

"*Pax vobiscum!*" said the pseudo¹ friar, and was endeavoring to hurry past, when a soft voice replied, "*Et vobis²—quæso, domine reverendissime, pro misericordia vestra.*"³

"I am somewhat deaf," replied Cedric in good Saxon, and at the same time muttered to himself, "A curse on the fool and his *Pax vobiscum!* I have lost my javelin at the first cast."

It was, however, no unusual thing for a priest of those days to be deaf of his Latin ear, and this the person who now addressed Cedric knew full well.

"I pray you of dear love, reverend father," she replied in his own language, "that you will deign to visit with your ghostly comfort a wounded prisoner of this castle, and have such compassion upon him and us as thy holy office teaches. Never shall good deed so highly advantage thy convent."

"Daughter," answered Cedric, much embarrassed, "my time in this castle will not permit me to exercise the duties of mine office. I must presently forth. There is life and death upon my speed."

"Yet, father, let me entreat you by the vow you have taken on you," replied the suppliant, "not to leave the oppressed and endangered without counsel or succor."

"May the Fiend fly away with me, and leave me in Ifrin with the souls of Odin and of Thor!"⁴ answered Cedric impatiently, and would probably have proceeded in the same tone of total departure from his spiritual character, when the colloquy was interrupted by the harsh voice of Urfried, the old crone of the turret.

"How, minion," said she to the female speaker, "is this the manner in which you requite the kindness which permitted thee to leave thy prison-cell yonder? Puttest thou the reverend man to use ungracious language to free himself from a Jewess?"

¹ Counterfeit.

² "And with you;" that is, "Peace be with you also."

³ "I pray, O most holy father! for thy mercy."

⁴ In the Scandinavian mythology, the god of war, and the defender of the gods against the giants.

"A Jewess!" said Cedric, availing himself of the information to get clear of their interruption.—"Let me pass, woman! Stop me not, at your peril. I am fresh from my holy office, and would avoid pollution."

"Come this way, father," said the old hag. "Thou art a stranger in this castle, and canst not leave it without a guide. Come hither, for I would speak with thee.—And you, daughter of an accursed race, go to the sick man's chamber, and tend him until my return; and woe betide you if you again quit it without my permission!"

Rebecca retreated. Her importunities had prevailed upon Urfried to suffer her to quit the turret, and Urfried had employed her services where she herself would most gladly have paid them, by the bedside of the wounded Ivanhoe. With an understanding awake to their dangerous situation, and prompt to avail herself of each means of safety which occurred, Rebecca had hoped something from the presence of a man of religion, who, she learned from Urfried, had penetrated into this godless castle. She watched the return of the supposed ecclesiastic with the purpose of addressing him and interesting him in favor of the prisoners; with what imperfect success, the reader has been just acquainted.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHEN Urfried had with clamors and menaces driven Rebecca back to the apartment from which she had sallied, she proceeded to conduct the unwilling Cedric into a small apartment, the door of which she heedfully secured. Then, fetching from a cupboard a stoup of wine and two flagons, she placed them on the table, and said, in a tone rather asserting a fact than asking a question, "Thou art Saxon, father. Deny it not," she continued, observing that Cedric hastened not to reply. "The sounds of my native language are sweet to mine ears, though

seldom heard, save from the tongues of the wretched and degraded serfs on whom the proud Normans impose the meanest drudgery of this dwelling. Thou art a Saxon, father,—a Saxon,—and, save as thou art a servant of God, a freeman. Thine accents are sweet in mine ear.”

“Do not Saxon priests visit this castle, then?” replied Cedric. “It were, methinks, their duty to comfort the outcast and oppressed children of the soil.”

“They come not; or, if they come, they better love to revel at the board of their conquerors,” answered Urfried, “than to hear the groans of their countrymen: so, at least, report speaks of them. Of myself, I can say little. This castle, for ten years, has opened to no priest save the Norman chaplain who partook the revels of Front-de-Bœuf, and he has been long gone to render an account of his stewardship. But thou art a Saxon,—a Saxon priest,—and I have one question to ask of thee.”

