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

and bent their bows. Six arrows placed on the string were pointed towards the quarter from which the travelers approached, when their guide, being recognized, was welcomed with every token of respect and attachment, and all signs and fears of a rough reception at once subsided.

"Where is the miller?" was his first question.

"On the road towards Rotherham."

"With how many?" demanded the leader, for such he seemed to be.

"With six men and good hope of booty, if it please St. Nicholas."

"Devoutly spoken," said Locksley; "and where is Allan-a-Dale?"

"Walked up towards the Watling Street,[1] to watch for the Prior of Jorvaulx."

"That is well thought on also," replied the captain; "and where is the friar?"

"In his cell."

"Thither will I go," said Locksley. "Disperse and seek your companions. Collect what force you can, for there's game afoot that must be hunted hard, and will turn to bay. Meet me here by daybreak. And stay," he added, "I have forgotten what is most necessary of the whole. Two of you take the road quickly towards Torquilstone, the castle of Front-de-Bœuf. A set of gallants, who have been masquerading in such guise as our own, are carrying a band of prisoners thither. Watch them closely, for, even if they reach the castle before we collect our force, our honor is concerned to punish them, and we will find means to do so. Keep a close watch on them, therefore; and dispatch one of your comrades, the lightest of foot, to bring the news of the yeomen thereabout."

They promised implicit obedience, and departed with alacrity on their different errands. In the mean while, their leader and

[1] A celebrated Roman road or highway of Britain, running from Dover to London, and on to Chester and North Wales.

his two companions, who now looked upon him with great respect, as well as some fear, pursued their way to the chapel of Copmanhurst.

When they had reached the little moonlight glade, having in front the reverend though ruinous chapel and the rude hermitage, so well suited to ascetic devotion, Wamba whispered to Gurth, "If this be the habitation of a thief, it makes good the old proverb, 'The nearer the church, the farther from God.' And, by my coxcomb,"[1] he added, "I think it be even so. Hearken but to the black sanctus[2] which they are singing in the hermitage!"

In fact, the anchorite and his guest were performing, at the full extent of their very powerful lungs, a drinking-song.

"Now, that is not ill sung," said Wamba, who had thrown in a few of his own flourishes to help out the chorus. "But who, in the saint's name, ever expected to have heard such a jolly chant come from out a hermit's cell at midnight?"

"Marry, that should I," said Gurth, "for the jolly Clerk of Copmanhurst is a known man, and kills half the deer that are stolen in this walk.[3] Men say that the keeper has complained to his official, and that he will be stripped of his cowl and cope altogether if he keep not better order."

While they were thus speaking, Locksley's loud and repeated knocks had at length disturbed the anchorite and his guest. "By my beads," said the hermit, stopping short in a grand flourish, "here come more benighted guests. I would not for my cowl that they found us in this goodly exercise. All men have their enemies, good Sir Sluggard; and there be those malignant enough to construe the hospitable refreshment which I have been offering to you, a weary traveler, for the matter of three short hours, into sheer drunkenness, alien to my profession and my disposition."

[1] Jester's cap; called coxcomb from the bit of red cloth which, notched like the comb of a cock, was formerly worn in their caps by licensed jesters.

[2] The black sanctus was a name used in irony for a drinking-song; a *sanctus* (meaning "holy") was an anthem.

[3] Habitual haunt, used in the sense of a run, as a sheep-run.

"Base calumniators!" replied the knight; "I would I had the chastising of them! Nevertheless, Holy Clerk, it is true that all have their enemies, and there be those in this very land whom I would rather speak to through the bars of my helmet than barefaced."

"Get thine iron pot[1] on thy head, then, friend Sluggard, as quickly as thy nature will permit," said the hermit, "while I remove these pewter flagons; and to drown the clatter strike into the tune which thou hearest me sing. It is no matter for the words: I scarce know them myself."

So saying, he struck up a thundering *De profundis clamavi*,[2] under cover of which he removed the apparatus[3] of their banquet; while the knight, laughing heartily, and arming himself all the while, assisted his host with his voice from time to time, as his mirth permitted.

"What matins[4] are you after at this hour?" said a voice from without.

"Heaven forgive you, Sir Traveler!" said the hermit, whose own noise perhaps prevented from recognizing accents which were tolerably familiar to him. "Wend[5] on your way, in the name of God and St. Dunstan, and disturb not the devotions of me and my holy brother."

"Mad priest," answered the voice from without, "open to Locksley!"

"All's safe, all's right," said the hermit to his companion.

"But who is he?" said the Black Knight: "it imports me much to know."

"Who is he?" answered the hermit. "I tell thee he is a friend."

"But what friend?" answered the knight; "for he may be friend to thee, and none of mine."

"What friend?" replied the hermit; "that, now, is one of the questions that is more easily asked than answered. What friend?

[1] Helmet. [2] "Out of the depths have I cried" (see Psalm cxxx.).
[3] The dishes, etc. [4] Morning prayers. [5] Proceed.

Why, he is, now that I bethink me a little, the very same honest keeper I told thee of awhile since."

"Ay, as honest a keeper as thou art a pious hermit," replied the knight. "I doubt it not. But undo the door to him before he beat it from its hinges."

The dogs, in the mean time, which had made a dreadful baying at the commencement of the disturbance, seemed now to recognize the voice of him who stood without; for, totally changing their manner, they scratched and whined at the door, as if interceding for his admission. The hermit speedily unbolted his portal, and admitted Locksley with his two companions.

"Why, hermit," was the yeoman's first question as soon as he beheld the knight, "what boon companion hast thou here?"

"A brother of our order," replied the friar, shaking his head; "we have been at our orisons all night."

