Highness has graced me."

"Whoever shall call thee Saxon, Sir Baron," replied Cedric, offended at a mode of expression by which the Normans frequently expressed their habitual contempt of the English, "will do thee an honor as great as it is undeserved."

Front-de-Bœuf would have replied, but Prince John's petulance and levity got the start.

"Assuredly," said he, "my lords, the noble Cedric speaks truth; and his race may claim precedence over us as much in the length of their pedigrees as in the longitude of their cloaks."

"They go before us indeed in the field, as deer before dogs," said Malvoisin.

"And with good right may they go before us. Forget not," said Prior Aymer, "the superior decency and decorum of their manners."

"Their singular abstemiousness and temperance," said De Bracy, forgetting the plan which promised him a Saxon bride.

"Together with the courage and conduct," said Brian de Bois-Guilbert, "by which they distinguished themselves at Hastings and elsewhere."

While, with smooth and smiling cheek, the courtiers each in turn followed their prince's example and aimed a shaft of ridicule at Cedric, the face of the Saxon became inflamed with passion, and he glanced his eyes fiercely from one to another, as if the quick succession of so many injuries had prevented his replying to them in turn, or like a baited bull, who, surrounded by his tormentors, is at a loss to choose from among them the immediate object of his revenge. At length he spoke in a voice half choked with passion; and, addressing himself to Prince John as the head and front of the offense which he had received, "Whatever," he said, "have been the follies of our race, a Saxon would have been held *nidering*"[1]—the most emphatic term for abject worthlessness—"who should in his own hall, and while his own wine-cup passed, have treated or suffered to be treated an unoffending guest as your Highness has this day beheld me used; and whatever was the misfortune of our fathers on the field of Hastings, those may at least be silent"—here he looked at Front-de-Bœuf and the Templar—"who have within these few hours once and again lost saddle and stirrup before the lance of a Saxon."

"By my faith, a biting jest!" said Prince John. "How like you it, sirs? Our Saxon subjects rise in spirit and courage, be-

[1] There was nothing so ignominious among the Saxons as to merit this disgraceful epithet. William the Conqueror, hated as he was by them, continued to draw a considerable army of Anglo-Saxons to his standard by threatening to stigmatize those who staid at home as *nidering*.

come shrewd in wit and bold in bearing in these unsettled times. What say ye, my lords? By this good light, I hold it best to take our galleys,[1] and return to Normandy in time."

"For fear of the Saxons!" said De Bracy, laughing, "we should need no weapons but our hunting spears to bring these boars to bay."

"A truce with your raillery, Sir Knights," said Fitzurse. — "And it were well," he added, addressing the prince, "that your Highness should assure the worthy Cedric there is no insult intended him by jests which must sound but harshly in the ear of a stranger."

"Insult!" answered Prince John, resuming his courtesy of demeanor; "I trust it will not be thought that I could mean or permit any to be offered in my presence. Here! I fill my cup to Cedric himself, since he refuses to pledge his son's health."

The cup went round amid the well-dissembled applause of the courtiers, which, however, failed to make the impression on the mind of the Saxon that had been designed. He was not naturally acute of perception, but those too much undervalued his understanding who deemed that this flattering compliment would obliterate the sense of the prior insult. He was silent, however, when the royal pledge again passed round, "To Sir Athelstane of Coningsburgh."

The knight made his obeisance, and showed his sense of the honor by draining a huge goblet in answer to it.

"And now, sirs," said Prince John, who began to be warmed with the wine which he had drunk, "having done justice to our Saxon guests, we will pray of them some requital to our courtesy. — Worthy thane," he continued, addressing Cedric, "may we pray you to name to us some Norman whose mention may least sully your mouth, and to wash down with a goblet of wine all bitterness which the sound may leave behind it?"

Fitzurse arose while Prince John spoke, and, gliding behind the seat of the Saxon, whispered to him not to omit the opportunity

[1] Ships.

of putting an end to unkindness betwixt the two races by naming Prince John. The Saxon replied not to this politic insinuation, but rising up, and filling his cup to the brim, he addressed Prince John in these words: "Your Highness has required that I should name a Norman deserving to be remembered at our banquet. This, perchance, is a hard task, since it calls on the slave to sing the praises of the master; upon the vanquished, while pressed by all the evils of conquest, to sing the praises of the conqueror. Yet I *will* name a Norman, the first in arms and in place, the best and the noblest of his race; and the lips that shall refuse to pledge me to his well-earned fame I term false and dishonored, and will so maintain them with my life. I quaff this goblet to the health of Richard the Lion-hearted."

Prince John, who had expected that his own name would have closed the Saxon's speech, started when that of his injured brother was so unexpectedly introduced. He raised mechanically the wine-cup to his lips, then instantly set it down, to view the demeanor of the company at this unexpected proposal, which many of them felt it as unsafe to oppose as to comply with. Some of them, ancient and experienced courtiers, closely imitated the example of the prince himself, raising the goblet to their lips, and again replacing it before them. There were many who, with a more generous feeling, exclaimed, "Long live King Richard, and may he be speedily restored to us!" and some few, among whom were Front-de-Bœuf and the Templar, in sullen disdain suffered their goblets to stand untasted before them; but no man ventured directly to gainsay a pledge filled to the health of the reigning monarch.

