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.

The Crusader's Return.

1.

High deeds achieved of knightly fame,
From Palestine the champion came.
The cross upon his shoulders borne,
Battle and blast had dimmed and torn;
Each dint upon his battered shield
Was token of a foughten field;
And thus, beneath his lady's bower,
He sung, as fell the twilight hour,—

2.

"Joy to the fair! — thy knight behold,
Returned from yonder land of gold;
No wealth he brings, nor wealth can need,
Save his good arms and battle-steed,
His spurs to dash against a foe,
His lance and sword to lay him low;
Such all the trophies of his toil,
Such — and the hope of Tekla's smile!

3.

"Joy to the fair! whose constant knight
Her favor fired to feats of might;
Unnoted shall she not remain,
Where meet the bright and noble train;
Minstrel shall sing and herald tell —
'Mark yonder maid of beauty well,
'Tis she for whose bright eyes was won
The listed field at Askalon!

4.

"'Note well her smile! — it edged the blade
Which fifty wives to widows made,
When, vain his strength and Mahound's spell,
Iconium's turbaned Soldan fell.

Seest thou her locks whose sunny glow
Half shows, half shades, her neck of snow?
Twines not of them one golden thread
But for its sake a Paynim bled.'

5.

"Joy to the fair! — my name unknown,
Each deed, and all its praise thine own:
Then, oh! unbar this churlish gate,
The night dew falls, the hour is late.
Inured to Syria's glowing breath,
I feel the north breeze chill as death;
Let grateful love quell maiden shame,
And grant him bliss who brings thee fame."

During this performance the hermit demeaned himself much like a first-rate critic of the present day at a new opera. He reclined back upon his seat with his eyes half shut. Now, folding his hands and twisting his thumbs, he seemed absorbed in attention; and anon, balancing his expanded palms, he gently flourished them in time to the music. At one or two favorite cadences he threw in a little assistance of his own, where the knight's voice seemed unable to carry the air so high as his worshipful taste approved. When the song was ended, the anchorite emphatically declared it a good one, and well sung. Then he reached the harp, and entertained his guest with the following characteristic song, to a sort of derry-down chorus, appropriate to an old English ditty:—

The Barefooted Friar.

1.

I'll give thee, good fellow, a twelvemonth or twain
To search Europe through, from Byzantium to Spain;
But ne'er shall you find, should you search till you tire,
So happy a man as the Barefooted Friar.

2.

Your knight for his lady pricks forth in career,
And is brought home at even-song pricked through with a spear;
I confess him in haste, for his lady desires
No comfort on earth save the Barefooted Friar's.

3.

Your monarch? — Pshaw! many a prince has been known
To barter his robes for our cowl and our gown;
But which of us e'er felt the idle desire
To exchange for a crown the gray hood of a friar!

4.

The Friar has walked out, and where'er he has gone
The land and its fatness is marked for his own;
He can roam where he lists, he can stop when he tires,
For every man's house is the Barefooted Friar's.

5.

He's expected at noon, and no wight till he comes
May profane the great chair, or the porridge of plums;
For the best of the cheer, and the seat by the fire,
Is the undenied right of the Barefooted Friar.

6.

He's expected at night, and the pasty's made hot,
They broach the brown ale, and they fill the black pot;
And the goodwife would wish the goodman in the mire
Ere he lacked a soft pillow, the Barefooted Friar.

7.

Long flourish the sandal, the cord, and the cope,
The dread of the Devil, and trust of the Pope;
For to gather life's roses, unscathed by the brier,
Is granted alone to the Barefooted Friar.

"By my troth," said the knight, "thou hast sung well and lustily, and in high praise of thine order."

"I serve the duty of my chapel duly and truly," answered the hermit,—"two masses daily, morning and evening, primes, noons, and vespers, *aves*, *credos*, *paters*"—

"Excepting moonlight nights, when the venison is in season," said his guest.

"*Exceptis excipiendis*,"[1] replied the hermit, "as our old abbot taught me to say when impertinent laymen should ask me if I kept every punctilio[2] of mine order."