“I am a Saxon,” answered Cedric, “but unworthy, surely, of the name of priest. Let me begone on my way. I swear I will return, or send one of our fathers more worthy to hear your confession.”

“Stay yet awhile,” said Urfried. “The accents of the voice which thou hearest now will soon be choked with the cold earth, and I would not descend to it like the beast I have lived. But wine must give me strength to tell the horrors of my tale.” She poured out a cup, and drank it with a frightful avidity, which seemed desirous of draining the last drop in the goblet. “Partake it, father.” Cedric would have avoided pledging her in this ominous conviviality, but the sign which she made to him expressed impatience and despair. He complied with her request, and answered her challenge in a large wine-cup. She then proceeded with her story, as if appeased by his complaisance.

“I was not born,” she said, “father, the wretch that thou now seest me. I was free, was happy, was honored, loved, and was beloved. The wrinkled, decrepit hag before thee was once the daughter of the noble thane of Torquilstone, before whose frown a thousand vassals trembled!”

“Thou the daughter of Torquil Wolfanger!” said Cedric, receding as he spoke. “Thou—thou—the daughter of that noble Saxon, my father’s friend and companion in arms!”

“Thy father’s friend!” echoed Urfried. “Then Cedric, called the Saxon, stands before me! for the noble Hereward of Rotherwood had but one son, whose name is well known among his countrymen. But if thou art Cedric of Rotherwood, why this religious dress? Hast thou, too, despaired of saving thy country, and sought refuge from oppression in the shade of the convent?”

“It matters not who I am,” said Cedric. “I bid thee repent. Seek to prayer and penance, and mayest thou find acceptance! But I can not, I will not, longer abide with thee.”

“Be it so,” said Ulrica (for we may now lay aside her assumed name of Urfried). “Go thy way! Go thy way! If I am separated from mankind by my sufferings,—separated from those whose aid I might most justly expect,—not less will I be separated from them in my revenge. No man shall aid me, but the ears of all men shall tingle to hear of the deed which I shall dare to do. Farewell! Thy scorn has burst the last tie which seemed yet to unite me to my kind,—a thought that my woes might claim the compassion of my people.”

“Ulrica,” said Cedric, softened by this appeal, “wilt thou now yield to despair when repentance were thy fitter occupation?”

“Cedric,” answered Ulrica, “thy words have awakened a new soul within me; and thou thyself shalt say, that, whatever was the life of Ulrica, her death well became the daughter of the noble Torquil. There is a force without, beleaguering this accursed castle. Hasten to lead them to the attack, and, when thou shalt see a red flag wave from the turret on the eastern angle of the donjon, press the Normans hard. They will then have enough to do within, and you may win the wall in spite both of bow and mangonel.¹ Begone, I pray thee! Follow thine own fate, and leave me to mine.”

Cedric would have inquired further into the purpose which she

¹ A stone-throwing machine.

thus darkly announced, but the stern voice of Front-de-Bœuf was heard exclaiming, "Where tarries this loitering priest? By the scallop-shell¹ of Compostella,² I will make a martyr of him if he loiters here to hatch treason among my domestics!"

"What a true prophet," said Ulrica, "is an evil conscience! But heed him not. Out and to thy people! Cry your Saxon onslaught, and let them sing their war-song of Rollo,³ if they will: vengeance shall bear a burden⁴ to it."

As she thus spoke, she vanished through a private door, and Reginald Front-de-Bœuf entered the apartment. Cedric, with some difficulty, compelled himself to make obeisance to the haughty baron, who returned his courtesy with a slight inclination of the head.

"Thy penitents, father, have made a long shrift.⁵ It is the better for them, since it is the last they shall ever make. Hast thou prepared them for death?"

"I found them," said Cedric in such French as he could command, "expecting the worst from the moment they knew into whose power they had fallen."

"How now, Sir Friar?" replied Front-de-Bœuf. "Thy speech, methinks, smacks of a Saxon tongue."

