

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OUR history must needs *retrograde* for the space of a few pages, to inform the reader of certain passages material to his understanding the rest of this important narrative. His own intelligence may indeed have easily anticipated, that when Ivanhoe sunk down, and seemed abandoned by all the world, it was the *importunity* of Rebecca which prevailed on her father to have the gallant young warrior transported from the lists to the house which for the time the Jews inhabited in the suburbs of Ashby.

It would not have been difficult to have persuaded Isaac to this step in any other circumstances, for his disposition was kind and grateful; but he had also the prejudices and scrupulous timidity of his persecuted people, and those were to be conquered.

"Holy Abraham!" he exclaimed, "he is a good youth, and my heart bleeds to see the gore trickle down his rich embroidered haëqueton¹ and his corselet of goodly price—but to carry him to our house!—Damsel, hast thou well considered? He is a Christian, and by our law we may not deal with the stranger and Gentile, save for the advantage of our commerce."

"Speak not so, my dear father," replied Rebecca. "We may not indeed mix with them in banquet and in jollity; but in wounds and in misery the Gentile becometh the Jew's brother."

"I would I knew what the rabbi Jacob Ben Tudela would opine on it," replied Isaac; "nevertheless, the good youth must not bleed to death. Let Seth and Reuben bear him to Ashby."

"Nay, let them place him in my litter," said Rebecca. "I will mount one of the palfreys."

But Isaac, seizing the sleeve of her mantle, again exclaimed in a hurried voice, "Beard of Aaron!² what if the youth perish!

¹ Or *acton*, a padded jacket worn beneath armor.

² The first high-priest of the Jews; son of Amram of the tribe of Levi. He was three years older than his brother Moses.

If he die in our custody, shall we not be held guilty of his blood, and be torn to pieces by the multitude?"

"He will not die, my father," said Rebecca, gently extricating herself from the grasp of Isaac—"he will not die unless we abandon him; and if so, we are indeed answerable for his blood to God and to man."

"Nay," said Isaac, releasing his hold, "it grieveth me as much to see the drops of his blood as if they were so many golden byzants from mine own purse; and I well know that the lessons of Miriam, daughter of the rabbi Manasses of Byzantium, whose soul is in Paradise, have made thee skillful in the art of healing, and that thou knowest the craft of herbs and the force of elixirs. Therefore do as thy mind giveth thee. Thou art a good damsel, a blessing and a crown, and a song of rejoicing unto me and to my house, and unto the people of my fathers."

Rebecca lost no time in causing the patient to be transported to their temporary dwelling, and proceeded with her own hands to examine and to bind up his wounds.

The Jews, both male and female, possessed and practiced the medical science in all its branches; and the monarchs and powerful barons of the time frequently committed themselves to the charge of some experienced sage among this despised people, when wounded or in sickness.

The beautiful Rebecca had been heedfully brought up in all the knowledge proper to her nation, which her apt and powerful mind had retained, arranged, and enlarged, in the course of a progress beyond her years, her sex, and even the age in which she lived. Her knowledge of medicine and of the healing art had been acquired under an aged Jewess, the daughter of one of their most celebrated doctors, who loved Rebecca as her own child, and was believed to have communicated to her secrets which had been left to herself by her *sage* father at the same time and under the same circumstances. The fate of Miriam had indeed been to fall a sacrifice to the fanaticisms of the times; but her secrets had survived in her apt pupil.

When Ivanhoe reached the habitation of Isaac, he was still in a state of unconsciousness, owing to the profuse loss of blood which had taken place during his exertions in the lists. Rebecca examined the wound, applied to it such vulnerary¹ remedies as her art prescribed, and informed her father, that, if the healing balsam of Miriam retained its virtue, there was nothing to fear for his guest's life, and that he might with safety travel to York with them on the ensuing day.

It was not until evening was nearly closed that Ivanhoe was restored to consciousness of his situation. He awoke from a broken slumber under the confused impressions which are naturally attendant on the recovery from a state of insensibility. He was unable for some time to recall exactly to memory the circumstances which had preceded his fall in the lists, or to make out any connected chain of the events in which he had been engaged upon the yesterday. A sense of wounds and injury, joined to great weakness and exhaustion, was mingled with the recollection of blows dealt and received, of steeds rushing upon each other, overthrowing and overthrown,—of shouts and clashing of arms, and all the heady tumult of a confused fight. An effort to draw aside the curtain of his couch was in some degree successful, although rendered difficult by the pain of his wound.

To his great surprise, he found himself in a room magnificently furnished, but having cushions instead of chairs to rest upon, and in other respects partaking so much of Oriental costume that he began to doubt whether he had not, during his sleep, been transported back again to the land of Palestine. The impression was increased, when, the tapestry being drawn aside, a female form, dressed in a rich habit, which partook more of the Eastern taste than that of Europe, glided through the door which it concealed, and was followed by a swarthy domestic.

Rebecca's few and brief directions were given in the Hebrew language to the old domestic; and he, who had been frequently her assistant in similar cases, obeyed them without reply.

¹ Adapted to effect a cure.