"He is a monk of the church militant, I think," answered Locksley; "and there be more of them abroad. I tell thee, friar, thou must lay down the rosary and take up the quarter-staff. We shall need every one of our merry men, whether clerk or layman. But," he added, taking him a step aside, "art thou mad, to give admittance to a knight thou dost not know? Hast thou forgot our articles?"[1]

"Not know him!" replied the friar boldly. "I know him as well as the beggar knows his dish."

"And what is his name, then?" demanded Locksley.

"His name," said the hermit — "his name is Sir Anthony of Scrablestone!"

"Thou hast been prating, I fear," said the woodsman.

"Good yeoman," said the knight, coming forward, "be not wroth with my merry host. He did but afford me the hospitality which I would have compelled from him if he had refused it."

"Thou compel!" said the friar. "Wait but till I have changed this gray gown for a green cassock, and, if I make not a quarter-

[1] Bonds of agreement.

staff ring twelve upon thy pate, I am neither true clerk nor good woodsman."

While he spoke thus, he stripped off his gown, and appeared in a close black buckram doublet and drawers, over which he speedily did on a cassock of green, and hose of the same color. "I pray thee truss[1] my points,"[2] said he to Wamba, "and thou shalt have a cup of sack[3] for thy labor."

"Gramercy for thy sack," said Wamba; "but thinkst thou it is lawful for me to aid you to transmew[4] thyself from a holy hermit into a sinful forester?"

"Never fear," said the hermit; "I will but confess the sins of my green cloak to my gray friar's frock, and all shall be well again."

"Amen!" answered the Jester. "A broadcloth penitent should have a sackcloth confessor, and your frock may absolve my motley doublet into the bargain."

So saying, he accommodated the friar with his assistance in tying the endless number of points, as the laces which attached the hose to the doublet were then termed.

While they were thus employed, Locksley led the knight a little apart, and addressed him thus: "Deny it not, Sir Knight, you are he who decided the victory to the advantage of the English against the strangers on the second day of the tournament at Ashby."

"And what follows if you guess truly, good yeoman?" replied the knight.

"I should in that case hold you," replied the yeoman, "a friend to the weaker party."

"Such is the duty of a true knight, at least," replied the Black Champion; "and I would not willingly that there were reason to think otherwise of me."

"But for my purpose," said the yeoman, "thou shouldst be as well a good Englishman as a good knight; for that which I have

[1] Tighten; fasten.
[2] Laces used for the dress.
[3] Wine.
[4] Change.

to speak of concerns, indeed, the duty of every honest man, but is more especially that of a true-born native of England."

"You can speak to no one," replied the knight, "to whom England, and the life of every Englishman, can be dearer than to me."

"I would willingly believe so," said the woodsman, "for never had this country such need to be supported by those who love her. Hear me, and I will tell thee of an enterprise in which, if thou be'st really that which thou seemest, thou mayest take an honorable part. A band of villains, in the disguise of better men than themselves, have made themselves master of the person of a noble Englishman, called Cedric the Saxon, together with his ward, and his friend Athelstane of Coningsburgh, and have transported them to a castle in this forest, called Torquilstone. I ask of thee, as a good knight and a good Englishman, wilt thou aid in their rescue?"

"I am bound by my vow to do so," replied the knight; "but I would willingly know who you are, who request my assistance in their behalf."

"I am," said the forester, "a nameless man; but I am the friend of my country, and of my country's friends. With this account of me you must for the present remain satisfied, the more especially since you yourself desire to continue unknown. Believe, however, that my word, when pledged, is as inviolate as if I wore golden spurs."

"I willingly believe it," said the knight; "I have been accustomed to study men's countenances, and I can read in thine honesty and resolution. I will therefore ask thee no further questions, but aid thee in setting at freedom these oppressed captives; which done, I trust we shall part better acquainted, and well satisfied with each other."

"So," said Wamba to Gurth — for, the friar being now fully equipped, the Jester, having approached to the other side of the hut, had heard the conclusion of the conversation — "so we have got a new ally?"

The friar was now completely accoutered as a yeoman, with sword and buckler, bow and quiver, and a strong partisan[1] over his shoulder. He left his cell at the head of the party, and, having carefully locked the door, deposited the key under the threshold.

"Come on," said Locksley, "and be silent! Come on, my masters! We must collect all our forces; and few enough we shall have, if we are to storm the castle of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf."

CHAPTER XXI.

WHILE these measures were taking in behalf of Cedric and his companions, the armed men by whom the latter had been seized hurried their captives along towards the place of security where they intended to imprison them; but darkness came on fast, and the paths of the wood seemed but imperfectly known to the marauders. They were compelled to make several long halts, and once or twice to return on their road to resume the direction which they wished to pursue. The summer morn had dawned upon them ere they could travel in full assurance that they held the right path; but confidence returned with light, and the cavalcade now moved rapidly forward. Meanwhile the following dialogue took place between the two leaders of the banditti:—

"It is time thou shouldst leave us, Sir Maurice," said the Templar to De Bracy, "in order to prepare the second part of thy mystery. Thou art next, thou knowest, to act the knight deliverer."

"I have thought better of it," said De Bracy. "I will not leave thee till the prize is fairly deposited in Front-de-Bœuf's castle. There will I appear before the Lady Rowena in mine own shape."

[1] A staff capped by a blade with side projections; a form of halberd, a long-handled cutting weapon.

"And what has made thee change thy plan, De Bracy?" replied the Knight Templar.

"That concerns thee nothing," answered his companion.

"I would hope, however, Sir Knight," said the Templar, "that this alteration of measures arises from no suspicion of my honorable meaning, such as Fitzurse endeavored to instill into thee."

"My thoughts are my own," answered De Bracy; "suffice it to say, I will not give thee the power of cheating me out of the prey for which I have run such risks."

"Hear the truth, then," said the Templar: "I care not for your blue-eyed beauty. I have a prize among the captives as lovely as thine own."

"By the mass, thou meanest the fair Jewess!" said De Bracy.

"And if I do," said Bois-Guilbert, "who shall gainsay me?"