"True, holy father," said the knight; "but keep an eye on exceptions."

Fast grew the mirth of the parties, and many a song was exchanged betwixt them, when their revels were interrupted by a loud knocking at the door of the hermitage. Chap. XX.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Cedric the Saxon saw his son drop down senseless in the lists at Ashby, his first impulse was to order him into the custody and care of his own attendants, but the words choked in his throat. He could not bring himself to acknowledge, in presence of such an assembly, the son whom he had renounced and disinherited. He ordered, however, Oswald to keep an eye upon him, and directed that officer, with two of his serfs, to convey Ivanhoe to Ashby as soon as the crowd had dispersed. Oswald, however, was anticipated in this good office. The crowd dispersed, indeed, but the knight was nowhere to be seen.

It was in vain that Cedric's cupbearer looked around for his young master. He saw the bloody spot on which he had lately sunk down, but himself he saw no longer: it seemed as if the fairies had conveyed him from the spot. Perhaps Oswald (for the Saxons were very superstitious) might have adopted some

[1] Exceptions being taken.

[2] Little point of nicety; exactitude in matters of ceremony.

such hypothesis to account for Ivanhoe's disappearance, had he not suddenly cast his eye upon a person attired like a squire, in whom he recognized the features of his fellow-servant Gurth. Anxious concerning his master's fate, and in despair at his sudden disappearance, the translated[1] swineherd was searching for him everywhere, and had neglected in doing so the concealment on which his own safety depended. Oswald deemed it his duty to secure Gurth, as a fugitive of whose fate his master was to judge.

Renewing his inquiries concerning the fate of Ivanhoe, the only information which the cupbearer could collect from the bystanders was, that the knight had been raised with care by certain well-attired grooms, and placed in a litter belonging to a lady among the spectators, which had immediately transported him out of the press. Oswald, on receiving this intelligence, resolved to return to his master for further instructions, carrying along with him Gurth, whom he considered in some sort as a deserter from the service of Cedric.

The Saxon had been under very intense and agonizing apprehensions concerning his son; for Nature had asserted her rights, in spite of the patriotic stoicism[2] which labored to disown her. But no sooner was he informed that Ivanhoe was in careful and probably in friendly hands, than the paternal anxiety which had been excited by the dubiety[3] of his fate gave way anew to the feeling of injured pride and resentment at what he termed Wilfred's filial disobedience. "Let him wander his way," said he. "Let those leech[4] his wounds for whose sake he encountered them. He is fitter to do the juggling[5] tricks of the Norman chivalry than to maintain the fame and honor of his English an-

1 Changed in form.

2 The doctrine of the Stoics, a Greek sect who, disciples of the philosopher Zeno, held that man should be unmoved by joy or sorrow, etc., and submit uncomplainingly to necessity.

3 Uncertainty.

4 To treat as a leech or physician; doctor.

5 Alluding contemptuously to tournaments, etc.

cestry with the glaive[1] and brown-bill,[2] the good old weapons of his country."

"If to maintain the honor of ancestry," said Rowena, who was present, "it is sufficient to be wise in council, and brave in execution, to be boldest among the bold, and gentlest among the gentle, I know no voice, save his father's"—

"Be silent, Lady Rowena! On this subject only I hear you not. Prepare yourself for the prince's festival: we have been summoned thither with unwonted circumstance of honor and of courtesy, such as the haughty Normans have rarely used to our race since the fatal day of Hastings. Thither will I go, were it only to show these proud Normans how little the fate of a son who could defeat their bravest can affect a Saxon."

"Thither," said Rowena, "do I NOT go; and I pray you to beware, lest what you mean for courage and obstinacy shall be accounted hardness of heart."

"Remain at home, then, ungrateful lady," answered Cedric. "I seek the noble Athelstane, and with him attend the banquet of John of Anjou."