Having enjoyed his triumph for about a minute, Cedric said to his companion, "Up, noble Athelstane! we have remained here long enough, since we have requited the hospitable courtesy of Prince John's banquet. Those who wish to know further of our rude Saxon manners must henceforth seek us in the homes of our fathers, since we have seen enough of royal banquets and enough of Norman courtesy."

So saying, he arose and left the banqueting-room, followed by Athelstane and by several other guests, who, partaking of the Saxon lineage, held themselves insulted by the sarcasms of Prince John and his courtiers.

"By the bones of St. Thomas!" said Prince John as they retreated, "the Saxon churls have borne off the best of the day, and have retreated with triumph."

"*Conclamatum est, poculatum est*," said Prior Aymer; "we have drunk and we have shouted: it were time we left our wine-flagons."

"The monk is in a hurry to depart," said De Bracy.

"Even so, Sir Knight," replied the abbot; "for I must move several miles forward this evening upon my homeward journey."

"They are breaking up," said the prince in a whisper to Fitzurse. "Their fears anticipate the event, and this coward prior is the first to shrink from me."

"Fear not, my lord," said Waldemar. "I will show him such reasons as shall induce him to join us when we hold our meeting at York. — Sir Prior," he said, "I must speak with you in private before you mount your palfrey."

The other guests were now fast dispersing, with the exception of those immediately attached to Prince John's faction, and his retinue.

"This, then, is the result of your advice," said the prince, turning an angry countenance upon Fitzurse: "that I should be bearded at my own board by a drunken Saxon churl, and that, on the mere sound of my brother's name, men should fall off from me as if I had the leprosy!"

"Have patience, sir," replied his counselor. "I might retort your accusation, and blame the inconsiderate levity which foiled my design and misled your own better judgment; but this is no time for recrimination. De Bracy and I will instantly go among these shuffling cowards, and convince them they have gone too far to recede."

"It will be in vain," said Prince John, pacing the apartment

with disordered steps, and expressing himself with an agitation to which the wine he had drunk partly contributed. "It will be in vain. They have seen the handwriting on the wall; they have marked the paw of the lion in the sand, they have heard his approaching roar shake the wood; nothing will reanimate their courage."

"Would to God," said Fitzurse to De Bracy, "that aught could reanimate his own! His brother's very name is an ague to him. Unhappy are the counselors of a prince who wants fortitude and perseverance alike in good and in evil."

CHAPTER XV.

NO spider ever took more pains to repair the shattered meshes of his web than did Waldemar Fitzurse to reunite and combine the scattered members of Prince John's cabal.[1]

Arguments adapted to the peculiar circumstances of those whom he addressed had weight with the nobles of Prince John's faction. Most of them consented to attend the proposed meeting at York, for the purpose of making general arrangements for placing the crown upon the head of Prince John.

It was late at night when, worn out and exhausted with his various exertions, however gratified with the result, Fitzurse, returning to the Castle of Ashby, met with De Bracy, who had exchanged his banqueting garments for a short green kirtle, with hose of the same cloth and color, a leathern cap or headpiece, a short sword, a horn slung over his shoulder, a longbow in his hand, and a bundle of arrows stuck in his belt. Had Fitzurse met this figure in an outer apartment, he would have passed him without notice, as one of the yeomen of the guard; but, finding him in the inner hall, he looked at him with more attention, and recognized the Norman knight in the dress of an English yeoman.

[1] Faction.

"What mummery is this, De Bracy?" said Fitzurse somewhat angrily. "Is this a time for Christmas gambols and quaint maskings, when the fate of our master, Prince John, is on the very verge of decision? Why hast thou not been, like me, among these heartless cravens, whom the very name of King Richard terrifies, as it is said to do the children of the Saracens?"

"I have been attending to mine own business," answered De Bracy calmly, "as you, Fitzurse, have been minding yours."

"I minding mine own business!" echoed Waldemar. "I have been engaged in that of Prince John, our joint patron."

"As if thou hadst any other reason for that, Waldemar," said De Bracy, "than the promotion of thine own individual interest! Come, Fitzurse, we know each other. Ambition is thy pursuit, pleasure is mine, and they become our different ages. Of Prince John thou thinkest as I do, — that he is too weak to be a determined monarch, too tyrannical to be an easy monarch, too insolent and presumptuous to be a popular monarch, and too fickle and timid to be long a monarch of any kind. But he is a monarch by whom Fitzurse and De Bracy hope to rise and thrive; and therefore you aid him with your policy, and I with the lances of my Free Companions."

"A hopeful auxiliary," said Fitzurse impatiently; "playing the fool in the very moment of utter necessity. What on earth dost thou purpose by this absurd disguise at a moment so urgent?"