"No one that I know," said De Bracy. "Yet I would have sworn thy thoughts had been more on the old usurer's moneybags than on the black eyes of the daughter."

"I can admire both," answered the Templar; "besides, the old Jew is but half-prize. I must share his spoils with Front-de-Bœuf. But, now thou knowest my drift, thou wilt resume thine own original plan, wilt thou not?"

"No," replied De Bracy, "I will remain beside my prize."

While this dialogue was proceeding, Cedric was endeavoring to wring out of those who guarded him an avowal of their character and purpose.

It was in vain that Cedric expostulated with his guards, who had too many good reasons for their silence to be induced to break it either by his wrath or his expostulations. They continued to hurry him along, traveling at a very rapid rate, until, at the end of an avenue of huge trees, arose Torquilstone, now the hoary and ancient castle of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf. It was a fortress of no great size, consisting of a donjon,[1] or large and high square tower, surrounded by buildings of inferior height, which were encircled by an inner courtyard. Around the ex-

[1] In ancient castles the chief tower, also called the "keep."

terior wall was a deep moat, supplied with water from a neighboring rivulet. Front-de-Bœuf, whose character placed him often at feud with his enemies, had made considerable additions to the strength of his castle by building towers upon the outward wall, so as to flank it at every angle. The access, as usual in castles of the period, lay through an arched barbican,[1] or outwork, which was terminated and defended by a small turret at each corner.

Cedric no sooner saw the turrets of Front-de-Bœuf's castle raise their gray and moss-grown battlements, glimmering in the morning sun, above the woods by which they were surrounded, than he instantly augured more truly concerning the cause of his misfortune.

"I did injustice," he said, "to the thieves and outlaws of these woods, when I supposed such banditti to belong to their bands. I might as justly have confounded the foxes of these brakes[2] with the ravening wolves of France. Tell me, dogs, is it my life, or my wealth, that your master aims at? Is it too much that two Saxons, myself and the noble Athelstane, should hold land in the country which was once the patrimony of our race? Put us, then, to death, and complete your tyranny by taking our lives, as you began with our liberties. If the Saxon Cedric cannot rescue England, he is willing to die for her. Tell your tyrannical master I do only beseech him to dismiss the Lady Rowena in safety. She is a woman, and he need not dread her; and with us will die all who dare fight in her cause."

The attendants remained as mute to this address as to the former, and they now stood before the gate of the castle. De Bracy winded his horn three times, and the archers and cross-bow-men, who had manned the wall upon seeing their approach, hastened to lower the drawbridge and admit them. The prisoners were compelled by their guards to alight, and were conducted to

[1] An outwork or out-tower defending the entrance of a castle, commanding its approach over a drawbridge usually.

[2] Thick underbrush.

an apartment where a hasty repast was offered them, of which none but Athelstane felt any inclination to partake. Neither had the descendant of the Confessor much time to do justice to the good cheer placed before them, for their guards gave him and Cedric to understand that they were to be imprisoned in a chamber apart from Rowena. Resistance was vain; and they were compelled to follow to a large room, which, rising on clumsy Saxon pillars, resembled those refectories[1] and chapter-houses[2] which may be still seen in the most ancient parts of our most ancient monasteries.

The Lady Rowena was next separated from her train, and conducted, with courtesy indeed, but still without consulting her inclination, to a distant apartment. The same distinction was conferred on Rebecca, in spite of her father's entreaties, who offered even money, in this extremity of distress, that she might be permitted to abide with him. "Base unbeliever," answered one of his guards, "when thou hast seen thy lair, thou wilt not wish thy daughter to partake it." And without further discussion the old Jew was forcibly dragged off in a different direction from the other prisoners. The domestics, after being carefully searched and disarmed, were confined in another part of the castle; and Rowena was refused even the comfort she might have derived from the attendance of her handmaiden Elgitha.

The apartment in which the Saxon chiefs were confined, although at present used as a sort of guard-room, had formerly been the great hall of the castle. It was now abandoned to meaner purposes, because the present lord, among other additions to the convenience, security, and beauty of his baronial residence, had erected a new and noble hall, whose vaulted roof was supported by lighter and more elegant pillars, and fitted up with that higher degree of ornament which the Normans had already introduced into architecture.

[1] The dining apartments in a monastery.

[2] Buildings connected with cathedrals or religious houses in which the chapters or assemblies of monks or other clergy held council.

Cedric paced the apartment, filled with indignant reflections on the past and on the present, while the apathy of his companion served, instead of patience and philosophy, to defend him against everything save the inconvenience of the present moment; and so little did he feel even this last, that he was only from time to time roused to a reply by Cedric's animated and impassioned appeal to him.

"Yes," said Cedric, half speaking to himself and half addressing himself to Athelstane, "it was in this very hall that my ancestor feasted with Torquil Wolfganger, when he entertained the valiant and unfortunate Harold,[1] then advancing against the Norwegians, who had united themselves to the rebel Tosti.[2] It was in this hall that Harold returned the magnanimous answer to the ambassador of his rebel brother. Oft have I heard my father kindle as he told the tale. Who would have thought that you, noble Athelstane — that you, descended of Harold's blood, and that I, whose father was not the worst defender of the Saxon crown, should be prisoners to a vile Norman, in the very hall in which our ancestors held such high festival?"

While the Saxon was plunged in painful reflections, the door of their prison opened, and gave entrance to a sewer,[3] holding his white rod of office. This important person advanced into the chamber with a grave pace, followed by four attendants bearing in a table covered with dishes, the sight and smell of which seemed to be an instant compensation to Athelstane for all the inconvenience he had undergone. The persons who attended on the feast were masked and cloaked.

"What mummery is this?" said Cedric. "Think you that we

[1] The Saxon king defeated at Hastings by William the Conqueror, Oct. 14, 1066, and killed in the battle.