Ivanhoe suffered them in silence to take the measures they thought most proper for his recovery; and it was not until these were completed, and his kind physician about to retire, that his curiosity could no longer be suppressed. "Gentle maiden," he began in the Arabian tongue, with which his Eastern travels had rendered him familiar, and which he thought most likely to be understood by the turbaned and caftaned¹ damsel who stood before him—"I pray you, gentle maiden, of your courtesy"—

But here he was interrupted by his fair physician; a smile, which she could scarce suppress, dimpling for an instant a face whose general expression was that of contemplative melancholy. "I am of England, Sir Knight, and speak the English tongue, although my dress and my lineage belong to another climate."

"Noble damsel," again the Knight of Ivanhoe began; and again Rebecca hastened to interrupt him.

"Bestow not on me, Sir Knight," she said, "the epithet of noble. It is well you should speedily know that your handmaiden is a poor Jewess, the daughter of that Isaac of York to whom you were so lately a good and kind lord. It well becomes him and those of his household to render to you such careful tendance as your present state necessarily demands."

She then informed him of the necessity they were under of removing to York, and of her father's resolution to transport him thither, and tend him in his own house until his health should be restored. Ivanhoe expressed great repugnance to this plan, which he grounded on unwillingness to give further trouble to his benefactors.

"Was there not," he said, "in Ashby, or near it, some Saxon franklin, or even some wealthy peasant, who would endure the burden of a wounded countryman's residence with him until he should be again able to bear his armor? Was there no convent of Saxon endowment where he could be received? Or could he not be transported as far as Burton, where he was sure to find

¹ Wearing a caftan, or a kind of long gown having sleeves extending below the hands, worn in the East.

hospitality with Waltheoff the abbot of St. Withold's, to whom he was related?"

"Any, the worst of these harborages," said Rebecca with a melancholy smile, "would unquestionably be more fitting for your residence than the abode of a despised Jew; yet, Sir Knight, unless you would dismiss your physician, you cannot change your lodging. Our nation, as you well know, can cure wounds, though we deal not in inflicting them; and in our family, in particular, are secrets which have been handed down since the days of Solomon, and of which you have already experienced the advantages. No Nazarene—I crave your forgiveness, Sir Knight—no Christian leech within the four seas of Britain could enable you to bear your corselet within a month."

"And how soon wilt *thou* enable me to brook it?" said Ivanhoe impatiently.

"Within eight days, if thou wilt be patient and conformable to my directions," replied Rebecca.

"By our Blessed Lady," said Wilfred, "if it be not a sin to name her here, it is no time for me or any true knight to be bedridden; and if thou accomplish thy promise, maiden, I will pay thee with my casque full of crowns, come by them as I may."

"I will accomplish my promise," said Rebecca, "and thou shalt bear thine armor on the eighth day from hence, if thou wilt grant me but one boon in the stead of the silver thou dost promise me."

"If it be within my power, and such as a true Christian knight may yield to one of thy people," replied Ivanhoe, "I will grant thy boon blithely and thankfully."

"Nay," answered Rebecca, "I will but pray of thee to believe henceforward that a Jew may do good service to a Christian without desiring other guerdon than the blessing of the great Father who made both Jew and Gentile."

"It were sin to doubt it, maiden," replied Ivanhoe; "and I repose myself on thy skill without further scruple or question, well trusting you will enable me to bear my corselet on the eighth

day. And now, my kind leech, let me inquire of the news abroad. What of the noble Saxon Cedric and his household? What of the lovely lady?"—He stopped, as if unwilling to speak Rowena's name in the house of a Jew. "Of her, I mean, who was named the queen of the tournament."

"And who was selected by you, Sir Knight, to hold that dignity, with judgment which was admired as much as your valor," replied Rebecca.

The blood which Ivanhoe had lost did not prevent a flush from crossing his cheek, feeling that he had incautiously betrayed his deep interest in Rowena by the awkward attempt he had made to conceal it.

"It was less of her I would speak," said he, "than of Prince John; and I would fain know somewhat of a faithful squire, and why he now attends me not."

"Let me use my authority as a leech," answered Rebecca, "and enjoin you to keep silence, and avoid agitating reflections, whilst I apprise you of what you desire to know. Prince John hath broken off the tournament, and set forward in all haste towards York, with the nobles, knights, and churchmen of his party, after collecting such sums as they could wring, by fair means or foul, from those who are esteemed the wealthy of the land. It is said he designs to assume his brother's crown."

"Not without a blow struck in his defense," said Ivanhoe, raising himself upon the couch, "if there were but one true subject in England. I will fight for Richard's title with the best of them—ay, one to two in a just quarrel!"

"But that you may be able to do so," said Rebecca, touching his shoulder with her hand, "you must now observe my directions and remain quiet."

"True, maiden," said Ivanhoe, "as quiet as these disquieted times will permit. And of Cedric and his household?"

"His steward came but brief while since," said the Jewess, "panting with haste, to ask my father for certain moneys, the price of wool the growth of Cedric's flocks, and from him I

learned that Cedric and Athelstane of Coningsburgh had left Prince John's lodging in high displeasure, and were about to set forth on their return homeward."