"To get me a wife," answered De Bracy coolly. "I mean to purvey me a wife. I will carry off the lovely Rowena."

"Art thou mad, De Bracy?" said Fitzurse. "Bethink thee, that, though the men be Saxons, they are rich and powerful, and regarded with the more respect by their countrymen that wealth and honor are but the lot of few of Saxon descent."

"And should belong to none," said De Bracy. "The work of the Conquest should be completed."

"This is no time for it," said Fitzurse. "The approaching crisis renders the favor of the multitude indispensable, and Prince John cannot refuse justice to any one who injures their favorites."

"Let him grant it if he dare," said De Bracy. "He will soon see the difference betwixt the support of such a lusty lot of spears as mine and that of a heartless mob of Saxon churls. Yet I mean no immediate discovery of myself. Seem I not in this garb as bold a forester as ever blew horn? The blame of the violence shall rest with the outlaws of the Yorkshire forests. I have sure spies on the Saxons' motions. To-night they sleep in the convent of St. Wittol, or Withold, or whatever they call that churl of a Saxon saint at Burton-on-Trent.[1] Next day's march brings them within our reach, and, falcon-ways,[2] we swoop on them at once. Presently after I will appear in mine own shape, play the courteous knight, rescue the unfortunate and afflicted fair one, conduct her to Front-de-Bœuf's castle, or to Normandy if it should be necessary, and produce her not again to her kindred until she be the bride and dame of Maurice de Bracy."

"A marvelously sage plan," said Fitzurse, "and, as I think, not entirely of thine own device. Come, be frank, De Bracy, who aided thee in the invention, and who is to assist in the execution? for, as I think, thine own band lies as far off as York."

"Marry, if thou must needs know," said De Bracy, "it was the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert that shaped out the enterprise. He is to aid me in the onslaught, and he and his followers will personate the outlaws from whom my valorous arm is, after changing my garb, to rescue the lady."

"By my halidom," said Fitzurse, "the plan was worthy of your united wisdom! And thy prudence, De Bracy, is most especially manifested in the project of leaving the lady in the hands of thy worthy confederate. Thou mayst, I think, succeed in taking her from her Saxon friends, but how thou wilt rescue her afterwards from the clutches of Bois-Guilbert seems considerably more doubtful. He is a falcon well accustomed to pounce on a partridge, and to hold his prey fast."

[1] A town on the Trent River, in the counties of Stafford and Derby.

[2] Like the swift flight of a falcon.

"He is a Templar," said De Bracy, "and cannot therefore rival me in my plan of wedding this heiress."

"Then, since naught that I can say," said Fitzurse, "will put this folly from thy imagination (for well I know the obstinacy of thy disposition), at least waste as little time as possible: let not thy folly be lasting as well as untimely."

"I tell thee," answered De Bracy, "that it will be the work of a few hours; and I shall be at York, at the head of my daring and valorous fellows, as ready to support any bold design as thy policy can be to form one. But I hear my comrades assembling, and the steeds stamping and neighing in the outer court. Farewell! I go, like a true knight, to win the smiles of beauty."

"Like a true knight!" repeated Fitzurse, looking after him: "like a fool, I should say, or like a child, who will leave the most serious and needful occupation to chase the down of the thistle that drives past him. But it is with such tools that I must work; and for whose advantage? For that of a prince as likely to be an ungrateful master as he has already proved a rebellious son and an unnatural brother. But he—he, too, is but one of the tools with which I labor; and, proud as he is, should he presume to separate his interest from mine, this is a secret which he shall soon learn."

The meditations of the statesman were here interrupted by the voice of the prince from an interior apartment, calling out, "Noble Waldemar Fitzurse!" and, with bonnet doffed, the future chancellor (for to such high preferment did the wily Norman aspire) hastened to receive the orders of the future sovereign.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE reader cannot have forgotten that the event of the tournament was decided by the exertions of an unknown knight, *Le Noir Faineant.* This knight had left the field abruptly when the victory was achieved, and, when he was called upon

to receive the reward of his valor, he was nowhere to be found. In the mean time, while summoned by heralds and by trumpets, the knight was holding his course northward, avoiding all frequented paths, and taking the shortest road through the woodlands. He paused for the night at a small hostelry[1] lying out of the ordinary route, where, however, he obtained from a wandering minstrel news of the event of the tourney.

On the next morning the knight departed early, with the intention of making a long journey; the condition of his horse, which he had carefully spared during the preceding morning, being such as enabled him to travel far without the necessity of much repose. Yet his purpose was baffled by the devious paths through which he rode, so that when evening closed upon him he only found himself on the frontiers of the West Riding of Yorkshire. By this time both horse and man required refreshment; and it became necessary, moreover, to look out for some place in which they might spend the night, which was now fast approaching.

The place where the traveler found himself seemed unpropitious for obtaining either shelter or refreshment; and he felt dissatisfied, therefore, when, looking around, he found himself deeply involved in woods, through which indeed there were many open glades and some paths, but such as seemed only formed by the numerous herds of cattle which grazed in the forest, or by the animals of chase and the hunters who made prey of them.