[2] The battle alluded to, fought and won by King Harold over his brother, the rebellious Tosti, and an auxiliary force of Danes or Norsemen, took place in 1066 at Stamford, Strangford, or Staneford, — a ford upon the river Derwent, seven miles from York, and situated in that large and opulent county.

[3] A steward.

are ignorant whose prisoners we are, when we are in the castle of your master? Tell him," he continued, willing to use this opportunity to open a negotiation for his freedom — "tell your master, Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, that we know no reason he can have for withholding our liberty, excepting his unlawful desire to enrich himself at our expense. Tell him that we yield to his rapacity as in similar circumstances we should do to that of a literal robber. Let him name the ransom at which he rates our liberty, and it shall be paid, providing the exaction is suited to our means."

The sewer made no answer, but bowed his head.

"And tell Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf," said Athelstane, "that I send him my mortal defiance, and challenge him to combat with me, on foot or horseback, at any secure place, within eight days after our liberation; which, if he be a true knight, he will not, under these circumstances, venture to refuse or to delay."

"I shall deliver to the knight your defiance," answered the sewer; "meanwhile I leave you to your food."

The challenge of Athelstane was delivered with no good grace; for a large mouthful, which required the exercise of both jaws at once, added to a natural hesitation, considerably damped the effect of the bold defiance it contained. Still, however, his speech was hailed by Cedric as an incontestable token of reviving spirit in his companion, whose previous indifference had begun, notwithstanding his respect for Athelstane's descent, to wear out his patience. But he now cordially shook hands with him in token of his approbation, and was somewhat grieved when Athelstane observed that he would fight a dozen such men as Front-de-Bœuf, if by so doing he could hasten his departure from a dungeon where they put so much garlic into their pottage. Notwithstanding this intimation of a relapse into apathy, Cedric placed himself opposite to Athelstane, and soon showed, that, if the distresses of his country could banish the recollection of food while the table was uncovered, yet no sooner were the victuals put there than he proved that the appetite of his Saxon ancestors had descended to him along with their other qualities.

The captives had not long enjoyed their refreshment, however, ere their attention was disturbed, even from this most serious occupation, by the blast of a horn winded before the gate. It was repeated three times, with as much violence as if it had been blown before an enchanted castle by the destined knight at whose summons halls and towers, barbican and battlement, were to roll off like a morning vapor. The Saxons started from the table, and hastened to the window, but their curiosity was disappointed; for these outlets only looked upon the court of the castle, and the sound came from beyond its precincts. The summons, however, seemed of importance, for a considerable degree of bustle instantly took place in the castle.

CHAPTER XXII.

LEAVING the Saxon chiefs to return to their banquet, we have to look in upon the yet more severe imprisonment of Isaac of York. The poor Jew had been hastily thrust into a dungeon-vault of the castle, the floor of which was deep beneath the level of the ground, and very damp, being lower than even the moat itself. The only light was received through one or two loop-holes far above the reach of the captive's hand. These apertures admitted, even at midday, only a dim and uncertain light, which was changed for utter darkness long before the rest of the castle had lost the blessing of day. Chains and shackles, which had been the portion of former captives from whom active exertions to escape had been apprehended, hung, rusted and empty, on the walls of the prison; and in the rings of one of those sets of fetters there remained two moldering bones, which seemed to have been once those of the human leg, as if the prisoner had been left not only to perish there, but to be consumed to a skeleton.

At one end of this ghastly apartment was a large fire-grate,

over the top of which were stretched some transverse iron bars, half devoured with rust.

The whole appearance of the dungeon might have appalled a stouter heart than that of Isaac, who, nevertheless, was more composed under the imminent pressure of danger than he had seemed to be while affected by terrors of which the cause was as yet remote and contingent.

In this humor of passive resistance, and with his garment collected beneath him to keep his limbs from the wet pavement, Isaac sat in a corner of his dungeon, where his folded hands, his disheveled hair and beard, his furred cloak and high cap, seen by the wiry and broken light, would have afforded a study for Rembrandt,[1] had that celebrated painter existed at the period. The Jew remained without altering his position for nearly three hours, at the expiry of which steps were heard on the dungeon stair. The bolts screamed as they were withdrawn, the hinges creaked as the wicket opened, and Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, followed by the two Saracen slaves of the Templar, entered the prison.

Front-de-Bœuf, a tall and strong man, whose life had been spent in public war or in private feuds and broils, and who had hesitated at no means of extending his feudal power, had features corresponding to his character, and which strongly expressed the fiercer and more malignant passions of the mind. The scars with which his visage was seamed would, on features of a different cast, have excited the sympathy and veneration due to the marks of honorable valor; but, in the peculiar case of Front-de-Bœuf, they only added to the ferocity of his countenance and to the dread which his presence inspired. This formidable baron was clad in a leathern doublet, fitted close to his body, which was frayed and soiled with the stains of his armor. He had no weapon excepting a poniard at his belt, which served to counter-

[1] A Dutch painter of history and portraits, celebrated for his powerful rendering of contrasts in light and shadow, born June 15, 1606, near Leyden, and died in Amsterdam, October 8, 1669.

balance the weight of the bunch of rusty keys that hung at his right side.

The black slaves who attended Front-de-Bœuf were stripped of their gorgeous apparel, and attired in jerkins and trousers of coarse linen, their sleeves being tucked up above the elbow, like those of butchers when about to exercise their function in the slaughter-house. Each had in his hand a small pannier,[1] and, when they entered the dungeon, they stopped at the door until Front-de-Bœuf himself carefully locked and double-locked it. Having taken this precaution, he advanced slowly up the apartment towards the Jew, upon whom he kept his eye fixed as if he wished to paralyze him with his glance, as some animals are said to fascinate their prey. It seemed, indeed, as if the sullen and malignant eye of Front-de-Bœuf possessed some portion of that supposed power over his unfortunate prisoner. The Jew sate with his mouth agape, and his eyes fixed on the savage baron with such earnestness of terror that his frame seemed literally to shrink together and to diminish in size while encountering the fierce Norman's fixed and baleful gaze. The unhappy Isaac was deprived not only of the power of rising to make the obeisance which his terror dictated, but he could not even doff his cap or utter any word of supplication, so strongly was he agitated by the conviction that tortures and death were impending over him.