"Went any lady with them to the banquet?" said Wilfred.

"The Lady Rowena," said Rebecca, answering the question with more precision than it had been asked—"the Lady Rowena went not to the prince's feast, and, as the steward reported to us, she is now on her journey back to Rotherwood with her guardian Cedric. And touching your faithful squire Gurth"—

"Ha!" exclaimed the knight, "knowest thou his name? But thou dost," he immediately added, "and well thou mayest, for it was from thy hand, and, as I am now convinced, from thine own generosity of spirit, that he received but yesterday a hundred zecchins."

"Speak not of that," said Rebecca, blushing deeply: "I see how easy it is for the tongue to betray what the heart would gladly conceal."

"But this sum of gold," said Ivanhoe gravely: "my honor is concerned in repaying it to your father."

"Let it be as thou wilt," said Rebecca, "when eight days have passed away; but think not and speak not now of aught that may retard thy recovery."

"Be it so, kind maiden," said Ivanhoe. "It were most ungrateful to dispute thy commands. But one word of the fate of poor Gurth, and I have done with questioning thee."

"I grieve to tell thee, Sir Knight," answered the Jewess, "that he is in custody by the order of Cedric." And then, observing the distress which her communication gave to Wilfred, she instantly added, "But the steward Oswald said that if nothing occurred to renew his master's displeasure against him, he was sure that Cedric would pardon Gurth, a faithful serf, and one who stood high in favor, and who had but committed this error out of the love that he bore to Cedric's son. And he said, moreover, that he and his comrades, and especially Wamba the Jester, were

resolved to warn Gurth to make his escape by the way, in case Cedric's ire against him could not be mitigated." *Page 182.*

"Would they may keep their purpose!" said Ivanhoe; "but it seems as if I were destined to bring ruin on whomsoever hath shown kindness to me. My King, by whom I was honored and distinguished, thou seest that the brother most indebted to him is raising his arms to grasp his crown; my regard hath brought restraint and trouble on the fairest of her sex; and now my father in his mood may slay this poor bondsman, but for his love and loyal service to me. Thou seest, maiden, what an ill-fated wretch thou dost labor to assist: be wise, and let me go, ere the misfortunes which track my footsteps like slothounds shall involve thee also in their pursuit."

"Nay," said Rebecca, "thy weakness and thy grief, Sir Knight, make thee miscalculate the purposes of Heaven. Thou hast been restored to thy country when it most needed the assistance of a strong hand and a true heart, and thou hast humbled the pride of thine enemies and those of thy King, when their horn was most highly exalted; and for the evil which thou sustained, seest thou not that Heaven hath raised thee a helper and a physician even among the most despised of the land? Therefore be of good courage, and trust that thou art preserved for some marvel which thine arm shall work before this people. Adieu! and having taken the medicine which I shall send thee by the hand of Reuben, compose thyself again to rest, that thou mayest be the more able to endure the journey on the succeeding day."

Ivanhoe was convinced by the reasoning, and obeyed the directions, of Rebecca. The draught which Reuben administered was of a sedative and narcotic quality, and secured the patient sound and undisturbed slumbers. In the morning his kind physician found him entirely free from feverish symptoms, and fit to undergo the fatigue of a journey.

He was deposited in the horse-litter which had brought him from the lists, and every precaution taken for his traveling with ease. In one circumstance only, even the entreaties of Rebecca

were unable to secure sufficient attention to the accommodation of the wounded knight. Isaac, like the enriched traveler of Juvenal's¹ tenth satire, had ever the fear of robbery before his eyes, conscious that he would be alike accounted fair game by the marauding Norman noble and by the Saxon outlaw. He therefore journeyed at a great rate, and made short halts and shorter repasts, so that he passed by Cedric and Athelstane, who had several hours the start of him, but who had been delayed by their protracted feasting at the Convent of St. Withold's. Yet such was the virtue of Miriam's balsam, or such the strength of Ivanhoe's constitution, that he did not sustain from the hurried journey that inconvenience which his kind physician had apprehended.

In another point of view, however, the Jew's haste proved somewhat more than good speed. The rapidity with which he insisted on traveling bred several disputes between him and the party whom he had hired to attend him as a guard. These men were Saxons, and not free by any means from the national love of ease and good living which the Normans stigmatized as laziness and gluttony. Reversing Shylock's position, they had accepted the employment in hopes of feeding upon the wealthy Jew, and were very much displeased when they found themselves disappointed by the rapidity with which he insisted on their proceeding. They remonstrated also upon the risk of damage to their horses by these forced marches. Finally there arose betwixt Isaac and his satellites a deadly feud concerning the quantity of wine and ale to be allowed for consumption at each meal; and thus it happened, that when the alarm of danger approached, and that which Isaac feared was likely to come upon him, he

¹ A Latin satirist, born, it is thought, at Aquinum, a town of the Volsci, A.D. 40; died in Egypt A.D. 125. The allusion to the enriched traveler is to the passage in the satire which says in substance that though carrying a few vessels of silver, if you go by night you tremble at the shadow of every reed in the moonlight, while the traveler with empty pockets sings in the robber's face.

was deserted by the discontented mercenaries on whose protection he had relied, without using the means necessary to secure their attachment.