The sun, by which the knight had chiefly directed his course, had now sunk behind the Derbyshire[2] hills on his left, and every effort which he might take to pursue his journey was as likely to lead him out of his road as to advance him on his route. After having in vain endeavored to select the most beaten path, in hopes it might lead to the cottage of some herdsman or the silvan lodge of a forester, and having repeatedly found himself totally unable to determine on a choice, the knight resolved to trust to the sagacity of his horse, experience having on former occa-

[1] Inn.

[2] A county of north central England.

sions made him acquainted with the wonderful talent possessed by these animals for extricating themselves and their riders on such emergencies.

The good steed, grievously fatigued with so long a day's journey under a rider cased in mail, had no sooner found by the slackened reins that he was abandoned to his own guidance than he seemed to assume new strength and spirit; and whereas formerly he had scarce replied to the spur otherwise than by a groan, he now, as if proud of the confidence reposed in him, pricked up his ears, and assumed of his own accord a more lively motion. The path which the animal adopted turned off from the course pursued by the knight during the day; but, as the horse seemed confident in his choice, the rider abandoned himself to his discretion.

He was justified by the event, for the footpath soon after appeared a little wider and more worn, and the tinkle of a small bell gave the knight to understand that he was in the vicinity of some chapel or hermitage.

Accordingly, he soon reached an open plat of turf, on the opposite side of which a rock, rising abruptly from a gently sloping plain, offered its gray and weather-beaten front to the traveler. Ivy mantled its sides in some places; and in others oaks and holly-bushes, whose roots found nourishment in the cliffs of the crag, waved over the precipices below, like the plumage of the warrior over his steel helmet, giving grace to that whose chief expression was terror. At the bottom of the rock, and leaning, as it were, against it, was constructed a rude hut, built chiefly of the trunks of trees felled in the neighboring forest, and secured against the weather by having its crevices stuffed with moss mingled with clay. The stem of a young fir-tree lopped of its branches, with a piece of wood tied across near the top, was planted upright by the door as a rude emblem of the holy cross. At a little distance on the right hand a fountain of the purest water trickled out of the rock, and was received in a hollow stone which labor had formed into a rustic basin. Escaping from

thence, the stream murmured down the descent by a channel which its course had long worn, and so wandered through the little plain to lose itself in the neighboring wood.

Beside this fountain were the ruins of a very small chapel, of which the roof had partly fallen in. The building, when entire, had never been above sixteen feet long by twelve feet in breadth; and the roof, low in proportion, rested upon four concentric[1] arches which sprung from the four corners of the building, each supported upon a short and heavy pillar. The ribs of two of these arches remained, though the roof had fallen down betwixt them: over the others it remained entire. The entrance to this ancient place of devotion was under a very low, round arch, ornamented by several courses of that zigzag molding, resembling shark's teeth, which appears so often in the more ancient Saxon architecture. A belfry rose above the porch on four small pillars, within which hung the green and weather-beaten bell, the feeble sounds of which had been some time before heard by the Black Knight.

The whole peaceful and quiet scene lay glimmering in twilight before the eyes of the traveler, giving him good assurance of lodging for the night, since it was a special duty of those hermits who dwelt in the woods to exercise hospitality towards benighted or bewildered passengers.

Accordingly the knight took no time to consider minutely the particulars which we have detailed, but thanking St. Julian (the patron of travelers), who had sent him good harborage, he leaped from his horse, and assailed the door of the hermitage with the butt of his lance, in order to arouse attention and gain admittance.

It was some time before he obtained any answer, and the reply, when made, was unpropitious.

"Pass on, whosoever thou art," was the answer given by a deep, hoarse voice from within the hut, "and disturb not the servant of God and St. Dunstan in his evening devotions."

[1] Having the same center.

"Worthy father," answered the knight, "here is a poor wanderer bewildered in these woods, who gives thee the opportunity of exercising thy charity and hospitality."

"Good brother," replied the inhabitant of the hermitage, "it has pleased Our Lady and St. Dunstan to destine me for the object of those virtues, instead of the exercise thereof. I have no provisions here which even a dog would share with me, and a horse of any tenderness of nurture would despise my couch: pass, therefore, on thy way, and God speed thee!"

"But how," replied the knight, "is it possible for me to find my way through such a wood as this when darkness is coming on? I pray you, reverend father, as you are a Christian, to undo your door and at least point out to me my road."

"And I pray you, good Christian brother," replied the anchorite,[1] "to disturb me no more. You have already interrupted one *pater*,[2] two *aves*,[3] and a *credo*,[4] which I, miserable sinner that I am, should, according to my vow, have said before moonrise."

"The road, the road!" vociferated the knight; "give me directions for the road, if I am to expect no more from thee."