On the other hand, the stately form of the Norman appeared to dilate in magnitude, like that of the eagle, which ruffles up its plumage when about to pounce on its defenseless prey. He paused within three steps of the corner in which the unfortunate Jew had now, as it were, coiled himself up into the smallest possible space, and made a sign for one of the slaves to approach. The black satellite came forward, accordingly, and, producing from his basket a large pair of scales and several weights, he laid them at the feet of Front-de-Bœuf, and again retired to the respectful distance at which his companion had already taken his station.

[1] Basket of wicker-work.

The motions of these men were slow and solemn, as if there impended over their souls some preconception of horror and of cruelty. Front-de-Bœuf himself opened the scene by thus addressing his ill-fated captive:—

"Most accursed dog of an accursed race," he said, awaking with his deep and sullen voice the sullen echoes of his dungeon vault, "seest thou these scales?"

The unhappy Jew returned a feeble affirmative.

"In these very scales shalt thou weigh me out," said the relentless baron, "a thousand silver pounds, after the just measure and weight of the Tower of London."

"Holy Abraham!" returned the Jew, finding voice through the very extremity of his danger, "heard man ever such a demand? Who ever heard, even in a minstrel's tale, of such a sum as a thousand pounds of silver? What human sight was ever blessed with the vision of such a mass of treasure? Not within the walls of York, ransack my house and that of all my tribe, wilt thou find the tithe[1] of that huge sum of silver that thou speakest of."

"I am reasonable," answered Front-de-Bœuf; "and if silver be scant, I refuse not gold. At the rate of a mark of gold for each six pounds of silver, thou shalt free thy unbelieving carcass from such punishment as thy heart has never even conceived."

"Have mercy on me, noble knight!" exclaimed Isaac. "I am old and poor and helpless. It were unworthy to triumph over me. It is a poor deed to crush a worm."

"Old thou mayest be," replied the knight, "more shame to their folly who have suffered thee to grow gray in usury and knavery; feeble thou mayest be, for when had a Jew either heart or hand? but rich it is well known thou art."

"I swear to you, noble knight," said the Jew, "by all which I believe, and by all which we believe in common"—

"Perjure not thyself," said the Norman, interrupting him, "and let not thine obstinacy seal thy doom until thou hast seen

[1] A tenth; any small portion.

and well considered the fate that awaits thee. Think not I speak to thee only to excite thy terror, and practice on the base cowardice thou hast derived from thy tribe. I swear to thee by that which thou dost NOT believe, by the gospel which our Church teaches, and by the keys which are given her to bind and to loose, that my purpose is deep and peremptory.[1] This dungeon is no place for trifling. Prisoners ten thousand times more distinguished than thou have died within these walls, and their fate hath never been known; but for thee is reserved a long and lingering death, to which theirs were luxury."

He again made a signal for the slaves to approach, and spoke to them apart, in their own language; for he also had been in Palestine, where, perhaps, he had learned his lesson of cruelty. The Saracens produced from their baskets a quantity of charcoal, a pair of bellows, and a flask of oil. While the one struck a light with a flint and steel, the other disposed the charcoal in the large rusty grate which we have already mentioned, and exercised the bellows until the fuel came to a red glow.

"Seest thou, Isaac," said Front-de-Bœuf, "the range of iron bars above that glowing charcoal? On that warm couch thou shalt lie, stripped of thy clothes, as if thou wert to rest on a bed of down. One of these slaves shall maintain the fire beneath thee, while the other shall anoint thy wretched limbs with oil, lest the roast should burn. Now choose betwixt such a scorching bed and the payment of a thousand pounds of silver; for, by the head of my father, thou hast no other option."

"It is impossible," exclaimed the miserable Jew—"it is impossible that your purpose can be real! The good God of nature never made a heart capable of exercising such cruelty!"

"Trust not to that, Isaac," said Front-de-Bœuf: "it were a fatal error. Dost thou think that I, who have seen a town sacked in which thousands of my Christian countrymen perished by sword, by flood, and by fire, will blench[2] from my purpose for the outcries or screams of one single wretched Jew? Or

[1] Not debatable; that is, final.

[2] Shrink away from.

thinkest thou that these swarthy slaves, who have neither law, country, nor conscience, but their master's will; who use the poison, or the stake, or the poniard, or the cord, at his slightest wink—thinkest thou that *they* will have mercy, who do not even understand the language in which it is asked? Be wise, old man; discharge thyself of a portion of thy superfluous wealth; repay to the hands of a Christian a part of what thou hast acquired by the usury thou hast practiced on those of his religion. Thy cunning may soon swell out once more thy shriveled purse, but neither leech nor medicine can restore thy scorched hide and flesh wert thou once stretched on these bars. Tell down thy ransom, I say, and rejoice that at such rate thou canst redeem thee from a dungeon the secrets of which few have returned to tell. I waste no more words with thee. Choose between thy dross[1] and thy flesh and blood, and as thou choosest so shall it be."

"So may Abraham, Jacob, and all the fathers of our people, assist me," said Isaac, "I cannot make the choice, because I have not the means of satisfying your exorbitant demand."

"Seize him and strip him, slaves," said the knight, "and let the fathers of his race assist him if they can."

