

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.

the most holy Order of the Temple of Zion nurseth not a few heretics within its bosom, and that Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert is of the number."

"Care not for such reports," said the Templar; "but let us think of making good the castle. How fought these villain yeomen on thy side?"

"Like fiends incarnate," said De Bracy. "They swarmed close up to the walls, headed, as I think, by the knave who won the prize at the archery, for I knew his horn and baldric. And this is old Fitzurse's boasted policy, encouraging these malapert¹ knaves to rebel against us! Had I not been armed in proof, the villain had marked me down seven times with as little remorse as if I had been a buck in season. He told every rivet on my armor with a cloth-yard shaft, that rapped against my ribs with as little compunction as if my bones had been of iron. But that I wore a shirt of Spanish mail under my plate coat, I had been fairly sped."²

"But you maintained your post?" said the Templar. "We lost the outwork on our part."

"That is a shrewd loss," said De Bracy. "The knaves will find cover there to assault the castle more closely, and may, if not well watched, gain some unguarded corner of a tower, or some forgotten window, and so break in upon us. Our numbers are too few for the defenses of every point, and the men complain that they can nowhere show themselves but they are the mark for as many arrows as a parish-butt³ on a holiday even. Front-de-Bœuf is dying, too, so we shall receive no more aid from his bull's head and brutal strength.—How think you, Sir Brian? Were we not better make a virtue of necessity, and compound with the rogues by delivering up our prisoners?"

"How?" exclaimed the Templar. "Deliver up our prisoners, and stand an object alike of ridicule and execration, as the doughty warriors who dared by a night attack to possess them-

¹ Impudent.

² Undone; made an end of.

³ A target for archery practice put up in a churchyard.

selves of the persons of a party of defenseless travelers, yet could not make good a strong castle against a vagabond troop of outlaws, led by swineherds, jesters, and the very refuse of mankind? Shame on thy counsel, Maurice de Bracy! The ruins of this castle shall bury both my body and my shame ere I consent to such base and dishonorable composition."¹

"Let us to the walls, then," said De Bracy carelessly. "That man never breathed, be he Turk or Templar, who held life at a lighter rate than I do. But I trust there is no dishonor in wishing I had here some twoscore of my gallant troop of Free Companions.—O my brave lances! if ye knew but how hard your captain were this day bested, how soon would I see my banner at the head of your clump of spears, and how short while would these rabble villains stand to endure encounter!"

"Wish for whom thou wilt," said the Templar, "but let us make what defense we can with the soldiers who remain. They are chiefly Front-de-Bœuf's followers, hated by the English for a thousand acts of insolence and oppression."

"The better," said De Bracy. "The rugged slaves will defend themselves to the last drop of their blood ere they encounter the revenge of the peasants without. Let us up and be doing, then, Brian de Bois-Guilbert; and, live or die, thou shalt see Maurice de Bracy bear himself this day as a gentleman of blood and lineage."

"To the walls!" answered the Templar; and they both ascended the battlements to do all that skill could dictate and manhood accomplish in defense of the place. They readily agreed that the point of greatest danger was that opposite to the outwork of which the assailants had possessed themselves. The castle, indeed, was divided from that barbican by the moat, and it was impossible that the besiegers could assail the postern door, with which the outwork corresponded, without surmounting that obstacle; but it was the opinion, both of the Templar and De Bracy, that the besiegers, if governed by the same policy their

¹ Agreement; conditions.

leader had already displayed, would endeavor, by a formidable assault, to draw the chief part of the defenders' observation to this point, and take measures to avail themselves of every negligence which might take place in the defense elsewhere. To guard against such an evil, their numbers only permitted the knights to place sentinels from space to space along the walls in communication with each other, who might give the alarm whenever danger was threatened. Meanwhile they agreed that De Bracy should command the defense at the postern, and the Templar should keep with him a score of men or thereabouts as a body of reserve, ready to hasten to any other point which might be suddenly threatened. The loss of the barbican had also this unfortunate effect: that notwithstanding the superior heights of the castle walls, the besieged could not see from them, with the same precision as before, the operations of the enemy; for some straggling underwood approached so near the sallyport of the outwork, that the assailants might introduce into it whatever force they thought proper, not only under cover, but even without the knowledge of the defenders. Utterly uncertain, therefore, upon what point the storm was to burst, De Bracy and his companion were under the necessity of providing against every possible contingency; and their followers, however brave, experienced the anxious dejection of mind incident to men inclosed by enemies who possessed the power of choosing their time and mode of attack.