"The road," replied the hermit, "is easy to hit. The path from the wood leads to a morass, and from thence to a ford, which, as the rains have abated, may now be passable. When thou hast crossed the ford, thou wilt take care of thy footing up the left bank, as it is somewhat precipitous; and the path, which hangs over the river, has lately, as I learn (for I seldom leave the duties of my chapel), given way in sundry places. Thou wilt then keep straight forward"—

"A broken path, a precipice, a ford, and a morass!" said the knight, interrupting him. "Sir Hermit, if you were the holi-

[1] Anchoret; a religious recluse or hermit.

[2] Paternoster; the Lord's Prayer.

[3] Ave Maria! ("Hail, Mary!"); a prayer in the devotional service of the Romish Church, termed the "Angelic Salutation."

[4] The Apostles' Creed, called so from the first word in the Latin version, beginning "*Credo in Deum.*"

est that ever wore beard or told[1] bead, you shall scarce prevail on me to hold this road to-night. I tell thee that thou, who livest by the charity of the country — ill deserved, as I doubt it is — hast no right to refuse shelter to the wayfarer when in distress. Either open the door quickly, or, by the rood, I will beat it down and make entry for myself."

"Friend wayfarer," replied the hermit, "be not importunate. If thou puttest me to use the carnal weapon in mine own defense, it will be e'en the worse for you."

At this moment a distant noise of barking and growling, which the traveler had for some time heard, became extremely loud and furious, and made the knight suppose that the hermit, alarmed by his threat of making forcible entry, had called the dogs who made this clamor to aid him in his defense, out of some inner recess in which they had been kenneled. Incensed at this preparation on the hermit's part for making good his inhospitable purpose, the knight struck the door so furiously with his foot that posts as well as staples shook with violence.

The anchorite, not caring again to expose his door to a similar shock, now called out aloud, "Patience, patience! Spare thy strength, good traveler, and I will presently undo the door, though it may be my doing so will be little to thy pleasure."

The door, accordingly, was opened; and the hermit, — a large, strong-built man, — in his sackcloth[2] gown and hood, girt with a rope of rushes, stood before the knight. He had in one hand a lighted torch, or link; and in the other, a baton of crab-tree, so thick and heavy that it might well be termed a club. Two large, shaggy dogs, half greyhound, half mastiff, stood ready to rush upon the traveler as soon as the door should be opened; but, when the torch glanced upon the lofty crest and golden spurs of the knight who stood without, the hermit, altering probably his original intentions, repressed the rage of his auxiliaries, and,

[1] Numbered; referring to the custom of numbering or telling off beads on the rosary as prayers were said.

[2] Cloth of a coarse texture.

changing his tone to a sort of churlish courtesy, invited the knight to enter his hut, making excuse for his unwillingness to open his lodge after sunset by alleging the multitude of robbers and outlaws who were abroad, and who gave no honor to Our Lady or St. Dunstan, nor to those holy men who spent life in their service.

"The poverty of your cell, good father," said the knight, looking around him, and seeing nothing but a bed of leaves, a crucifix rudely carved in oak, a missal,[1] with a rough-hewn table and two stools, and one or two clumsy articles of furniture — "the poverty of your cell should seem a sufficient defense against any risk of thieves, not to mention the aid of two trusty dogs, large and strong enough, I think, to pull down a stag, and of course to match with most men."

"The good keeper of the forest," said the hermit, "hath allowed me the use of these animals to protect my solitude until the times shall mend."

Having said this, he fixed his torch in a twisted branch of iron which served for a candlestick; and placing the oaken trivet[2] before the embers of the fire, which he refreshed with some dry wood, he placed a stool upon one side of the table, and beckoned to the knight to do the same upon the other.

They sat down, and gazed with great gravity at each other, each thinking in his heart that he had seldom seen a stronger or more athletic figure than was placed opposite to him.

"Reverend hermit," said the knight, after looking long and fixedly at his host, "were it not to interrupt your devout meditations, I would pray to know three things of your Holiness, — first, where I am to put my horse; secondly, what I can have for supper; thirdly, where I am to take up my couch for the night."

"I will reply to you," said the hermit, "with my finger, it being against my rule to speak by words where signs can answer

[1] The office book of the Romish Church, containing the liturgy of the mass, or *missa* (the sacramental service of the Roman Catholic Church).

[2] A table with three legs.

the purpose." So saying, he pointed successively to two corners of the hut. "Your stable," said he, "is there; your bed, there; and," reaching down a platter with two handfuls of parched pease upon it from the neighboring shelf, and placing it upon the table, he added, "your supper is here."

The knight shrugged his shoulders, and, leaving the hut, brought in his horse (which in the interim he had fastened to a tree), unsaddled him with much attention, and spread upon the steed's weary back his own mantle.

The hermit was apparently somewhat moved to compassion by the anxiety as well as address which the stranger displayed in tending his horse; for, muttering something about provender left for the keeper's palfrey, he dragged out of a recess a bundle of forage, which he spread before the knight's charger, and immediately afterwards shook down a quantity of dried fern in the corner which he had assigned for the rider's couch. The knight returned him thanks for his courtesy; and, this duty done, both resumed their seats by the table, whereon stood the trencher of pease placed between them. The hermit, after a long grace, which had once been Latin, but of which original language few traces remained, excepting here and there the long rolling termination of some word or phrase, set example to his guest by modestly putting into a very large mouth, furnished with teeth which might have ranked with those of a boar both in sharpness and whiteness, some three or four dried pease, — a miserable grist, as it seemed, for so large and able a mill.