The assistants, taking their directions more from the baron's eye and his hand than his tongue, once more stepped forward, laid hands on the unfortunate Isaac, plucked him up from the ground, and, holding him between them, waited the hard-hearted baron's further signal. The unhappy Jew eyed their countenances and that of Front-de-Bœuf, in hope of discovering some symptoms of relenting; but that of the baron exhibited the same cold, half-sullen, half-sarcastic smile which had been the prelude to his cruelty; and the savage eyes of the Saracens, rolling gloomily under their dark brows, acquiring a yet more sinister expression by the whiteness of the circle which surrounds the pupil, evinced rather the secret pleasure which they expected from the approaching scene than any reluctance to be its directors or agents. The Jew then looked at the glowing furnace

[1] Refuse in melting metals; here used contemptuously for money.

over which he was presently to be stretched, and, seeing no chance of his tormentor's relenting, his resolution gave way.

"I will pay," he said, "the thousand pounds of silver—that is," he added after a moment's pause, "I will pay it with the help of my brethren; for I must beg as a mendicant at the door of our synagogue ere I make up so unheard of a sum. When and where must it be delivered?"

"Here," replied Front-de-Bœuf, "here it must be delivered; weighed it must be—weighed and told down on this very dungeon floor. Thinkest thou I will part with thee until thy ransom is secure?"

"And what is to be my surety," said the Jew, "that I shall be at liberty after this ransom is paid?"

"The word of a Norman noble, thou pawnbroking slave," answered Front-de-Bœuf; "the faith of a Norman nobleman, more pure than the gold and silver of thee and all thy tribe."

"I crave pardon, noble lord," said Isaac timidly, "but wherefore should I rely wholly on the word of one who will trust nothing to mine?"

"Because thou canst not help it, Jew," said the knight sternly. "Wert thou now in thy treasure-chamber at York, and were I craving a loan of thy shekels, it would be thine to dictate the time of payment and the pledge of security. This is *my* treasure-chamber. Here I have thee at advantage, nor will I again deign to repeat the terms on which I grant thee liberty."

The Jew groaned deeply. "Grant me," he said, "at least, with my own liberty, that of the companions with whom I travel. They scorned me as a Jew, yet they pitied my desolation, and, because they tarried to aid me by the way, a share of my evil hath come upon them; moreover, they may contribute in some sort to my ransom."

"If thou meanest yonder Saxon churls," said Front-de-Bœuf, "their ransom will depend upon other terms than thine. Mind thine own concerns, Jew, I warn thee, and meddle not with those of others."

"I am, then," said Isaac, "only to be set at liberty, together with mine wounded friend?"

"Shall I twice recommend it," said Front-de-Bœuf, "to a son of Israel, to meddle with his own concerns, and leave those of others alone? Since thou hast made thy choice, it remains but that thou payest down thy ransom, and that at a short day."

"Yet hear me," said the Jew: "for the sake of that very wealth which thou wouldst obtain at the expense of thy"—Here he stopped short, afraid of irritating the savage Norman; but Front-de-Bœuf only laughed, and himself filled up the blank at which the Jew had hesitated. "At the expense of my conscience, thou wouldst say, Isaac. Speak it out. I tell thee I am reasonable. I can bear the reproaches of a loser, even when that loser is a Jew. Thou wert not so patient, Isaac, when thou didst invoke justice against Jacques Fitzdotterel for calling thee a usurious blood-sucker, when thy exactions had devoured his patrimony."

"I swear by the Talmud,"[1] said the Jew, "that your valor has been misled in that matter. Fitzdotterel drew his poniard upon me in mine own chamber because I craved him for mine own silver. The term of payment was due at the Passover."

"I care not what he did," said Front-de-Bœuf: "the question is, when shall I have mine own? When shall I have the shekels, Isaac?"

"Let my daughter Rebecca go forth to York," answered Isaac, "with your safe-conduct, noble knight; and so soon as man and horse can return, the treasure"—Here he groaned deeply, but added, after the pause of a few seconds, "the treasure shall be told down on this very floor."

"Thy daughter!" said Front-de-Bœuf, as if surprised. "By heavens, Isaac, I would I had known of this! Yonder black-browed girl I gave to Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert."

The yell which Isaac raised at this unfeeling communication made the very vault to ring, and astounded the two Saracens so

[1] The law (civil and canonical) of the Jewish people.

much that they let go their hold of the Jew. He availed himself of his enlargement to throw himself on the pavement and clasp the knees of Front-de-Bœuf.

"Take all that you have asked," said he, "Sir Knight, take ten times more, reduce me to ruin and to beggary if thou wilt, nay, pierce me with thy poniard, broil me on that furnace, but spare my daughter, spare a helpless maiden. She is the image of my deceased Rachel. Will you deprive a widowed husband of his sole remaining comfort? Will you reduce a father to wish that his only living child were laid beside her dead mother in the tomb of our fathers?"

"I would," said the Norman, somewhat relenting, "that I had known of this before. I thought your race had loved nothing save their money-bags."

"Think not so vilely of us, Jews though we be," said Isaac, eager to improve the moment of apparent sympathy. "The hunted fox, the tortured wild-cat, loves its young: the despised and persecuted race of Abraham love their children!"

"Be it so," said Front-de-Bœuf. "I will believe it in future, Isaac, for thy very sake; but it aids us not now. I cannot help what has happened, or what is to follow. My word is passed to my comrade in arms, nor would I break it for ten Jews."

"Robber and villain!" said the Jew, retorting with passion which, however impotent, he now found it impossible to bridle, "I will pay thee nothing—not one silver penny will I pay thee—unless my daughter is delivered to me in safety!"

"Art thou in thy senses, Israelite?" said the Norman sternly. "Has thy flesh and blood a charm against heated iron and scalding oil?"

"I care not!" said the Jew, rendered desperate by paternal affection. "Do thy worst. My daughter is my flesh and blood, dearer to me a thousand times than those limbs which thy cruelty threatens. No silver will I give thee, unless I were to pour it molten down thy avaricious throat—no, not a silver penny will I give thee, Nazarene! Take my life if thou wilt, and

say the Jew, amidst his tortures, knew how to disappoint the Christian."