In this deplorable condition, the Jew, with his daughter and her wounded patient, were found by Cedric, as has already been noticed, and soon afterward fell into the power of De Bracy and his confederates. Little notice was at first taken of the horse-litter, and it might have remained behind but for the curiosity of De Bracy, who looked into it under the impression that it might contain the object of his enterprise, for Rowena had not unveiled herself. But De Bracy's astonishment was considerable when he discovered that the litter contained a wounded man, who, conceiving himself to have fallen into the power of Saxon outlaws with whom his name might be a protection for himself and his friends, frankly avowed himself to be Wilfred of Ivanhoe. The ideas of chivalrous honor, which, amidst his wildness and levity, never utterly abandoned De Bracy, prohibited him from doing the knight any injury in his defenseless condition, and equally interdicted his betraying him to Front-de-Bœuf, who would have had no scruples to put to death, under any circumstances, the rival claimant of the fief of Ivanhoe. On the other hand, to liberate a suitor preferred by the Lady Rowena was a pitch far above the flight of De Bracy's generosity. A middle course betwixt good and evil was all which he found himself capable of adopting, and he commanded two of his own squirens to keep close by the litter, and to suffer no one to approach it. If questioned, they were directed by their master to say that the empty litter of the Lady Rowena was employed to transport one of their comrades who had been wounded in the scuffle. On arriving at Torquilstone, De Bracy's squirens conveyed Ivanhoe, still under the name of a wounded comrade, to a distant apartment. This explanation was accordingly returned by these men to Front-de-Bœuf, when he questioned them why they did not make for the battlements upon the alarm.

"A wounded companion!" he replied in great wrath and

astonishment. "No wonder that churls and yeomen wax so presumptuous as even to lay leaguer¹ before castles, and that clowns and swineherds send defiances to nobles, since men-at-arms have turned sick men's nurses, and Free Companions are grown keepers of dying folk's curtains, when the castle is about to be assailed. To the battlements, ye loitering villains!" he exclaimed, raising his stentorian voice till the arches around rung again; "to the battlements, or I will splinter your bones with this truncheon!"

The men sulkily replied that they desired nothing better than to go to the battlements, providing Front-de-Bœuf would bear them out with their master, who had commanded them to tend the dying man.

"The dying man, knaves!" rejoined the baron. "I promise thee we shall all be dying men and we stand not to it the more stoutly. But I will relieve the guard upon this caitiff companion of yours.—Here, Urfried—Saxon witch—hearest me not?—tend me this bedridden fellow, since he must needs be tended, whilst these knaves use their weapons. Here be two arblasts, comrades, with windlances and quarrells.² To the barbican with you, and see you drive each bolt through a Saxon brain!"

The men, who, like most of their description, were fond of enterprise, and detested inaction, went joyfully to the scene of danger as they were commanded, and thus the charge of Ivanhoe was transferred to Urfried, or Ulrica. But she, whose brain was burning with remembrance of injuries and with hopes of vengeance, was readily induced to devolve upon Rebecca the care of her patient.

¹ Besiege.

² The arblast was a crossbow; the windlace, the machine used in bending that weapon; and the quarrell, so called from its square or diamond-shaped head, was the bolt adapted to it.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN finding herself once more by the side of Ivanhoe, Rebecca was astonished at the pleasure which she experienced, even at a time when all around them both was danger, if not despair. As she inquired after his health, there was a softness in her accents, implying a kinder interest than she would herself have been pleased to have voluntarily expressed.

"My mind, gentle maiden," said Ivanhoe, "is more disturbed by anxiety than my body with pain. From the speeches of these men who were my warders just now, I learn that I am a prisoner, and, if I judge aright of the loud, hoarse voice which even now dispatched them hence on some military duty, I am in the castle of Front-de-Bœuf. If so, how will this end, or how can I protect Rowena and my father?"

She hastened to give Ivanhoe what information she could; but it amounted only to this, that the Templar Bois-Guilbert and the baron Front-de-Bœuf were commanders within the castle; that it was beleaguered from without, but by whom she knew not. She added that there was a Christian priest within the castle who might be possessed of more information.

"A Christian priest!" said the knight joyfully. "Fetch him hither, Rebecca, if thou canst. Say a sick man desires his ghostly counsel. Say what thou wilt, but bring him. Something I must do or attempt, but how can I determine until I know how matters stand without?"

Rebecca, in compliance with the wishes of Ivanhoe, made that attempt to bring Cedric into the wounded knight's chamber which was defeated, as we have already seen, by the interference of Urfried, who had been also on the watch to intercept the supposed monk. Rebecca retired to communicate to Ivanhoe the result of her errand.