The knight, in order to follow so laudable an example, laid aside his helmet, his corselet,[1] and the greater part of his armor, and showed to the hermit a head thick-curled with yellow hair, high features, blue eyes remarkably bright and sparkling, a mouth well formed, having an upper lip clothed with mustaches darker than his hair, and bearing altogether the look of a bold, daring, and enterprising man, with which his strong form well corresponded.

[1] Armor (breastplate and backpiece) for the body.

The hermit, as if wishing to answer to the confidence of his guest, threw back his cowl,[1] and showed a round bullet head belonging to a man in the prime of life. His close-shaven crown, surrounded by a circle of stiff curled black hair, had something the appearance of a parish pinfold[2] begirt by its high hedge. The features expressed nothing of monastic austerity: on the contrary, it was a bold, bluff countenance, with broad black eyebrows, a well-turned forehead, and cheeks as round and vermilion as those of a trumpeter, from which descended a long and curly black beard. Such a visage, joined to the brawny form of the holy man, spoke rather of sirloins and haunches than of pease and pulse. This incongruity did not escape the guest. After he had with great difficulty accomplished the mastication of a mouthful of the dried pease, he found it absolutely necessary to request his pious entertainer to furnish him with some liquor, who replied to his request by placing before him a large can of the purest water from the fountain.

"It is from the well of St. Dunstan," said he, "in which, betwixt sun and sun, he baptized five hundred heathen Danes[3] and Britons, blessed be his name!" and, applying his black beard to the pitcher, he took a draught much more moderate in quantity than his encomium seemed to warrant.

"It seems to me, reverend father," said the knight, "that the small morsels which you eat, together with this holy but somewhat thin beverage, have thriven with you marvelously. You appear a man more fit to win the ram at a wrestling match, or the ring at a bout at quarter-staff, or the bucklers at a sword-play, than to linger out your time in this desolate wilderness, saying masses, and living upon parched pease and cold water."

"Sir Knight," answered the hermit, "it has pleased Our Lady and my patron saint to bless the pittance to which I restrain myself, even as the pulse and water were blessed to the children Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who drank the same rather than the wine and meats which were appointed them by the King of the Saracens."

[1] Hood of a monk's gown.

[2] A pen for stray cattle.

[3] The Scandinavian sea-rovers whose inroads and settlements in England cover a considerable portion of its history from about the eighth century to the eleventh century.

"Holy father," said the knight, "upon whose countenance it hath pleased Heaven to work such a miracle, permit a sinful layman to crave thy name."

"Thou mayst call me," answered the hermit, "the Clerk[1] of Copmanhurst, for so I am termed in these parts. They add, it is true, the epithet 'holy,' but I stand not upon that, as being unworthy of such addition. And now, valiant knight, may I pray ye for the name of my honorable guest?"

"Truly," said the knight, "Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst, men call me in these parts the Black Knight. Many, sir, add to it the epithet of 'Sluggard,' whereby I am noway ambitious to be distinguished."

The hermit could scarcely forbear from smiling at his guest's reply.

"I see," said he, "Sir Sluggish Knight, that thou art a man of prudence and of counsel; and, moreover, I see that my poor monastic fare likes thee not, accustomed perhaps, as thou hast been, to courts and camps, and the luxuries of cities; and now I bethink me, Sir Sluggard, that when the charitable keeper of this forest-walk left these dogs for my protection, and also those bundles of forage, he left me also some food, which being unfit for my use, the very recollection of it had escaped me amid my more weighty meditations."

"I dare be sworn he did so," said the knight. "I was convinced that there was better food in the cell,[2] Holy Clerk, since you first doffed your cowl. Your keeper is ever a jovial fellow; and none who beheld thy grinders contending with these pease, and thy throat flooded with this ungenial element, could see thee doomed to such horse-provender and horse-beverage" (pointing

[1] Latin, *clericus* ("a priest"); Anglo-Saxon, *clerc* ("a clerk, a priest").

[2] Usually a small house attached to a convent or monastery.

to the provisions upon the table), "and refrain from mending thy cheer. Let us see the keeper's bounty, therefore, without delay."

The hermit cast a wistful look upon the knight, in which there was a sort of comic expression of hesitation, as if uncertain how far he should act prudently in trusting his guest. There was, however, as much of bold frankness in the knight's countenance as was possible to be expressed by features. His smile, too, had something in it irresistibly comic, and gave an assurance of faith and loyalty with which his host could not refrain from sympathizing.

After a mute glance or two, the hermit went to the farther side of the hut, and opened a hutch,[1] which was concealed with great care and some ingenuity. Out of the recesses of a dark closet, into which this aperture gave admittance, he brought a large pasty, baked in a pewter platter of unusual dimensions. This mighty dish he placed before his guest, who, using his poniard to cut it open, lost no time in making himself acquainted with its contents.