Meanwhile the lord of the beleaguered and endangered castle lay upon a bed of bodily pain and mental agony. The moment had now arrived when earth and all its treasures were gliding from before his eyes, and when the savage baron's heart, though hard as a nether millstone, became appalled as he gazed forward into the waste darkness of futurity. The fever of his body aided the impatience and agony of his mind, and his death-bed exhibited a mixture of the newly awakened feelings of horror, combating with the fixed and inveterate obstinacy of his disposition, — a fearful state of mind, only to be equaled in those tremen-

dous regions where there are complaints without hope, remorse without repentance, a dreadful sense of present agony, and a presentiment that it cannot cease or be diminished.

"Where be these dog priests now," growled the baron, "who set such price on their ghostly mummery? Where be all those unshod Carmelites for whom old Front-de-Bœuf founded the Convent of St. Anne, robbing his heir of many a fair rood of meadow, and many a fat field and close?¹ Where be the greedy hounds now? Swilling, I warrant me, at the ale, or playing their juggling tricks at the bedside of some miserly churl. Me, the heir of their founder — me, whom their foundation binds them to pray for — me — ungrateful villains as they are — they suffer to die like the houseless dog on yonder common, unshriven² and unhoused.³ Tell the Templar to come hither: he is a priest, and may do something. But no! As well confess myself to the Devil as to Brian de Bois-Guilbert. I have heard old men talk of prayer, — prayer by their own voice. Such need not to court or to bribe the false priest. But I — I dare not!"

"Lives Reginald Front-de-Bœuf," said a broken and shrill voice close by his bedside, "to say there is that which he dares not?"

The evil conscience and the shaken nerves of Front-de-Bœuf heard, in this strange interruption to his soliloquy, the voice of one of those demons, who, as the superstition of the times believed, beset the beds of dying men, to distract their thoughts and turn them from the meditations which concerned their eternal welfare. He shuddered, and drew himself together; but, instantly summoning up his wonted resolution, he exclaimed, "Who is there? What art thou, that darest to echo my words in a tone like that of the night-raven? Come before my couch, that I may see thee!"

"I am thine evil angel, Reginald Front-de-Bœuf," replied the voice.

¹ Inclosed ground.

² Unconfessed; unabsolved.

³ The sacrament unadministered.

"Let me behold thee, then, in thy bodily shape, if thou be'st indeed a fiend," replied the dying knight. "Think not that I will blench from thee. By the eternal dungeon, could I but grapple with these horrors that hover round me, as I have done with mortal dangers, Heaven should never say that I shrunk from the conflict!"

"Think on thy sins, Reginald Front-de-Bœuf," said the almost unearthly voice, "on rebellion, on murder! Who stirred up John to war against his gray-headed father, against his generous brother?"

"Be thou fiend, priest, or devil," replied Front-de-Bœuf, "thou liest in thy throat! Not I stirred John to rebellion—not I alone: there were fifty knights and barons, the flower of the midland counties. Better men never laid lance in rest. And must I answer for the fault done by fifty? False fiend, I defy thee! Depart, and haunt my couch no more! Let me die in peace if thou be mortal: if thou be a demon, thy time is not yet come."

"In peace thou shalt not die," repeated the voice. "Even in death shalt thou think on thy murders, on the groans which this castle has echoed, on the blood that is ingrained in its floors!"

"Thou canst not shake me by thy petty malice," answered Front-de-Bœuf with a ghastly and constrained laugh. "The infidel Jew—it was merit with Heaven to deal with him as I did, else wherefore are men canonized who dip their hands in the blood of Saracens? The Saxon porkers whom I have slain—they were the foes of my country and of my lineage and of my liege lord. Ho, ho! thou seest there is no crevice in my coat of plate. Art thou fled? Art thou silenced?"

"No, foul parricide!" replied the voice. "Think of thy father! Think of his death! Think of his banquet-room flooded with his gore, and that poured forth by the hand of a son!"