"We shall see that," said Front-de-Bœuf; "for by the blessed rood, which is the abomination of thy tribe, thou shalt feel the extremities of fire and steel!—Strip him, slaves, and chain him down upon the bars."

In spite of the feeble struggles of the old man, the Saracens had already torn from him his upper garment, and were proceeding totally to disrobe him, when the sound of a bugle, twice winded without the castle, penetrated even to the recesses of the dungeon, and immediately after loud voices were heard calling for Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf. Unwilling to be found engaged in his occupation, the savage baron gave the slaves a signal to restore Isaac's garment, and, quitting the dungeon with his attendants, he left the Jew to thank God for his own deliverance, or to lament over his daughter's captivity, as his personal or parental feelings might prove strongest.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE apartment to which the Lady Rowena had been introduced was fitted up with some rude attempts at ornament and magnificence, and her being placed there might be considered as a peculiar mark of respect not offered to the other prisoners. But the wife of Front-de-Bœuf, for whom it had been originally furnished, was long dead, and decay and neglect had impaired the few ornaments with which her taste had adorned it. The tapestry hung down from the walls in many places, and in others was tarnished and faded under the effects of the sun, or tattered and decayed by age. Desolate, however, as it was, this was the apartment of the castle which had been judged most fitting for the accommodation of the Saxon heiress; and here she was left to meditate upon her fate until the actors in this nefa-

rious drama had arranged the several parts which each of them was to perform. This had been settled in a council held by Front-de-Bœuf, De Bracy, and the Templar, in which, after a long and warm debate concerning the several advantages which each insisted upon deriving from his peculiar share in this audacious enterprise, they had at length determined the fate of their unhappy prisoners.

It was about the hour of noon, therefore, when De Bracy, for whose advantage the expedition had been first planned, appeared to prosecute his views upon the hand and possessions of the Lady Rowena.

The interval had not entirely been bestowed in holding council with his confederates, for De Bracy had found leisure to decorate his person with all the foppery of the times. His green cassock and vizard were now flung aside. His long, luxuriant hair was trained to flow in quaint tresses down his richly furred cloak. His beard was closely shaved, his doublet reached to the middle of his leg, and the girdle which secured it, and at the same time supported his ponderous sword, was embroidered and embossed with gold-work. We have already noticed the extravagant fashion of the shoes at this period; and the points of Maurice de Bracy's might have challenged the prize of extravagance with the gayest, being turned up and twisted like the horns of a ram. Such was the dress of a gallant of the period; and, in the present instance, that effect was aided by the handsome person and good demeanor of the wearer, whose manners partook alike of the grace of a courtier and the frankness of a soldier.

He saluted Rowena by doffing his velvet bonnet garnished with a golden brooch representing St. Michael trampling down the Prince of Evil. With this he gently motioned the lady to a seat; and, as she still retained her standing posture, the knight ungloved his right hand, and motioned to conduct her thither. But Rowena declined, by her gesture, the proffered compliment, and replied, "If I be in the presence of my jailer, Sir Knight,— nor will circumstances allow me to think otherwise,— it best becomes his prisoner to remain standing till she learns her doom."

"Alas, fair Rowena!" returned De Bracy, "you are in the presence of your captive, not your jailer; and it is from your fair eyes that De Bracy must receive that doom which you fondly expect from him."

"I know you not, sir," said the lady, drawing herself up with all the pride of offended rank and beauty — "I know you not; and the insolent familiarity with which you apply to me the jargon of a troubadour forms no apology for the violence of a robber."

"To thyself, fair maid," answered De Bracy in his former tone, "be ascribed whate'er I have done which passed the respect due to her whom I have chosen queen of my heart, and loadstar of my eyes."

"I repeat to you, Sir Knight, that I know you not, and that no man wearing chain and spurs ought thus to intrude himself upon the presence of an unprotected lady."

"That I am unknown to you," said De Bracy, "is indeed my misfortune; yet let me hope that De Bracy's name has not been always unspoken when minstrels or heralds have praised deeds of chivalry, whether in the lists or in the battle-field."

"To heralds and to minstrels, then, leave thy praise, Sir Knight," replied Rowena, "more suiting for their mouths than for thine own; and tell me which of them shall record in song, or in book of tourney, the memorable conquest of this night,— a conquest obtained over an old man, followed by a few timid hinds; and its booty an unfortunate maiden, transported against her will to the castle of a robber."

"You are unjust, Lady Rowena," said the knight, biting his lips in some confusion, and speaking in a tone more natural to him than that of affected gallantry, which he had at first adopted.

"Sir Knight," said Rowena, "certes, you constrain[1] me to sit down, since you enter upon such commonplace terms, of which

[1] Compel.

each crowder[1] hath a stock that might last from hence to Christmas."

"Proud damsel," said De Bracy, incensed at finding his gallant style procured him nothing but contempt—"proud damsel, thou shalt be as proudly encountered. Know, then, that I have supported my pretensions to your hand in the way that best suited thy character. It is meeter for thy humor to be wooed with bow and bill than in set terms and in courtly language."

"Courtesy of tongue," said Rowena, "when it is used to veil churlishness of deed, is but a knight's girdle around the breast of a base clown. I wonder not that the restraint appears to gall you. More it were for your honor to have retained the dress and language of an outlaw than to veil the deeds of one under an affectation of gentle language and demeanor."

"You counsel well, lady," said the Norman; "and in the bold language which best justifies bold action, I tell thee thou shalt never leave this castle, or thou shalt leave it as Maurice de Bracy's wife. I am not wont to be baffled in my enterprises, nor needs a Norman noble scrupulously to vindicate his conduct to the Saxon maiden whom he distinguishes by the offer of his hand. Thou art proud, Rowena, and thou art the fitter to be my wife. By what other means couldst thou be raised to high honor and to princely place saving by my alliance? How else wouldst thou escape from the mean precincts of a country grange,[2] where Saxons herd with the swine which form their wealth, to take thy seat, honored as thou shouldst be, and shalt be, amid all in England that is distinguished by beauty or dignified by power?"