"How long is it since the good keeper has been here?" said the knight to his host, after having swallowed several hasty morsels of this reënforcement to the hermit's good cheer.

"About two months," answered the father hastily.

"By the true Lord," answered the knight, "everything in your hermitage is miraculous, Holy Clerk; for I would have been sworn that the fat buck which furnished this venison had been running on foot within the week."

The hermit was somewhat discountenanced by this observation; and, moreover, he had made but a poor figure while gazing on the diminution of the pasty, on which his guest was making desperate inroads,—a warfare in which his previous profession of abstinence left him no pretext for joining.

"I have been in Palestine, Sir Clerk," said the knight, stopping short of a sudden, "and I bethink me it is a custom there that every host who entertains a guest shall assure him of the

[1] A chest or bin for storing away things.

wholesomeness of his food by partaking of it along with him. Far be it from me to suspect so holy a man of aught inhospitable; nevertheless I will be highly bound to you would you comply with this Eastern custom."

"To ease your unnecessary scruples, Sir Knight, I will for once depart from my rule," replied the hermit; and, as there were no forks in those days, his clutches were instantly in the bowels of the pasty.

The ice of ceremony being once broken, it seemed matter of rivalry between the guest and the entertainer which should display the best appetite; and although the former had probably fasted longest, yet the hermit fairly surpassed him.

"Holy Clerk," said the knight when his hunger was appeased, "I would gage my good horse yonder against a zecchin, that that same honest keeper to whom we are obliged for the venison has left thee a stoup[1] of wine, or a runlet[2] of canary,[3] or some such trifle, by way of ally to this noble pasty. This would be a circumstance, doubtless, totally unworthy to dwell in the memory of so rigid an anchorite; yet I think, were you to search yonder crypt[4] once more, you would find that I am right in my conjecture."

The hermit replied by a grin, and, returning to the hutch, he produced a leathern bottle which might contain about four quarts. He also brought forth two large drinking-cups made out of the horn of the urus,[5] and hooped with silver. Having made this goodly provision for washing down the supper, he seemed to think no further ceremonious scruple necessary on his part; but filling both cups, and saying, in the Saxon fashion, "*Waes hael*,[6] Sir Sluggish Knight!" he emptied his own at a draught.

[1] A vessel for liquor; a beaker.

[2] Rundlet; a small barrel or cask.

[3] A kind of wine from the Canary Islands.

[4] Generally a vault beneath a church, either for purposes of burial or as an underground chapel or oratory; here used in metaphorical allusion to the bin.

[5] An extinct bovine animal having very large horns.

[6] "Be whole, be in health;" that is, "I drink your health." (Compare Note 3, p. 45.)

"*Drink hael*,[1] Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst!" answered the warrior, and did his host reason[2] in a similar brimmer.[3]

"Holy Clerk," said the stranger, after the first cup was thus swallowed, "I cannot but marvel that a man possessed of such thews and sinews as thine, and who therewithal shows the talent of so goodly a trencherman,[4] should think of abiding by himself in this wilderness. In my judgment, you are fitter to keep a castle or a fort, eating of the fat and drinking of the strong, than to live here upon pulse and water, or even upon the charity of the keeper. At least, were I as thou, I should find myself both disport[5] and plenty out of the King's deer. There is many a goodly herd in these forests, and a buck will never be missed that goes to the use of St. Dunstan's chaplain."

"Sir Sluggish Knight," replied the clerk, "these are dangerous words, and I pray you to forbear them. I am true hermit to the King and law, and, were I to spoil my liege's[6] game, I should be sure of the prison, and, an my gown saved me not, were in some peril of hanging."

"Nevertheless, were I as thou," said the knight, "I would take my walk by moonlight, when foresters and keepers were warm in bed, and ever and anon, as I pattered[7] my prayers, I would let fly a shaft among the herds of dun[8] deer that feed in the glades. Resolve me, Holy Clerk, hast thou never practiced such a pastime?"

"Friend Sluggard," answered the hermit, "thou hast seen all that can concern thee of my housekeeping, and something more than he deserves who takes up his quarters by violence. Credit me, it is better to enjoy the good which God sends thee than to be impertinently curious how it comes. Fill thy cup, and welcome; and do not, I pray thee, by further impertinent inquiries,

[1] "Drink health," "I drink to you."
[2] To do one reason is to do what is desired; to give satisfaction.
[3] A bowl full to the top.
[4] A table comrade, usually in the sense of a heavy eater.
[5] Diversion. [6] Sovereign's. [7] Muttered. [8] A dull brown color.

put me to show that thou couldst hardly have made good thy lodging had I been earnest to oppose thee."

"By my faith," said the knight, "thou makest me more curious than ever! Thou art the most mysterious hermit I ever met; and I will know more of thee ere we part. As for thy threats, know, holy man, thou speakest to one whose trade it is to find out danger wherever it is to be met with."