They had not much leisure to regret the failure of this source

of intelligence, or to contrive by what means it might be supplied; for the noise within the castle, occasioned by the defensive preparations, which had been considerable for some time, now increased into tenfold bustle and clamor. The heavy yet hasty step of the men-at-arms traversed the battlements, or resounded on the narrow and winding passages and stairs which led to the various bartisans and points of defense. The voices of the knights were heard animating their followers, or directing means of defense, while their commands were often drowned in the clashing of armor or the clamorous shouts of those whom they addressed. Tremendous as these sounds were, and yet more terrible from the awful event which they presaged, there was a sublimity mixed with them which Rebecca's high-toned mind could feel even in that moment of terror. Her eye kindled, although the blood fled from her cheeks; and there was a strong mixture of fear and of a thrilling sense of the sublime, as she repeated, half whispering to herself, half speaking to her companion, the sacred text, "The quiver rattleth, . . . the glittering spear and the shield, . . . the thunder of the captains, and the shouting!"

But Ivanhoe was like the war-horse of that sublime passage, glowing with impatience at his inactivity, and with his ardent desire to mingle in the affray of which these sounds were the introduction. "If I could but drag myself," he said, "to yonder window, that I might see how this brave game is like to go! If I had but bow to shoot a shaft, or battle-ax to strike were it but a single blow for our deliverance! It is in vain, it is in vain! I am alike nerveless and weaponless!"

"Fret not thyself, noble knight," answered Rebecca. "The sounds have ceased of a sudden. It may be they join not battle."

"Thou knowest naught of it," said Wilfred impatiently. "This dead pause only shows that the men are at their posts on the walls, and expecting an instant attack. What we have heard was but the distant muttering of the storm: it will burst anon in all its fury. Could I but reach yonder window!"

"Thou wilt but injure thyself by the attempt, noble knight," replied his attendant. Observing his extreme solicitude, she firmly added, "I myself will stand at the lattice, and describe to you as I can what passes without."

"You must not, you shall not!" exclaimed Ivanhoe. "Each lattice, each aperture, will be soon a mark for the archers. Some random shaft"—

"It shall be welcome!" murmured Rebecca, as with firm pace she ascended two or three steps which led to the window of which they spoke.

"Rebecca!" exclaimed Ivanhoe, "this is no maiden's pastime. Do not expose thyself to wounds and death, and render me forever miserable for having given the occasion: at least cover thyself with yonder ancient buckler, and show as little of your person at the lattice as may be."

Following with wonderful promptitude the directions of Ivanhoe, and availing herself of the protection of the large ancient shield, which she placed against the lower part of the window, Rebecca, with tolerable security to herself, could witness part of what was passing without the castle, and report to Ivanhoe the preparations which the assailants were making for the storm. Indeed, the situation which she thus obtained was peculiarly favorable for this purpose, because, being placed on an angle of the main building, Rebecca could not only see what passed beyond the precincts of the castle, but also commanded a view of the outwork likely to be the first object of the meditated assault. It was an exterior fortification of no great height or strength, intended to protect the postern gate, through which Cedric had been recently dismissed by Front-de-Bœuf. The castle moat divided this species of barbican from the rest of the fortress, so that, in case of its being taken, it was easy to cut off the communication with the main building by withdrawing the temporary bridge. In the outwork was a sallyport corresponding to the postern of the castle, and the whole was surmounted by a strong palisade. Rebecca could observe, from the number of men

placed for the defense of this post, that the besieged entertained apprehensions for its safety; and, from the mustering of the assailants in a direction nearly opposite to the outwork, it seemed no less plain that it had been selected as a vulnerable point of attack.

These appearances she hastily communicated to Ivanhoe, and added, "The skirts of the wood seem lined with archers, although only a few are advanced from its dark shadow."

"Under what banner?" asked Ivanhoe.

"Under no ensign of war which I can observe," answered Rebecca.

"A singular novelty," muttered the knight, "to advance to storm such a castle without pennon or banner displayed! Seest thou who they be that act as leaders?"

"A knight clad in sable armor is the most conspicuous," said the Jewess: "he alone is armed from head to heel, and seems to assume the direction of all around him."

"What device does he bear on his shield?" replied Ivanhoe.

"Something resembling a bar of iron, and a padlock painted blue on the black shield."

"A fetterlock¹ and shacklebolt azure," said Ivanhoe. "I know not who may bear the device, but well I ween² it might now be mine own. Canst thou not see the motto?"

"Scarce the device itself at this distance," replied Rebecca; "but, when the sun glances fair upon his shield, it shows as I tell you."

"Seem there no other leaders?" exclaimed the anxious inquirer.

"None of mark and distinction that I can behold from this station," said Rebecca; "but doubtless the other side of the

¹ A shackle or fetter fixed to a horse's leg to prevent his running away when turned out to pasture. It was frequently used as a device on coats of arms.

² Fancy; wish; the meaning being, that he wishes he himself were now fighting with it.

castle is also assailed. They appear even now preparing to advance. God of Zion protect us! What a dreadful sight! Those who advance first bear huge shields, and defenses made of plank; the others follow, bending their bows as they come on. They raise their bows!—God of Moses, forgive the creatures thou hast made!"