"Sir Knight," replied Rowena, "the grange which you contemn hath been my shelter from infancy; and, trust me, when I leave it, should that day ever arrive, it shall be with one who has not learned to despise the dwelling and manners in which I have been brought up."

[1] Player; especially a player of a *crowd*, a kind of fiddle.

[2] Farm, including buildings, etc.

"I guess your meaning, lady," said De Bracy, "though you may think it lies too obscure for my apprehension. But dream not that Richard Cœur-de-Lion will ever resume his throne, far less that Wilfred of Ivanhoe, his minion, will ever lead thee to his footstool, to be there welcomed as the bride of a favorite. Know, lady, that this rival is in my power, and that it rests but with me to betray the secret of his being within the castle to Front-de-Bœuf, whose jealousy will be more fatal than mine."

"Wilfred here?" said Rowena in disdain: "that is as true as that Front-de-Bœuf is his rival."

De Bracy looked at her steadily for an instant. "Wert thou really ignorant of this?" said he. "Didst thou not know that Wilfred of Ivanhoe traveled in the litter of the Jew?—a meet conveyance for the crusader whose doughty arm was to conquer the Holy Sepulcher!" and he laughed scornfully.

"And if he is here," said Rowena, compelling herself to a tone of indifference, though trembling with an agony of apprehension which she could not suppress, "in what is he the rival of Front-de-Bœuf? or what has he to fear beyond a short imprisonment and an honorable ransom, according to the use of chivalry?"

"Rowena," said De Bracy, "art thou, too, deceived by the common error of thy sex, who think there can be no rivalry but that respecting their own charms? Knowest thou not there is a jealousy of ambition and of wealth, as well as of love, and that this our host, Front-de-Bœuf, will push from his road him who opposes his claim to the fair barony of Ivanhoe as readily as if he were preferred to him by some blue-eyed damsel? But smile on my suit, lady, and the wounded champion shall have nothing to fear from Front-de-Bœuf, whom else thou mayest mourn for as in the hands of one who has never shown compassion."

"Save him, for the love of Heaven!" said Rowena, her firmness giving way under terror for her lover's impending fate.

"I can, I will, it is my purpose," said De Bracy; "for when Rowena consents to be the bride of De Bracy, who is it shall

dare to put forth a violent hand upon her kinsman, the son of her guardian, the companion of her youth? I am not romantic fool enough to further the fortune or avert the fate of one who is likely to be a successful obstacle between me and my wishes. Use thine influence with me in his behalf, and he is safe: refuse to employ it, Wilfred dies, and thou thyself art not the nearer to freedom."

"Thy language," answered Rowena, "hath in its indifferent bluntness something which cannot be reconciled with the horrors it seems to express. I believe not that thy purpose is so wicked or thy power so great."

"Flatter thyself, then, with that belief," said De Bracy, "until time shall prove it false. Thy lover lies wounded in this castle, — thy preferred lover. He is a bar betwixt Front-de-Bœuf and that which Front-de-Bœuf loves better than either ambition or beauty. What will it cost beyond the blow of a poniard, or the thrust of a javelin, to silence his opposition forever? Nay, were Front-de-Bœuf afraid to justify a deed so open, let the leech but give his patient a wrong draught; let the chamberlain,[1] or the nurse who tends him, but pluck the pillow from his head, — and Wilfred, in his present condition, is sped without the effusion of blood. Cedric also" —

"And Cedric also," said Rowena, repeating his words, "my noble, my generous guardian! I deserve the evil I have encountered for forgetting his fate even in that of his son!"

"Cedric's fate also depends upon thy determination," said De Bracy, "and I leave thee to form it."

Hitherto, Rowena had sustained her part in this trying scene with undismayed courage, but it was because she had not considered the danger as serious and imminent. Her disposition was naturally mild, timid, and gentle, but it had been tempered and hardened by her education. Accustomed to see the will of others give way before her, she had acquired that self-confidence

[1] An officer having charge of the chambers or apartments of a person of rank.

which arises from the habitual and constant deference of the circle in which we move.

Her haughtiness and habit of domination was therefore a fictitious character; and it deserted her when she found her will, the slightest expression of which was wont to command respect and attention, now placed in opposition to a man of a strong, fierce, and determined mind, who possessed the advantage, and was resolved to use it. She quailed before him.

After casting her eyes around as if to look for the aid which was nowhere to be found, and after a few broken interjections, she raised her hands to Heaven, and burst into a passion of uncontrolled vexation and sorrow. It was impossible to see so beautiful a creature in such extremity without feeling for her; and De Bracy was not unmoved, though he was yet more embarrassed than touched. He paced the apartment to and fro, now vainly exhorting the terrified maiden to compose herself, now hesitating concerning his own line of conduct.

"If," thought he, "I should be moved by the tears and sorrow of this disconsolate damsel, what should I reap but the loss of those fair hopes for which I have encountered so much risk, and the ridicule of Prince John and his jovial comrades? And yet," he said to himself, "I feel myself ill framed for the part which I am playing. I cannot look on so fair a face while it is disturbed with agony, or on those eyes when they are drowned in tears. I would she had retained her original haughtiness of disposition, or that I had a larger share of Front-de-Bœuf's thrice-tempered hardness of heart!"

Agitated by these thoughts, he could only bid the unfortunate Rowena be comforted, and assure her that as yet she had no reason for the excess of despair to which she was now giving way; but in this task of consolation De Bracy was interrupted by the horn, "hoarse-winded blowing far and keen," which had at the same time alarmed the other inmates of the castle, and interrupted their several plans.