"I was bred in the Convent of St. Withold of Burton," answered Cedric.

"Ay?" said the baron. "It had been better for thee to have

¹ Emblem of a pilgrim.

² The Order of Compostella was an order of Spanish knighthood, founded during the twelfth century to protect the road for pilgrims to the shrine of St. James at Compostella, Spain. After the victory of Clavijo, St. James the Elder was taken as the patron saint of Spain, and his relics were preserved at Compostella, or Santiago de Compostella, which became one of the three chief places of pilgrimage in the Romish Church, the other two being Jerusalem and Rome.

³ A Norwegian pirate who invaded France about A.D. 900, where he settled, and established the Normans in that country.

⁴ A refrain, like the refrain of a chorus.

⁵ Confession.

been a Norman, and better for my purpose too; but need has no choice of messengers. That St. Withold's of Burton is a howlet's nest worth the harrying.¹ The day will soon come that the frock shall protect the Saxon as little as the mail-coat."

"God's will be done!" said Cedric in a voice tremulous with passion, which Front-de-Bœuf imputed to fear.

"I see," said he, "thou dreamest already that our men-at-arms are in thy refectory. But do me one cast² of thy holy office, and, come what list of others, thou shalt sleep as safe in thy cell as a snail within his shell of proof."

"Speak your commands," said Cedric with suppressed emotion.

"Follow me through this passage, then, that I may dismiss thee by the postern."

And as he strode on his way before the supposed friar, Front-de-Bœuf thus schooled him in the part which he desired he should act.

"Thou seest, Sir Friar, yon herd of Saxon swine, who have dared to environ this castle of Torquilstone. Tell them whatever thou hast a mind of the weakness of this fortalice, or aught else that can detain them before it for twenty-four hours. Meantime bear thou this scroll. But soft— Canst read, Sir Priest?"

"Not a jot I," answered Cedric, "save on my breviary; and then I know the characters, because I have the holy service by heart, praised be Our Lady and St. Withold!"

"The fitter messenger for my purpose. Carry thou this scroll to the castle of Philip de Malvoisin. Say it cometh from me, and is written by the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert, and that I pray him to send it to York with all the speed man and horse can make. Meanwhile tell him to doubt nothing. He shall find us whole and sound behind our battlement. Shame on it, that we should be compelled to hide thus by a pack of runagates who are wont to fly even at the flash of our pennons and the tramp of our horses! I say to thee, priest, contrive some cast of thine

¹ An owl's nest worth plundering.

² Service.

art to keep the knaves where they are until our friends bring up their lances. My vengeance is awake, and she is a falcon that slumbers not till she has been gorged."

"By my patron saint," said Cedric with deeper energy than became his character, "and by every saint who has lived and died in England, your commands shall be obeyed! Not a Saxon shall stir from before these walls, if I have art and influence to detain them there."

"Ha!" said Front-de-Bœuf, "thou changest thy tone, Sir Priest, and speakest brief and bold, as if thy heart were in the slaughter of the Saxon herd; and yet thou art thyself of kindred to the swine!"

Cedric was no ready practicer of the art of dissimulation, and would at this moment have been much the better of a hint from Wamba's more fertile brain; but necessity, according to the ancient proverb, sharpens invention, and he muttered something under his cowl concerning the men in question being excommunicated outlaws both to Church and to kingdom.

"*Despardieux*,"¹ answered Front-de-Bœuf, "thou hast spoken the very truth. I forget that the knaves can strip a fat abbot as well as if they had been born south of yonder salt channel. Was it not he of St. Ives whom they tied to an oak-tree, and compelled to sing a mass while they were rifling his mails² and his wallets? No, by Our Lady! that jest was played by Gaul-tier of Middleton, one of our own companions-at-arms. But they were Saxons who robbed the chapel at St. Bees³ of cup, candlestick, and chalice,⁴ were they not?"

"They were godless men," answered Cedric.

"Ay, and, priest, thou art bound to revenge such sacrilege."