Her description was here suddenly interrupted by the signal for assault, which was given by the blast of a shrill bugle, and at once answered by a flourish of the Norman trumpets from the battlements, which, mingled with the deep and hollow clang of the nakers (a species of kettledrum), retorted in notes of defiance the challenge of the enemy. The shouts of both parties augmented the fearful din, the assailants crying, "St. George for merry England!" and the Normans answering them with cries of "*En avant!*¹ *De Bracy!*—*Beau-seant!*² *Beau-seant!*—*Front-de-Bœuf à la rescousse!*"³ according to the war-cries of their different commanders.

It was not, however, by clamor that the contest was to be decided, and the desperate efforts of the assailants were met by an equally vigorous defense on the part of the besieged. The archers, trained by their woodland pastimes to the most effective use of the longbow, shot, to use the appropriate phrase of the time, so "wholly together" that no point at which a defender could show the least part of his person escaped their cloth-yard shafts.⁴ By this heavy discharge, which continued as thick and sharp as hail, while, notwithstanding, every arrow had its individual aim, and flew by scores together against each embrasure and opening in the parapets, as well as at every window where a defender either occasionally had post, or might be suspected to be stationed,—by this sustained discharge two or three of the garrison were slain, and several others wounded. But confident in their armor of proof, and in the cover which their situation afforded, the followers of Front-de-Bœuf and his allies showed an obstinacy in

¹ "Onward!"

² See note, p. 132.

³ "To the rescue!"

⁴ Arrows the length of a cloth-yard stick.

defense proportioned to the fury of the attack, and replied with the discharge of their large crossbows, as well as with their long-bows, slings, and other missile weapons, to the close and continued shower of arrows, and, as the assailants were necessarily but indifferently protected, did considerably more damage than they received at their hand. The whizzing of shafts and of missiles on both sides was only interrupted by the shouts which arose when either side inflicted or sustained some notable loss.

"And I must lie here like a bedridden monk," exclaimed Ivanhoe, "while the game that gives me freedom or death is played out by the hand of others!—Look from the window once again, kind maiden, but beware that you are not marked by the archers beneath. Look out once more, and tell me if they yet advance to the storm."

With patient courage, strengthened by the interval which she had employed in mental devotion, Rebecca again took post at the lattice, sheltering herself, however, so as not to be visible from beneath.

"What dost thou see, Rebecca?" again demanded the wounded knight.

"Nothing but the cloud of arrows flying so thick as to dazzle mine eyes, and to hide the bowmen who shoot them."

"That cannot endure," said Ivanhoe. "If they press not right on to carry the castle by pure force of arms, the archery may avail but little against stone walls and bulwarks. Look for the knight of the fetterlock, fair Rebecca, and see how he bears himself; for as the leader is, so will his followers be."

"I see him not," said Rebecca.

"Foul craven!" exclaimed Ivanhoe. "Does he blench from the helm when the wind blows highest?"

"He blenches not, he blenches not!" said Rebecca. "I see him now. He leads a body of men close under the outer barrier of the barbican. They pull down the piles and palisades. They hew down the barriers with axes. His high black plume floats abroad over the throng like a raven over the field of the slain.

They have made a breach in the barriers—they rush in—they are thrust back! Front-de-Bœuf heads the defenders: I see his gigantic form above the press. They throng again to the breach, and the pass is disputed hand to hand and man to man. God of Jacob! it is the meeting of two fierce tides, the conflict of two oceans moved by adverse winds."

She turned her head from the lattice, as if unable longer to endure a sight so terrible.

"Look forth again, Rebecca," said Ivanhoe, mistaking the cause of her retiring. "The archery must in some degree have ceased, since they are now fighting hand to hand. Look again. There is now less danger."

Rebecca again looked forth, and almost immediately exclaimed, "Holy prophets of the law! Front-de-Bœuf and the Black Knight fight hand to hand on the breach, amid the roar of their followers, who watch the progress of the strife. Heaven strike with the cause of the oppressed and of the captive!" She then uttered a loud shriek, and exclaimed, "He is down! He is down!"

"Who is down?" cried Ivanhoe. "For Our dear Lady's sake, tell me which has fallen!"

"The Black Knight," answered Rebecca faintly, then instantly again shouted with joyful eagerness, "But no, but no!—the name of the Lord of hosts be blessed!—he is on foot again, and fights as if there were twenty men's strength in his single arm. His sword is broken. He snatches an ax from a yeoman. He presses Front-de-Bœuf with blow on blow. The giant stoops and totters like an oak under the steel of the woodman. He falls! He falls!"

"Front-de-Bœuf?" exclaimed Ivanhoe.

"Front-de-Bœuf!" answered the Jewess. His men rush to the rescue, headed by the haughty Templar. Their united force compels the champion to pause. They drag Front-de-Bœuf within the walls."

"The assailants have won the barriers, have they not?" said Ivanhoe.

"They have, they have!" exclaimed Rebecca, "and they press the besieged hard upon the outer wall. Some plant ladders, some swarm like bees, and endeavor to ascend upon the shoulders of each other. Down go stones, beams, and trunks of trees upon their heads; and as fast as they bear the wounded to the rear, fresh men supply their places in the assault. Great God! hast thou given men thine own image that it should be thus cruelly defaced by the hands of their brethren?"