He went, accordingly, to the banquet, of which we have already mentioned the principal events. Immediately upon retiring from the castle, the Saxon thanes, with their attendants, took horse; and it was during the bustle which attended their doing so that Cedric for the first time cast his eyes upon the deserter Gurth. The noble Saxon had returned from the banquet, as we have seen, in no very placid humor, and wanted but a pretext for wreaking his anger upon some one. "The gyves!"[3] he said, "the gyves! Oswald — Hundibert! Dogs and villains! why leave ye the knave unfettered?"

Without daring to remonstrate, the companions of Gurth bound

1 A cutting weapon consisting of a broad blade with a sharp point, mounted on a pole. The weapon is thought to have originated from the custom of the early Celts of fixing a sword to the end of a pole as an instrument of defense against cavalry.

2 A form of bill or halberd (see Note 4, p. 51).

3 Fetters.

him with a halter, as the readiest cord which occurred. He submitted to the operation without remonstrance, except that, darting a reproachful look at his master, he said, "This comes of loving your flesh and blood better than mine own."

"To horse, and forward!" said Cedric.

"It is indeed full time," said the noble Athelstane; "for if we ride not the faster, the worthy Abbot Waltheoff's preparations for a rere-supper[1] will be altogether spoiled."

The travelers, however, used such speed as to reach the Convent of St. Withold's before the apprehended evil took place. The abbot, himself of ancient Saxon descent, received the noble Saxons with profuse and exuberant hospitality, nor did they take leave of their reverend host the next morning until they had shared with him a sumptuous refection.

As the cavalcade left the court of the monastery, an incident happened somewhat alarming to the Saxons, who, of all people of Europe, were most addicted to a superstitious observance of omens, and to whose opinions can be traced most of those notions upon such subjects still to be found among our popular antiquities.

In the present instance, the apprehension of impending evil was inspired by no less respectable a prophet than a large, lean, black dog, which, sitting upright, howled most piteously as the foremost riders left the gate, and presently afterwards, barking wildly and jumping to and fro, seemed bent upon attaching itself to the party.

"I like not that music, father Cedric," said Athelstane, for by this title of respect he was accustomed to address him.

"Nor I either, uncle," said Wamba; "I greatly fear we shall have to pay the piper."[2]

"In my mind," said Athelstane, "we had better turn back,

[1] A night-meal, sometimes signifying a collation given at a late hour, after the regular supper had made its appearance.

[2] To pay the piper is to suffer the expense. The piper was a player on a pipe, or bagpipe.

and abide with the abbot until the afternoon. It is unlucky to travel where your path is crossed by a monk, a hare, or a howling dog, until you have eaten your next meal."

"Away!" said Cedric impatiently. "The day is already too short for our journey. For the dog, I know it to be the cur of the runaway slave Gurth, a useless fugitive, like its master."

So saying, and rising at the same time in his stirrups, impatient at the interruption of his journey, he launched his javelin at poor Fangs; for Fangs it was, who, having traced his master thus far upon his stolen expedition, had here lost him, and was now, in his uncouth way, rejoicing at his reappearance. The javelin inflicted a wound upon the animal's shoulder, and narrowly missed pinning him to the earth; and Fangs fled, howling, from the presence of the enraged thane. Gurth's heart swelled within him, for he felt this meditated slaughter of his faithful adherent in a degree much deeper than the harsh treatment he had himself received. Having in vain attempted to raise his hand to his eyes, he said to Wamba, who, seeing his master's ill humor, had prudently retreated to the rear, "I pray thee, do me the kindness to wipe my eyes with the skirt of thy mantle: the dust offends me, and these bonds will not let me help myself one way or another."

Wamba did him the service he required, and they rode side by side for some time, during which Gurth maintained a moody silence. At length he could repress his feelings no longer.

"Friend Wamba," said he, "of all those who are fools enough to serve Cedric, thou alone hast dexterity enough to make thy folly acceptable to him. Go to him, therefore, and tell him that neither for love nor fear will Gurth serve him longer. He may strike the head from me, he may scourge me, he may load me with irons,[1] but henceforth he shall never compel me either to love or to obey him. Go to him, then, and tell him that Gurth the son of Beowulph renounces his service."