"I am, indeed, bound to vengeance," murmured Cedric. "St. Withold knows my heart."

Front-de-Bœuf, in the mean while, led the way to a postern,

¹ "By Heaven!"

² Saddle-bags.

³ An English village in the county of Cumberland.

⁴ The cup used in the Communion.

where, passing the moat on a single plank, they reached a small barbican, or exterior defense, which communicated with the open field by a well-fortified sallyport.¹

"Begone, then! and if thou wilt do mine errand, and if thou return hither when it is done, thou shalt see Saxon flesh cheap as ever was hog's in the shambles² of Sheffield. And hark thee! Thou seemest to be a jolly confessor. Come hither after the onslaught, and thou shalt have as much Malvoisie³ as would drench thy whole convent."

"Assuredly we shall meet again," answered Cedric.

"Something in hand the whilst," continued the Norman; and, as they parted at the postern door, he thrust into Cedric's reluctant hand a gold byzant, adding, "Remember, I will flay off both cowl and skin if thou failest in thy purpose."

"And full leave will I give thee to do both," answered Cedric, leaving the postern, and striding forth over the free field with a joyful step, "if, when we meet next, I deserve not better at thine hand." Turning then back towards the castle, he threw the piece of gold towards the donor, exclaiming at the same time, "False Norman, thy money perish with thee!"

Front-de-Bœuf heard the words imperfectly, but the action was suspicious. "Archers," he called to the warders on the outward battlements, "send me an arrow through yon monk's frock! — yet stay," he said, as his retainers were bending their bows, "it avails not: we must thus far trust him, since we have no better shift. I think he dares not betray me. At the worst, I can but treat with these Saxon dogs whom I have safe in kennel. — Ho! Giles jailer, let them bring Cedric of Rotherwood before me, and the other churl, his companion, — him, I mean, of Coningsburgh, — Athelstane there, or what call they him? Their very names are an incumbrance to a Norman knight's mouth, and have, as it were, a flavor of bacon. Give me a stoup of wine, as jolly Prince

¹ A gate.

² Stalls where meat was sold.

³ Malmsey, wine, especially Canary and Madeira.

John said, that I may wash away the relish. Place it in the armory, and thither lead the prisoners."

His commands were obeyed; and, upon entering that Gothic¹ apartment, hung with many spoils won by his own valor and that of his father, he found a flagon of wine on the massive oaken table, and the two Saxon captives under the guard of four of his dependants. Front-de-Bœuf took a long draught of wine, and then addressed his prisoners; for the manner in which Wamba drew the cap over his face, the change of dress, the gloomy and broken light, and the baron's imperfect acquaintance with the features of Cedric (who avoided his Norman neighbors, and seldom stirred beyond his own domains), prevented him from discovering that the most important of his captives had made his escape.

"Gallants of England," said Front-de-Bœuf, "how relish ye your entertainment at Torquilstone? Are ye yet aware what your *surquedy* and *outracundance*² merit for scoffing at the entertainment of a prince of the House of Anjou? Have ye forgotten how ye requited the unmerited hospitality of the royal John? By God and St. Dennis, an ye pay not the richer ransom, I will hang ye up by the feet from the iron bars of these windows till the kites and hooded crows have made skeletons of you! Speak out, ye Saxon dogs! What bid ye for your worthless lives?—How say you, you of Rotherwood?"

"Not a doit³ I," answered poor Wamba; "and for hanging up by the feet, my brain has been topsy-turvy, they say, ever since the biggin⁴ was bound first round my head, so turning me upside down may, peradventure, restore it again."

"St. Genevieve!" said Front-de-Bœuf, "what have we got here?"

And with the back of his hand he struck Cedric's cap from the

¹ In the Gothic style of architecture, pointed arches, etc.

² Insolence and presumption.

³ A Dutch coin of the value of about one fourth of a cent.

⁴ A cap or hood for a child.

head of the Jester, and, throwing open his collar, discovered the fatal badge of servitude,—the silver collar round his neck.