"Ha!" answered the baron after a long pause, "an thou knowest that, thou art indeed the author of evil, and as omnis-

cient as the monks call thee. That secret I deemed locked in my own breast and in that of one beside. Go, leave me, fiend, and seek the Saxon witch Ulrica, who alone could tell thee what she and I alone witnessed. Go, I say, to her, who washed the wounds, and straightened the corpse, and gave to the slain man the outward show of one parted in time and in the course of nature. Go to her! Let her, as well as I, taste of the tortures of the hereafter!"

"She already tastes them," said Ulrica, stepping before the couch of Front-de-Bœuf. "She hath long drunken of this cup, and its bitterness is now sweetened to see that thou dost partake it. Grind not thy teeth, Front-de-Bœuf; roll not thine eyes; clinch not thy hand, nor shake it at me with that gesture of menace! The hand which, like that of thy renowned ancestor, who gained thy name, could have broken with one stroke the skull of a mountain bull, is now unnerved and powerless as mine own!"

"Vile hag!" replied Front-de-Bœuf, "detestable screech-owl! it is, then, thou who art come to exult over the ruins thou hast assisted to lay low?"

"Ay, Reginald Front-de-Bœuf," answered she, "it is Ulrica, it is the daughter of the murdered Torquil Wolfanger, it is the sister of his slaughtered sons. Front-de-Bœuf, thou hast been my evil angel, and I will be thine. I will dog thee till the very instant of dissolution!"

"Detestable fury!" exclaimed Front-de-Bœuf, "that moment shalt thou never witness.—Ho! Giles, Clement, and Eustace, St. Maur and Stephen, seize this witch, and hurl her from the battlements headlong. She has betrayed us to the Saxon! Ho! St. Maur, Clement! false-hearted knaves, where tarry ye?"

"Call on them again, valiant baron," said the hag with a smile of grisly mockery. "Summon thy vassals around thee, doom them that loiter to the scourge and the dungeon. But know, mighty chief," she continued, suddenly changing her tone, "thou shalt have neither answer, nor aid, nor obedience, at their hands. Listen to these horrid sounds!" for the din of the recommenced

assault and defense now rung fearfully loud from the battlement of the castle. "In that war-cry is the downfall of thy house. The blood-cemented fabric of Front-de-Bœuf's power totters to the foundation, and before the foes he most despised. The Saxon, Reginald,—the scorned Saxon,—assails thy walls! Why liest thou here like a worn-out hind, when the Saxon storms thy place of strength?"

"Gods and fiends!" exclaimed the wounded knight. "Oh for one moment's strength, to drag myself to the *mêlée*, and perish as becomes my name!"

"Think not of it, valiant warrior!" replied she. "Thou shalt die no soldier's death, but perish like the fox in his den when the peasants have set fire to the cover¹ around it."

"Hateful hag, thou liest!" exclaimed Front-de-Bœuf. "My followers bear them bravely; my walls are strong and high; my comrades in arms fear not a whole host of Saxons, were they headed by Hengist and Horsa. The war-cry of the Templar and of the Free Companions rises high over the conflict. And by mine honor, when we kindle the blazing beacon, for joy of our defense, it shall consume thee, body and bones; and I shall live to hear thou art gone from earthly fires to those that never sent forth an incarnate fiend more utterly diabolical."

"Hold thy belief," replied Ulrica, "till the proof reach thee—But no!" she said, interrupting herself, "thou shalt know even now the doom which all thy power, strength, and courage is unable to avoid, though it is prepared for thee by this feeble hand. Markest thou the smouldering and suffocating vapor which already eddies in sable folds through the chamber? Didst thou think it was but the darkening of thy bursting eyes, the difficulty of thy cumbered breathing? No! Front-de-Bœuf, there is another cause. Rememberest thou the magazine of fuel that is stored beneath these apartments?"

"Woman!" he exclaimed with fury, "thou hast not set fire to it? By Heaven, thou hast, and the castle is in flames!"

¹ Low scrub; underbrush.

"They are fast rising, at least," said Ulrica with frightful composure; "and a signal shall soon wave to warn the besiegers to press hard upon those who would extinguish them. Farewell, Front-de-Bœuf! May Mista, Skogula, and Zerneck, the gods of the ancient Saxons,—fiends, as the priests now call them,—supply the place of comforters at your dying bed, which Ulrica now relinquishes! But know, if it will give thee comfort to know it, that Ulrica is bound to the same dark coast with thyself, the companion of thy punishment. And now, parricide, farewell forever! May each stone of this vaulted roof find a tongue to echo that title into thine ear!"