"Assuredly," said Wamba, "fool as I am, I shall not do your

[1] Fetters.

fool's errand. Cedric hath another javelin stuck into his girdle, and thou knowest he does not always miss his mark."

"I care not," replied Gurth, "how soon he makes a mark of me. Yesterday he left Wilfred, my young master, in his blood. To-day he has striven to kill before my face the only other living creature that ever showed me kindness. By St. Edmund, St. Dunstan, St. Withold, St. Edward the Confessor,[1] and every other Saxon saint in the calendar, I will never forgive him!"

"To my thinking, now," said the Jester, who was frequently wont to act as peacemaker in the family, "our master did not propose to hurt Fangs, but only to affright him: for, if you observed, he rose in his stirrups, as thereby meaning to overcast[2] the mark; and so he would have done, but Fangs, happening to bound up at the very moment, received a scratch, which I will be bound to heal with a penny's breadth of tar."

"If I thought so," said Gurth — "if I could but think so — but no — I saw the javelin was well aimed; I heard it whiz through the air with all the wrathful malevolence of him who cast it; and it quivered after it had pitched in the ground, as if with regret for having missed its mark. By St. Anthony, I renounce him!"

And the indignant swineherd resumed his sullen silence, which no efforts of the Jester could again induce him to break.

Meanwhile Cedric and Athelstane, the leaders of the troop, conversed together on the state of the land, on the dissensions of the royal family, on the feuds and quarrels among the Norman nobles, and on the chance that the oppressed Saxons might free themselves, or elevate themselves into national consequence and independence during civil convulsions likely to ensue. On this Cedric was all animation. The restoration of his race was the idol of his heart, to which he had willingly sacrificed domestic happiness and the interests of his son. But to achieve this in favor of the native English, it was necessary that they should be united among themselves, and act under an acknowledged head.

[1] King of England, 1042–66, esteemed for his piety. [2] Throw over.

The necessity of choosing the chief from the Saxon blood royal had been made a solemn condition by those whom Cedric had intrusted with his secret plans and hopes. Athelstane had this quality at least, though he had few talents to recommend him as a leader. But as head of the Saxon confederacy many of that nation were disposed to prefer to his the title of the Lady Rowena, who drew her descent from Alfred.

It would have been no difficult thing for Cedric, had he so disposed, to have placed himself at the head of a third party as formidable at least as any of the others. To counterbalance their royal descent, he had courage, activity, energy, and, above all, that devoted attachment to the cause which had procured him the epithet of THE SAXON; and his birth was inferior to none, excepting only that of Athelstane and his ward. These qualities were unalloyed by the slightest selfishness; and, instead of dividing his weakened nation by forming a faction of his own, it was a leading part of Cedric's plan to extinguish that which already existed by promoting a marriage betwixt Rowena and Athelstane. An obstacle occurred to this, his favorite project, in the mutual attachment of his ward and his son, and hence the original cause of the banishment of Wilfred from the house of his father.

This stern measure Cedric had adopted in hopes that during Wilfred's absence Rowena might relinquish her preference; but in this he was disappointed, — a disappointment which might be attributed in part to the mode in which his ward had been educated. Cedric, to whom the name of Alfred was as that of a deity, had treated the sole remaining scion[1] of that great monarch with a degree of observance such as perhaps was in those days scarce paid to an acknowledged princess. Rowena's will had been in almost all cases a law to his household; and Cedric himself, as if determined that her sovereignty should be fully acknowledged within that little circle at least, seemed to take a pride in acting as the first of her subjects. Thus trained

[1] Heir.

in the exercise not only of free will, but despotic authority, Rowena was disposed both to resist and to resent any attempt to control her affections, or dispose of her hand contrary to her inclinations. The opinions which she felt strongly, she avowed boldly; and Cedric, who could not free himself from his habitual deference to her opinions, felt totally at a loss how to enforce his authority of guardian.