"Giles—Clement—dogs and varlets!" exclaimed the furious Norman, "what have you brought me here?"

"I think I can tell you," said De Bracy, who just entered the apartment. "This is Cedric's clown, who fought so manful a skirmish with Isaac of York about a question of precedence."

"I shall settle it for them both," replied Front-de-Bœuf: "they shall hang on the same gallows, unless his master and this boar of Coningsburgh will pay well for their lives. Their wealth is the least they can surrender; they must also carry off with them the swarms that are besetting the castle, subscribe a surrender of their pretended immunities, and live under us as serfs and vassals; too happy if, in the new world that is about to begin, we leave them the breath of their nostrils.—Go," said he to two of his attendants, "fetch me the right Cedric hither, and I pardon your error for once, the rather that you but mistook a fool for a Saxon franklin."

"Ay, but," said Wamba, "your chivalrous Excellency will find there are more fools than franklins among us."

"What means the knave?" said Front-de-Bœuf, looking towards his followers, who, lingering and loath, faltered forth their belief, that, if this were not Cedric who was there in presence, they knew not what was become of him.

"Saints of Heaven!" exclaimed De Bracy, "he must have escaped in the monk's garments!"

"Fiends!" echoed Front-de-Bœuf: "it was, then, the boar of Rotherwood whom I ushered to the postern and dismissed with my own hands!—And thou," he said to Wamba, "whose folly could overreach the wisdom of idiots yet more gross than thyself, I will give thee holy orders. I will shave thy crown for thee!—Here, let them tear the scalp from his head, and then pitch him headlong from the battlements.—Thy trade is to jest. Canst thou jest now?"

"You deal with me better than your word, noble knight,"

whimpered forth poor Wamba, whose habits of buffoonery were not to be overcome even by the immediate prospect of death. "If you give me the red cap you propose, out of a simple monk you will make a cardinal."

"The poor wretch," said De Bracy, "is resolved to die in his vocation. — Front-de-Bœuf, you shall not slay him. Give him to me to make sport for my Free Companions. — How sayest thou, knave? Wilt thou take heart of grace, and go to the wars with me?"

"Ay, with my master's leave," said Wamba, "for, look you, I must not slip collar," and he touched that which he wore, "without his permission."

"Oh, a Norman saw will soon cut a Saxon collar," said De Bracy.

"Ay, noble sir," said Wamba, "and thence goes the proverb, —

"Norman saw on English oak,
On English neck a Norman yoke;
Norman spoon in English dish,
And England ruled as Normans wish;
Blithe world in England never will be more,
Till England's rid of all the four."

"Thou dost well, De Bracy," said Front-de-Bœuf, "to stand there listening to a fool's jargon when destruction is gaping for us! Seest thou not we are overreached, and that our proposed mode of communicating with our friends without has been disconcerted by this same motley gentleman thou art so fond to brother? What views have we to expect but instant storm?"

"To the battlements, then," said De Bracy. "When didst thou ever see me the graver for the thoughts of battle? — Call the Templar yonder, and let him fight but half as well for his life as he has done for his order. Make thou to the walls thyself with thy huge body. Let me do my poor endeavor in my own way, and I tell thee the Saxon outlaws may as well attempt to scale the clouds as the castle of Torquilstone; or, if you will treat with

the banditti, why not employ the mediation of this worthy franklin? — Here, Saxon," he continued, addressing Athelstane, and handing the cup to him, "rouse up thy soul to say what thou wilt do for thy liberty."

"What a man of mold¹ may," answered Athelstane, "providing it be what a man of manhood ought. Dismiss me free, with my companions, and I will pay a ransom of a thousand marks." ^{2133 4d}

"And wilt, moreover, assure us the retreat of that scum of mankind who are swarming around the castle, contrary to God's peace and the King's?" said Front-de-Bœuf.

"In so far as I can," answered Athelstane, "I will withdraw them; and I fear not but that my father Cedric will do his best to assist me."