"Think not of that," said Ivanhoe: "this is no time for such thoughts. Who yield? Who push their way?"

"The ladders are thrown down," replied Rebecca, shuddering: "the soldiers lie groveling under them like crushed reptiles. The besieged have the better."

"St. George strike for us!" exclaimed the knight. "Do the false yeomen give way?"

"No!" exclaimed Rebecca, "they bear themselves right yeomanly. The Black Knight approaches the postern with his huge ax. The thundering blows which he deals, you may hear them above all the din and shouts of the battle. Stones and beams are hailed down on the bold champion. He regards them no more than if they were thistle-down or feathers."

"By St. John of Acre!"¹ said Ivanhoe, raising himself joyfully on his couch, "methought there was but one man in England that might do such a deed."

"The postern gate shakes!" continued Rebecca. "It crashes! It is splintered by his blows! They rush in! The outwork is won! O God! they hurl the defenders from the battlements! They throw them into the moat!—O men, if ye be indeed men, spare them that can resist no longer!"

"The bridge—the bridge which communicates with the castle—have they won that pass?" exclaimed Ivanhoe.

"No," replied Rebecca, "the Templar has destroyed the plank on which they crossed. Few of the defenders escaped with him into the castle. The shrieks and cries which you hear

¹ See note, p. 52.

tell the fate of the others. Alas! I see it is still more difficult to look upon victory than upon battle."

"What do they do now, maiden?" said Ivanhoe. "Look forth yet again. This is no time to faint at bloodshed."

"It is over for the time," answered Rebecca. "Our friends strengthen themselves within the outwork which they have mastered; and it affords them so good a shelter from the foemen's shot that the garrison only bestow a few bolts on it from interval to interval, as if rather to disquiet than effectually to injure them."

"Our friends," said Wilfred, "will surely not abandon an enterprise so gloriously begun and so happily attained. Oh, no! I will put my faith in the good knight whose ax hath rent heart of oak and bars of iron. Singular," he again muttered to himself, "if there be two who can do a deed of such *derring-do*.¹ A fetterlock, and a shacklebolt on a field-sable—what may that mean? Seest thou naught else, Rebecca, by which the Black Knight may be distinguished?"

"Nothing," said the Jewess. "All about him is black as the wing of the night-raven. Nothing can I spy that can mark him further; but, having once seen him put forth his strength in battle, methinks I could know him again among a thousand warriors. He rushes to the fray as if he were summoned to a banquet. There is more than mere strength: there seems as if the whole soul and spirit of the champion were given to every blow which he deals upon his enemies. God assoilzie² him of the sin of bloodshed! It is fearful, yet magnificent, to behold how the arm and heart of one man can triumph over hundreds."

"Rebecca," said Ivanhoe, "thou hast painted a hero. Surely they rest but to refresh their force, or to provide the means for crossing the moat. Under such a leader as thou hast spoken this knight to be, there are no craven fears, no cold-blooded delays, no yielding up a gallant emprise;³ since the difficulties which render it arduous render it also glorious. I swear by the honor

¹ Desperate courage.

² Absolve.

³ Enterprise.

of my house, I vow by the name of my bright lady-love, I would endure ten years' captivity to fight one day by that good knight's side in such a quarrel as this!"

"Alas!" said Rebecca, leaving her station at the window, and approaching the couch of the wounded knight, "this impatient yearning after action, this struggling with and repining at your present weakness, will not fail to injure your returning health. How couldst thou hope to inflict wounds on others ere that be healed which thou thyself hast received?"

"Rebecca," he replied, "thou knowest not how impossible it is for one trained to actions of chivalry to remain passive as a priest or a woman when they are acting deeds of honor around him. The love of battle is the food upon which we live, the dust of the *mêlée*¹ is the breath of our nostrils. We live not, we wish not to live, longer than while we are victorious and renowned. Such, maiden, are the laws of chivalry, to which we are sworn, and to which we offer all that we hold dear."

"Alas!" said the fair Jewess, "and what is it, valiant knight, save an offering of sacrifice to a demon of vainglory, and a passing through the fire to Moloch?² What remains to you as the prize of all the blood you have spilled, of all the travail and pain you have endured, of all the tears which your deeds have caused, when death hath broken the strong man's spear, and overtaken the speed of his war-horse?"

"What remains?" cried Ivanhoe. "Glory, maiden, glory, which gilds our sepulcher, and embalms our name."

"Glory?" continued Rebecca. "Alas! is the rusted mail which hangs as a hatchment³ over the champion's dim and moldering tomb, is the defaced sculpture of the inscription which the ignorant monk can hardly read to the inquiring pilgrim,—are these sufficient rewards for the sacrifice of every kindly affec-

¹ Hand-to-hand fight; the tumult of confused combat.

² The fire-god worshiped by Ammonites with human sacrifices.

³ A tablet, usually lozenge-shaped or square, displaying the arms of a dead person, and set over the tomb.

tion, for a life spent miserably that ye may make others miserable?"