It was in vain that he attempted to dazzle her with the prospect of a visionary throne. Rowena, who possessed strong sense, neither considered his plan as practicable nor as desirable, so far as she was concerned, could it have been achieved. Without attempting to conceal her avowed preference of Wilfred of Ivanhoe, she declared that, were that favored knight out of the question, she would rather take refuge in a convent than share a throne with Athelstane.

Nevertheless Cedric persisted in using every means in his power to bring about the proposed union of Athelstane and Rowena, together with expediting those other measures which seemed necessary to forward the restoration of Saxon independence.

On this last subject he was now laboring with Athelstane. The warm and impassioned exhortations of Cedric had little effect upon his impassive temper; and leaving this task, which might be compared to spurring a tired jade,[1] or to hammering upon cold iron, Cedric fell back to his ward Rowena. As his presence interrupted the discourse between the lady and her favorite attendant upon the gallantry and fate of Wilfred, Elgitha failed not to revenge both her mistress and herself by recurring to the overthrow of Athelstane in the lists,— the most disagreeable subject which could greet the ears of Cedric. To this sturdy Saxon, therefore, the day's journey was fraught with all manner of displeasure and discomfort.

At noon, upon the motion of Athelstane, the travelers paused in a woodland shade by a fountain, to repose their horses, and

[1] A worthless horse.

partake of some provisions with which the hospitable abbot had loaded a sumpter-mule. Their repast was a pretty long one, and these several interruptions rendered it impossible for them to hope to reach Rotherwood without traveling all night,— a conviction which induced them to proceed on their way at a more hasty pace than they had hitherto used.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE travelers had now reached the verge of the wooded country, and were about to plunge into its recesses, held dangerous at that time from the number of outlaws whom oppression and poverty had driven to despair, and who occupied the forests in such large bands as could easily bid defiance to the feeble police of the period. From these rovers, however, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, Cedric and Athelstane accounted themselves secure, as they had in attendance ten servants, besides Wamba and Gurth, whose aid could not be counted upon, the one being a jester, and the other a captive. It may be added, that, in traveling thus late through the forest, Cedric and Athelstane relied on their descent and character, as well as their courage. The outlaws, whom the severity of the forest laws had reduced to this roving and desperate mode of life, were chiefly peasants and yeomen of Saxon descent, and were generally supposed to respect the persons and property of their countrymen.

As the travelers journeyed on their way, they were alarmed by repeated cries for assistance; and, when they rode up to the place from whence they came, they were surprised to find a horse-litter[1] placed upon the ground, beside which sat a young woman richly dressed in the Jewish fashion, while an old man, whose yellow cap proclaimed him to belong to the same nation, walked

[1] A conveyance on poles, carried by horses and borne between them.

up and down with gestures of the deepest despair, and wrung his hands, as if affected by some strange disaster.

To the inquiries of Athelstane and Cedric, the old Jew could for some time only answer by invoking the protection of all the patriarchs of the Old Testament successively against the sons of Ishmael, who were coming to smite them, hip and thigh, with the edge of the sword. When he began to come to himself out of this agony of terror, Isaac of York (for it was our old friend) was at length able to explain that he had hired a body-guard of six men at Ashby, together with mules for carrying the litter of a sick friend. This party had undertaken to escort him as far as Doncaster. They had come thus far in safety; but, having received information from a woodcutter that there was a strong band of outlaws lying in wait in the woods before them, Isaac's mercenaries had not only taken flight, but had carried off with them the horses which bore the litter, and left the Jew and his daughter without the means either of defense or of retreat, to be plundered, and probably murdered, by the banditti, whom they expected every moment would bring down upon them. "Would it but please your valors," added Isaac in a tone of deep humiliation, "to permit the poor Jews to travel under your safeguard, I swear by the tables of our law,[1] that never has favor been conferred upon a child of Israel since the days of our captivity which shall be more gratefully acknowledged."