"We are agreed, then," said Front-de-Bœuf, "thou and they are to be set at freedom, and peace is to be on both sides, for payment of a thousand marks. It is a trifling ransom, Saxon, and thou wilt owe gratitude to the moderation which accepts of it in exchange of your persons. But mark, this extends not to the Jew Isaac."

"Nor to the Jew Isaac's daughter," said the Templar, who had now joined them.

"Neither," said Front-de-Bœuf, "belongs to this Saxon's company."

"I were unworthy to be called Christian if they did," replied Athelstane. "Deal with the unbelievers as ye list."

"Neither does the ransom include the Lady Rowena," said De Bracy. "It shall never be said I was scared out of a fair prize without striking a blow for it."

"Neither," said Front-de-Bœuf, "does our treaty refer to this wretched Jester, whom I retain, that I may make him an example to every knave who turns jest into earnest."

"The Lady Rowena," answered Athelstane with the most steady countenance, "is my affianced bride. I will be drawn²

¹ Athelstane's meaning is, what a brave man thinks consistent with his manhood.

² Torn apart.

by wild horses before I consent to part with her. The slave Wamba has this day saved the life of my father Cedric: I will lose mine ere a hair of his head be injured."

"Thy affianced bride!—the Lady Rowena the affianced bride of a vassal like thee?" said De Bracy. "Saxon, thou drest that the days of thy seven kingdoms¹ are returned again. I tell thee, the princes of the House of Anjou confer not their wards on men of such lineage as thine."

"My lineage, proud Norman," replied Athelstane, "is drawn from a source more pure and ancient than that of a beggarly Frenchman whose living is won by selling the blood of the thieves whom he assembles under his paltry standard. Kings were my ancestors, strong in war, and wise in council, who every day feasted in their hall more hundreds than thou canst number individual followers; whose names have been sung by minstrels, and their laws recorded by Witenagemots;² whose bones were interred amid the prayers of saints, and over whose tombs minstrels³ have been builded."

"Thou hast it, De Bracy," said Front-de-Bœuf, well pleased with the rebuff which his companion had received. "The Saxon hath hit thee fairly."

"As fairly as a captive can strike," said De Bracy with apparent carelessness; "for he whose hands are tied should have his tongue at freedom.—But the glibness of reply, comrade," rejoined he, speaking to Athelstane, "will not win the freedom of the Lady Rowena."

To this, Athelstane, who had already made a longer speech than was his custom, returned no answer. The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of a menial, who announced that a monk demanded admittance at the postern gate.

"In the name of St. Bennet, the prince of these bull-beggars," said Front-de-Bœuf, "have we a real monk this time, or another

¹ The Heptarchy (see Note 4, p. 23).

² The national council of the Saxons, the council of the wise men.

³ Cathedrals.

impostor?—Search him, slaves, for an ye suffer a second impostor to be palmed upon you, I will have your eyes torn out, and hot coals put into the sockets."

"Let me endure the extremity of your anger, my lord," said Giles, "if this be not a real shaveling. Your squire Jocelyn knows him well, and will vouch him to be Brother Ambrose, a monk in attendance upon the Prior of Jorvaulx."

"Admit him," said Front-de-Bœuf. "Most likely he brings us news from his jovial master. Surely the priests are relieved from duty, that they are strolling thus wildly through the country. Remove these prisoners; and, Saxon, think on what thou hast heard."

"I claim," said Athelstane, "an honorable imprisonment, with due care of my board and of my couch, as becomes my rank, and as is due to one who is in treaty for ransom. Moreover, I hold him that deems himself the best of you bound to answer to me with his body for this aggression on my freedom. This defiance hath already been sent to thee by the sewer: thou underliest it, and art bound to answer me. There lies my glove."¹

"I answer not the challenge of my prisoner," said Front-de-Bœuf; "nor shalt thou, Maurice de Bracy.—Giles," he continued, "hang the franklin's glove upon the tine² of yonder branched antlers. There shall it remain until he is a free man. Should he then presume to demand it, or to affirm he was unlawfully made my prisoner, by the belt of St. Christopher,³ he will speak to one who hath never refused to meet a foe on foot or on horseback, alone or with his vassals at his back!"