"By the soul of Hereward!"¹ replied the knight impatiently, "thou speakest, maiden, of thou knowest not what. Thou wouldst quench the pure light of chivalry, which alone distinguishes the noble from the base, the gentle knight from the churl and the savage; which rates our life far, far beneath the pitch of our honor, raises us victorious over pain, toil, and suffering, and teaches us to fear no evil but disgrace. Thou art no Christian, Rebecca; and to thee are unknown those high feelings which swell the bosom of a noble maiden when her lover hath done some deed of emprise which sanctions his flame. Chivalry! Why, maiden, she is the nurse of pure and high affection, the stay of the oppressed, the redresser of grievances, the curb of the power of the tyrant. Nobility were but an empty name without her, and liberty finds the best protection in her lance and her sword."

"I am indeed," said Rebecca, "sprung from a race whose courage was distinguished in the defense of their own land, but who warred not, even while yet a nation, save at the command of the Deity, or in defending their country from oppression. The sound of the trumpet wakes Judah no longer, and her despised children are now but the unresisting victims of hostile and military oppression. Well hast thou spoken, Sir Knight. Until the God of Jacob shall raise up for his chosen people a second Gideon² or a new Maccabeus,³ it ill beseemeth the Jewish damsel to speak of battle or of war."

¹ A traditional outlaw who flourished from about 1070; the son of Leofric, Lord of Bourne, in Lincolnshire, chief of a band of insurgent outlaws who, holding together in the Isle of Ely, made stubborn resistance against William.

² A great and renowned judge of Israel, B.C. 1362-22. He was the fifth judge in Israel (see Judges vi.-ix.).

³ The surname of Judas Maccabeus (Hebrew, *Makkab*, "a hammer"), a celebrated Jewish leader. His family and descendants also had the name Maccabees (see Book of Maccabees in the Apocrypha).

The high-minded maiden concluded the argument in a tone of sorrow, which deeply expressed her sense of the degradation of her people, embittered perhaps by the idea that Ivanhoe considered her as one not entitled to interfere in a case of honor, and incapable of entertaining or expressing sentiments of honor and generosity.

"How little he knows this bosom," she said, "to imagine that cowardice or meanness of soul must needs be its guests, because I have censured the fantastic chivalry of the Nazarenes! Would to Heaven that the shedding of mine own blood drop by drop could redeem the captivity of Judah! Nay, would to God it could avail to set free my father, and this his benefactor, from the chains of the oppressor! The proud Christian should then see whether the daughter of God's chosen people dared not to die as bravely as the vainest Nazarene maiden, that boasts her descent from some petty chieftain of the rude and frozen north!"

She then looked towards the couch of the wounded knight.

"He sleeps," she said. "Nature exhausted by sufferance and the waste of spirits, his wearied frame embraces the first moment of temporary relaxation to sink into slumber. Alas! is it a crime that I should look upon him, when it may be for the last time; when yet but a short space, and those fair features will be no longer animated by the bold and buoyant spirit which forsakes them not even in sleep; when the nostrils shall be distended, the mouth agape, the eyes fixed and bloodshot; and when the proud and noble knight may be trodden on by the lowest caitiff of this accursed castle, yet stir not when the heel is lifted up against him? And my father! O my father! evil is it with his daughter, when his gray hairs are not remembered because of the golden locks of youth! What know I but that these evils are the messengers of Jehovah's wrath to the unnatural child who thinks of a stranger's captivity before a parent's; who forgets the desolation of Judah, and looks upon the comeliness of a Gentile and a stranger? But I will tear this folly from my heart, though every fiber bleed as I rend it away!"

She wrapped herself closely in her veil, and sat down at a distance from the couch of the wounded knight, with her back turned towards it, fortifying, or endeavoring to fortify, her mind, not only against the impending evils from without, but also against those treacherous feelings which assailed her from within.

CHAPTER XXX.

DURING the interval of quiet which followed the first success of the besiegers, while the one party was preparing to pursue their advantage, and the other to strengthen their means of defense, the Templar and De Bracy held brief council together in the hall of the castle.

"Where is Front-de-Bœuf?" said the latter, who had superintended the defense of the fortress on the other side. "Men say he hath been slain."

"He lives," said the Templar coolly—"lives as yet; but had he worn the bull's head of which he bears the name, and ten plates of iron to fence it withal, he must have gone down before yonder fatal ax. Yet a few hours, and Front-de-Bœuf is with his fathers,—a powerful limb lopped off Prince John's enterprise."

"And a brave addition to the kingdom of Satan," said De Bracy. "This comes of reviling saints and angels, and ordering images of holy things and holy men to be flung down on the heads of these rascaille yeomen."

"Go to, thou art a fool!" said the Templar. "Thy superstition is upon a level with Front-de-Bœuf's want of faith: neither of you can render a reason for your belief or unbelief."

"*Benedicite*, Sir Templar," replied De Bracy, "I pray you to keep better rule with your tongue when I am the theme of it. By the Mother of Heaven! I am a better Christian man than thou and thy fellowship; for the *bruit*¹ goeth shrewdly out, that

¹ Rumor; report.