"Dog of a Jew!" said Athelstane, whose memory was of that petty kind which stores up trifles of all kinds, but particularly trifling offenses, "dost not remember how thou didst beard us in the gallery at the tilt-yard?[2] Fight or flee, or compound[3] with the outlaws as thou dost list;[4] ask neither aid nor company from us; and if they rob only such as thee, who rob all the world, I, for mine own share, shall hold them right honest folk."

Cedric did not assent to the severe proposal of his companion. "We shall do better," said he, "to leave them two of our attend-

[1] The law of Moses.
[2] Place for holding a tournament.
[3] Bargain.
[4] Please.

ants and two horses to convey them back to the next village. It will diminish our strength but little; and with your good sword, noble Athelstane, and the aid of those who remain, it will be light work for us to face twenty of those runagates."

Rowena, somewhat alarmed by the mention of outlaws in force, and so near them, strongly seconded the proposal of her guardian; but Rebecca, suddenly quitting her dejected posture, and making her way through the attendants to the palfrey of the Saxon lady, knelt down, and, after the Oriental fashion in addressing superiors, kissed the hem of Rowena's garment. Then, rising and throwing back her veil, she implored her in the great name of the God whom they both worshiped, and by that revelation of the law upon Mount Sinai[1] in which they both believed, that she would have compassion upon them, and suffer them to go forward under their safeguard. "It is not for myself that I pray this favor," said Rebecca, "nor is it even for that poor old man. I know that to wrong and to spoil our nation is a light fault, if not a merit, with the Christians; and what is it to us whether it be done in the city, in the desert, or in the field? But it is in the name of one dear to many, and dear even to you, that I beseech you to let this sick person be transported with care and tenderness under your protection; for, if evil chance him, the last moment of your life would be imbittered with regret for denying that which I ask of you."

The noble and solemn air with which Rebecca made this appeal gave it double weight with the fair Saxon.

"The man is old and feeble," she said to her guardian; "the maiden young and beautiful; their friend sick, and in peril of his life. Jews though they be, we cannot as Christians leave them in this extremity. Let them unload two of the sumpter-mules,

[1] A mountain, celebrated in Scripture, in Arabia Petræa, identified with the Jabel Moosa ("Mount of Moses"), and one of a group of mountains of which Mount Horeb forms a portion of the north end. In the Old Testament Mounts Sinai and Horeb are used interchangeably for the Mountain of the Law.

and put the baggage behind two of the serfs. The mules may transport the litter, and we have led horses for the old man and his daughter."

Cedric readily assented to what she proposed, and Athelstane only added the condition that they should travel in the rear of the whole party, "where Wamba," he said, "might attend them with his shield of boar's brawn."

"I have left my shield in the tilt-yard," answered the Jester, "as has been the fate of many a better knight than myself."

Athelstane colored deeply, for such had been his own fate on the last day of the tournament; while Rowena, who was pleased in the same proportion, as if to make amends for the brutal jest of her unfeeling suitor, requested Rebecca to ride by her side.

"It were not fit I should do so," answered Rebecca with proud humility, "where my society might be held a disgrace to my protectress."

By this time the change of baggage was hastily achieved; for the single word "outlaws" rendered every one sufficiently alert, and the approach of twilight made the sound yet more impressive. Amid the bustle, Gurth was taken from horseback, in the course of which removal he prevailed upon the Jester to slack the cord with which his arms were bound. It was so negligently refastened, perhaps intentionally, on the part of Wamba, that Gurth found no difficulty in freeing his arms altogether from bondage; and then, gliding into the thicket, he made his escape from the party.

The bustle had been considerable, and it was some time before Gurth was missed: for, as he was to be placed for the rest of the journey behind a servant, every one supposed that some other of his companions had him under his custody; and, when it began to be whispered among them that Gurth had actually disappeared, they were under such immediate expectation of an attack from the outlaws, that it was not held convenient to pay much attention to the circumstance.