"Sir Sluggish Knight, I drink to thee," said the hermit, "respecting thy valor much, but deeming wondrous slightly of thy discretion. If thou wilt take equal arms with me, I will give thee, in all friendship and brotherly love, such sufficing penance and complete absolution that thou shalt not for the next twelve months sin the sin of excess and curiosity."

The knight pledged him, and desired him to name his weapons.

"There is none," replied the hermit, "from the scissors[1] of Delilah and the tenpenny nail of Jael[2] to the scimiter of Goliah, at which I am not a match for thee. But if I am to make the election, what sayest thou, good friend, to these trinkets?"

Thus speaking, he opened another hutch, and took out from it a couple of broadswords and bucklers, such as were used by the yeomanry of the period. The knight, who watched his motions, observed that this second place of concealment was furnished with two or three good longbows, a crossbow, a bundle of bolts for the latter, and half a dozen sheaves of arrows for the former. A harp and other matters of very uncanonical[3] appearance were also visible when this dark recess was opened.

"I promise thee, brother clerk," said he, "I will ask thee no more offensive questions. The contents of that cupboard are an answer to all my inquiries; and I see a weapon there" (here he

[1] The scissors with which Delilah sheared away the hair and strength of Samson, betraying him to the Philistines.
[2] Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, after the defeat of Jabin's army by Deborah and Barak, killed Sisera, the general who fled to her tent, by driving a "nail of the tent" through his temples (see Judges iv. 17–21).
[3] Not in accordance with church regulations.

stooped and took out the harp) "on which I would more gladly prove my skill with thee than at the sword and buckler."

"I hope, Sir Knight," said the hermit, "thou hast given no good reason for thy surname of the Sluggard. I do promise thee I suspect thee grievously. Nevertheless, thou art my guest, and I will not put thy manhood to the proof without thine own free will. Sit thee down, then, and fill thy cup. Let us drink, sing, and be merry. If thou knowest ever a good lay, thou shalt be welcome to a nook[1] of pāsty at Copmanhurst so long as I serve the chapel of St. Dunstan, which, please God, shall be till I change my gray covering for one of green turf. But come, fill a flagon,[2] for it will crave[3] some time to tune the harp; and naught pitches the voice and sharpens the ear like a cup of wine. For my part, I love to feel the grape at my very finger-ends, before they make the harp-strings tinkle."[4]

CHAPTER XVII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the prescription of the genial hermit, with which his guest willingly complied, he found it no easy matter to bring the harp to harmony.

"Methinks, holy father," said he, "the instrument wants one string, and the rest have been somewhat misused."

"Ay, markst thou that?" replied the hermit. "That shows thee a master of the craft. Wine and wassail," he added, gravely casting up his eyes — "all the fault of wine and wassail! I told Allan-a-Dale,[5] the northern minstrel, that he would damage the harp if he touched it after the seventh cup, but he would not be controlled. Friend, I drink to thy successful performance."

[1] Piece. [2] A good-sized drinking-vessel. [3] Require.

[4] All readers must recognize, in the Clerk of Copmanhurst, Friar Tuck, the buxom confessor of Robin Hood's gang.

[5] One of Robin Hood's band.

So saying, he took off his cup with much gravity, at the same time shaking his head at the intemperance of the Scottish harper.

The knight, in the mean time, had brought the strings into some order, and after a short prelude asked his host whether he would choose a *sirvente* in the language of *oc*, or a *lai* in the language of *oui*, or a *virelai*, or a ballad in the vulgar English.[1]

"A ballad,[2] a ballad," said the hermit, "against all the *ocs* and *ouis* of France. Downright English am I, Sir Knight, and downright English was my patron St. Dunstan, and scorned *oc* and *oui* as he would have scorned the parings of the Devil's hoof. Downright English alone shall be sung in this cell."

"I will assay,[3] then," said the knight, "a ballad composed by a Saxon gleeman,[4] whom I knew in Holy Land."

It speedily appeared that if the knight was not a complete master of the minstrel art, his taste for it had at least been cultivated under the best instructors. Art had taught him to soften the faults of a voice which had little compass, and was naturally rough rather than mellow, and, in short, had done all that culture can do in supplying natural deficiencies. His performance, therefore, might have been termed very respectable by abler judges than the hermit, especially as the knight threw into the notes, now a degree of spirit, and now of plaintive enthusiasm, which gave force and energy to the verses which he sung.

[1] The realm of France was divided betwixt the Norman and Teutonic race, who spoke the language in which the word "yes" is pronounced as *oui*, and the inhabitants of the southern regions, whose speech, bearing some affinity to the Italian, pronounced the same word *oc*. The poets of the former race were called "minstrels," and their poems "lays;" those of the latter were termed "troubadours," and their compositions "sirventes" and other names.

[2] A kind of popular form of verse, of a narrative character, and adapted for singing or recitation.

[3] Try.

[4] The minstrel of the Saxons; Anglo-Saxon *gleoman* (from *gleo*, "joy," "mirth"): hence the gleeman was the joy-man, the mirth-man, the man who at feasts lightened the heart with his song.