The Saxon prisoners were accordingly removed just as they

¹ The customary form of delivering a challenge.

² Prong.

³ A native of Lycia, of gigantic stature and strength, who, according to tradition, one night bore Christ in the form of a child across the stream over which he acted as a kind of ferryman. His burden grew at every step, and when he reached the opposite bank the child had grown to a man. Upon asking whom he carried, he was told that he had borne the Saviour, and had had the weight of the sins of the world on his back.

introduced the monk Ambrose, who appeared to be in great perturbation.

"This is the real *Deus vobiscum*,"¹ said Wamba, as he passed the reverend brother: "the others were but counterfeits."

"Holy Mother!" said the monk, as he addressed the assembled knights, "I am at last safe and in Christian keeping."

"Safe thou art," replied De Bracy: "and for Christianity, here is the stout Baron Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, whose utter abomination is a Jew; and the good Knight Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert, whose trade is to slay Saracens."

"Ye are friends and allies of our reverend father in God, Aymer, Prior of Jorvaulx," said the monk, without noticing the tone of De Bracy's reply. "Ye owe him aid both by knightly faith and holy charity, for what sayeth the blessed St. Augustin,² in his treatise *De Civitate Dei*"³—

"What," interrupted Front-de-Bœuf, "dost thou say, Sir Priest? We have little time to hear texts from the holy fathers."

"*Sancta Maria!*" ejaculated father Ambrose, "how prompt to ire are these unhallowed laymen!—But be it known to you, brave knights, that certain murderous caitiffs,⁴ casting behind them fear of God and reverence of his Church, and not regarding the bull of the holy see,⁵ *Si quis, suadente Diabolo*"⁶—

"Brother priest," said the Templar, "all this we know or guess at. Tell us plainly, is thy master, the prior, made prisoner, and to whom?"

"Surely," said Ambrose, "he is in the hands of the men of Belial,⁷ infesters of these woods, and contemners of the holy text, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets naught of evil.'"

¹ "God be with ye!" here, of course, meaning the monk.

² Born Nov. 13, 354, at Tagaste, Numidia; Bishop of Hippo in northern Africa thirty-five years. The religious order of the Augustinians took their name from him.

³ "On the City of God." This was the title of his work.

⁴ Knaves, in the sense of low fellows.

⁵ A decree or edict of the Pope.

⁶ "If any one urged by the Devil."

⁷ The Evil One.

"Here is a new argument for our swords, sirs," said Front-de-Bœuf, turning to his companions; "and so, instead of reaching us any assistance, the Prior of Jorvaulx requests aid at our hands? A man is well helped of these churchmen when he hath most to do!—But speak out, priest, and say at once, what doth thy master expect from us?"

"So please you," said Ambrose, "violent hands having been imposed on my reverend superior, contrary to the holy ordinance which I did already quote, and the men of Belial having rifled his mails and budgets, and stripped him of two hundred marks of pure refined gold, they do yet demand of him a large sum besides, ere they will suffer him to depart from their hands. Wherefore, the reverend father in God prays you, as his dear friends, to rescue him, either by paying down the ransom at which they hold him, or by force of arms, at your best discretion."

"The foul fiend quell the prior!" said Front-de-Bœuf. "His morning draught has been a deep one. When did thy master hear of a Norman baron unbuckling his purse to relieve a churchman, whose bags are ten times as weighty as ours? And how can we do aught by valor to free him, that are cooped up here by ten times our number, and expect an assault every moment?"

"And that was what I was about to tell you," said the monk, "had your hastiness allowed me time. But, God help me, I am old, and these foul onslaughts distract an aged man's brain. Nevertheless, it is of verity that they assemble a camp, and raise a bank against the walls of this castle."