The path which the party traveled was now so narrow as not

to admit with convenience above two riders abreast, and began to descend into a dingle,[1] traversed by a brook whose banks were broken, swampy, and overgrown with dwarf willows. Cedric and Athelstane, who were at the head of their retinue, saw the risk of being attacked at this pass; but, neither of them having had much practice in war, no better mode of preventing the danger occurred to them than that they should hasten through the defile as fast as possible. Advancing, therefore, without much order, they had just crossed the brook with a part of their followers, when they were assailed in front, flank, and rear at once, with an impetuosity to which, in their confused and ill-prepared condition, it was impossible to offer effectual resistance. The shout of "A white dragon, a white dragon!" "St. George[2] for merry England!"—war-cries adopted by the assailants as belonging to their assumed character of Saxon outlaws—was heard on every side, and on every side enemies appeared with a rapidity of advance and attack which seemed to multiply their numbers.

Both the Saxon chiefs were made prisoners at the same moment, and each under circumstances expressive of his character. Cedric, the instant an enemy appeared, launched at him his remaining javelin, which, taking better effect than that which he had hurled at Fangs, nailed the man against an oak-tree that happened to be close behind him. Thus far successful, Cedric spurred his horse against a second, drawing his sword at the same time, and striking with such inconsiderate fury that his weapon encountered a thick branch which hung over him, and he was disarmed by the violence of his own blow. He was instantly made prisoner, and pulled from his horse by two or three

[1] Dale; vale.

[2] The national saint of England, born, it is said, at Cappadocia; met death by martyrdom, April 23, 303, at Nicomedia. Among many legends concerning him, that of his slaying the dragon is best known. His day is celebrated April 23. The popularity of his name in England begins from the time of Richard Cœur-de-Lion, who, it is stated, in the First Crusade called upon his aid, but he was not patron saint of the kingdom until the time of Edward III.

of the banditti, who crowded around him. Athelstane shared his captivity; his bridle having been seized, and he himself forcibly dismounted, long before he could draw his weapon or assume any posture of effectual defense.

The attendants, embarrassed with baggage, surprised and terrified at the fate of their masters, fell an easy prey to the assailants; while the Lady Rowena, in the center of the cavalcade, and the Jew and his daughter in the rear, experienced the same misfortune.

Of all the train, none escaped except Wamba, who showed upon the occasion much more courage than those who pretended to greater sense. He possessed himself of a sword belonging to one of the domestics, who was just drawing it with a tardy and irresolute hand, laid it about him like a lion, drove back several who approached him, and made a brave though ineffectual attempt to succor his master. Finding himself overpowered, the Jester at length threw himself from his horse, plunged into the thicket, and, favored by the general confusion, escaped from the scene of action.

Yet the valiant Jester, as soon as he found himself safe, hesitated more than once whether he should not turn back and share the captivity of a master to whom he was sincerely attached.

"I have heard men talk of the blessings of freedom," he said to himself, "but I wish any wise man would teach me what use to make of it now that I have it."

As he pronounced these words aloud, a voice very near him called out in a low and cautious tone, "Wamba!" and at the same time a dog, which he recognized to be Fangs, jumped up and fawned upon him.

"Gurth!" answered Wamba with the same caution, and the swineherd immediately stood before him.

"What is the matter?" said he eagerly. "What mean these cries and that clashing of swords?"

"Only a trick of the times," said Wamba. "They are all prisoners."

"Who are prisoners?" exclaimed Gurth impatiently.

"My lord and my lady, and Athelstane and Hundibert and Oswald."

"In the name of God," said Gurth, "how came they prisoners, and to whom?"

"Our master was too ready to fight," said the Jester; "and Athelstane was not ready enough, and no other person was ready at all; and they are prisoners to green cassocks[1] and black visors;[2] and they lie all tumbled about on the green, like the crab-apples that you shake down to your swine; and I would laugh at it," said the honest Jester, "if I could for weeping;" and he shed tears of unfeigned sorrow.

Gurth's countenance kindled. "Wamba," he said, "thou hast a weapon, and thy heart was ever stronger than thy brain. We are only two, but a sudden attack from men of resolution will do much. Follow me!"

"Whither, and for what purpose?" said the Jester.