"To the battlements!" cried De Bracy, "and let us mark what these knaves do without;" and so saying, he opened a latticed window which led to a sort of bartizan, or projecting balcony, and immediately called from thence to those in the apartment. "St. Denis, but the old monk hath brought true tidings! They bring forward mantelets and pavises,¹ and the archers muster on the skirts of the wood like a dark cloud before a hail-storm."

¹ Mantelets were temporary and movable defenses formed of planks, under cover of which assailants advanced to the attack of fortified places of old.

Reginald Front-de-Bœuf also looked out upon the field, and immediately snatched his bugle, and, after winding a long and loud blast, commanded his men to their posts on the walls.

"De Bracy, look to the eastern side, where the walls are lowest. — Noble Bois-Guilbert, thy trade hath well taught thee how to attack and defend, look thou to the western side. — I myself will take post at the barbican. Yet do not confine your exertions to any one spot, noble friends! We must this day be everywhere, and multiply ourselves, were it possible, so as to carry by our presence succor and relief wherever the attack is hottest. Our numbers are few, but activity and courage may supply that defect, since we have only to do with rascal clowns."

"But, noble knights," exclaimed Father Ambrose, amidst the bustle and confusion occasioned by the preparations for defense, "will none of ye hear the message of the reverend father in God, Aymer, Prior of Jorvaulx? — I beseech thee to hear me, noble Sir Reginald!"

"Go patter thy petitions to Heaven!" said the fierce Norman, "for we on earth have no time to listen to them. — Ho! there, Anselm! see that seething pitch and oil are ready to pour on the heads of these audacious traitors. Look that the crossbow-men lack not bolts. Fling abroad my banner with the old bull's head!¹ The knaves shall soon find with whom they have to do this day!"

"But, noble sir," continued the monk, persevering in his endeavors to draw attention, "consider my vows of obedience, and let me discharge myself of my superior's errand."

"Away with this prating dotard," said Front-de-Bœuf. "Lock him up in the chapel, to tell his beads till the broil be over. It will be a new thing to the saints in Torquilstone to hear *aves* and *paters*. They have not been so honored, I trow,² since they were cut out of stone."

Pavisses were a species of large shields covering the whole person, employed on the same occasions.

¹ Front-de-Bœuf signifies the front or head of an ox or bull: hence the emblem on his banner.

² Think; believe.

"Blaspheme not the holy saints, Sir Reginald," said De Bracy: "we shall have need of their aid to-day before yon rascal rout disband."

"I expect little aid from their hand," said Front-de-Bœuf, "unless we were to hurl them from the battlements on the heads of the villains. There is a huge lumbering St. Christopher¹ yonder, sufficient to bear a whole company to the earth."

The Templar had in the mean time been looking out on the proceedings of the besiegers with rather more attention than the brutal Front-de-Bœuf or his giddy companion.

"By the faith of mine order," he said, "these men approach with more touch of discipline than could have been judged. See ye how dexterously they avail themselves of every cover which a tree or bush affords, and shun exposing themselves to the shot of our crossbows? I spy neither banner nor pennon among them, and yet will I gage my golden chain that they are led on by some noble knight or gentleman skillful in the practice of wars."

"I espy him," said De Bracy. "I see the waving of a knight's crest, and the gleam of his armor. See yon tall man in the black mail, who is busied marshaling the farther troop of the *rascaille*² yeomen. By St. Denis, I hold him to be the same whom we called *Le Noir Faineant*, who overthrew thee, Front-de-Bœuf, in the lists at Ashby."

"So much the better," said Front-de-Bœuf, "that he comes here to give me my revenge. Some hiding fellow he must be, who dared not stay to assert his claim to the tourney prize which chance had assigned him. I should in vain have sought for him where knights and nobles seek their foes, and right glad am I he hath here shown himself among yon villain yeomanry."

The demonstrations of the enemy's immediate approach cut off all further discourse. Each knight repaired to his post, and at the head of a few followers whom they were able to muster, and who were in numbers inadequate to defend the whole extent of the walls, they awaited with calm determination the threatened assault.

¹ See Note 3, p. 261.

² Vulgar; common.