"To rescue Cedric."

"But you have renounced his service but now," said Wamba.

"That," said Gurth, "was but while he was fortunate. Follow me!"

As the Jester was about to obey, a third person suddenly made his appearance, and commanded them both to halt. From his dress and arms, Wamba would have conjectured him to be one of those outlaws who had just assailed his master; but, besides that he wore no mask, the glittering baldric across his shoulder, with the rich bugle-horn which it supported, as well as the calm and commanding expression of his voice and manner, made him, notwithstanding the twilight, recognize Locksley the yeoman, who had been victorious, under such disadvantageous circumstances, in the contest for the prize of archery.

"What is the meaning of all this?" said he, "or who is it that rifle and ransom and make prisoners in these forests?"

"You may look at their cassocks close by," said Wamba, "and

[1] A loose outer cloak. [2] That is, to robbers.

see whether they be thy children's coats or no, for they are as like thine own as one green pea-cod is to another."

"I will learn that presently," answered Locksley; "and I charge ye, on peril of your lives, not to stir from the place where ye stand until I have returned. Obey me, and it shall be the better for you and your masters. Yet stay, I must render myself as like these men as possible."

So saying, he unbuckled his baldric with the bugle, took a feather from his cap, and gave them to Wamba, then drew a vizard[1] from his pouch, and, repeating his charges to them to stand fast, went to execute his purposes of reconnoitering.

"Shall we stand fast, Gurth?" said Wamba, "or shall we e'en give him leg bail?[2] In my foolish mind, he had all the equipage[3] of a thief too much in readiness to be himself a true man."

"Let him be the Devil," said Gurth, "an he will. We can be no worse of waiting his return. If he belong to that party, he must already have given them the alarm, and it will avail nothing either to fight or fly. Besides, I have late experience that arrant thieves are not the worst men in the world to have to deal with."

The yeoman returned in the course of a few minutes.

"Friend Gurth," he said, "I have mingled among yon men, and have learned to whom they belong, and whither they are bound. There is, I think, no chance that they will proceed to any actual violence against their prisoners. For three men to attempt them at this moment were little else than madness, for they are good men of war, and have as such placed sentinels to give the alarm when any one approaches; but I trust soon to gather such a force as may act in defiance of all their precau tions. You are both servants, and, as I think, faithful servants, of Cedric the Saxon, the friend of the rights of Englishmen. He shall not want English hands to help him in this extremity. Come, then, with me, until I gather more aid."

So saying, he walked through the wood at a great pace, followed by the Jester and the swineherd. It was not consistent with Wamba's humor to travel long in silence.

[1] Mask. [2] Let him run away. [3] Equipments; belongings.

"I think," said he, looking at the baldric and bugle which he still carried, "that I saw the arrow shot which won this gay prize, and that not so long since as Christmas."

"And I," said Gurth, "could take it on my halidom that I have heard the voice of the good yeoman who won it, by night as well as by day, and that the moon is not three days older since I did so."

"Mine honest friends," replied the yeoman, "who or what I am is little to the present purpose. Should I free your master, you will have reason to think me the best friend you have ever had in your lives; and whether I am known by one name or another, or whether I can draw a bow as well or better than a cow-keeper, or whether it is my pleasure to walk in sunshine or by moonlight, are matters which, as they do not concern you, so neither need ye busy yourselves respecting them."

"Our heads are in the lion's mouth," said Wamba in a whisper to Gurth, "get them out how we can."

"Hush! Be silent!" said Gurth. "Offend him not by thy folly, and I trust sincerely that all will go well."

CHAPTER XX.

IT was after three hours' good walking that the servants of Cedric, with their mysterious guide, arrived at a small opening in the forest, in the center of which grew an oak-tree of enormous magnitude, throwing its twisted branches in every direction. Beneath this tree four or five yeomen lay stretched on the ground, while another, as sentinel, walked to and fro in the moonlight shade.

Upon hearing the sound of feet approaching, the watch instantly gave the alarm, and the sleepers as suddenly started up