So saying, she left the apartment; and Front-de-Bœuf could hear the crash of the ponderous key as she locked and double-locked the door behind her, thus cutting off the most slender chance of escape. In the extremity of agony he shouted upon his servants and allies, "Stephen and St. Maur, Clement and Giles! I burn here unaided! To the rescue, to the rescue, brave Bois-Guilbert, valiant De Bracy! It is Front-de-Bœuf who calls! It is your master, ye traitor squires!—your ally, your brother-in-arms, ye perjured and faithless knights! Traitors, do you abandon me to perish thus miserably!—They hear me not! They cannot hear me: my voice is lost in the din of battle. The smoke rolls thicker and thicker; the fire has caught upon the floor below. Oh for one draught of the air of heaven, were it to be purchased by instant annihilation!" And in the mad frenzy of despair, the wretch now shouted with the shouts of the fighters, now muttered curses on himself, on mankind, and on Heaven itself. "The red fire flashes through the thick smoke!" he exclaimed. "The Demon marches against me under the banner of his own element.—Foul spirit, avoid! I go not with thee without my comrades. All, all are thine,—that garrison, these walls. Thinkest thou Front-de-Bœuf will be singled out to go alone? No! The infidel Templar, De Bracy, Ulrica, the men who aided my enterprises, the dog Saxons and accursed Jews who are my prisoners,—all, all shall attend me, a goodly

fellowship as ever took the downward road. Ha, ha, ha!" and he laughed in his frenzy till the vaulted roof rang again. "Who laughed there?" exclaimed Front-de-Bœuf in altered mood, for the noise of the conflict did not prevent the echoes of his own mad laughter from returning upon his ear. "Who laughed there?—Ulrica, was it thou? Speak, witch, and I forgive thee; for only thou or the Fiend himself could have laughed at such a moment. Avaunt,¹ avaunt!"—

But it were impious to trace any further the picture of the blasphemer and parricide's death-bed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CEDRIC, although not greatly confident in Ulrica's message, omitted not to communicate her promise to the Black Knight and Locksley. They were well pleased to find they had a friend within the place, who might, in the moment of need, be able to facilitate their entrance, and readily agreed with the Saxon that a storm, under whatever disadvantages, ought to be attempted, as the only means of liberating the prisoners now in the hands of the cruel Front-de-Bœuf.

"The royal blood of Alfred is endangered," said Cedric.

"True," said the Black Knight.—"And now, good Locksley, were it not well that noble Cedric should assume the direction of this assault?"

"Not a jot I," returned Cedric. "I have never been wont to study either how to take or how to hold out those abodes of tyrannic power which the Normans have erected in this groaning land. I will fight among the foremost; but my honest neighbors well know I am not a trained soldier in the discipline of wars or the attack of strongholds."

"Since it stands thus with the noble Cedric," said Locksley,

¹ Depart!

"I am most willing to take on me the direction of the archery; and ye shall hang me up on my own trysting-tree, an the defenders be permitted to show themselves over the walls without being stuck with as many shafts as there are cloves in a gammon of bacon at Christmas."

"Well said, stout yeoman," answered the Black Knight; "and if I be thought worthy to have a charge in these matters, and can find among these brave men so many as are willing to follow a true English knight, for so I may surely call myself, I am ready, with such skill as my experience has taught me, to lead them to the attack of these walls."

The parts being thus distributed to the leaders, they commenced the first assault, of which the reader has already heard the issue.

When the barbican was carried, the Sable Knight sent notice of the happy event to Locksley, requesting him at the same time to keep such a strict observation on the castle as might prevent the defenders from combining their force for a sudden sally, and recovering the outwork which they had lost. This the knight was chiefly desirous of avoiding, conscious that the men whom he led, being hasty and untrained volunteers, imperfectly armed and unaccustomed to discipline, must, upon any sudden attack, fight at great disadvantage with the veteran soldiers of the Norman knights, who were well provided with arms both defensive and offensive, and who, to match the zeal and high spirit of the besiegers, had all the confidence which arises from perfect discipline and the habitual use of weapons.

The knight employed the interval in causing to be constructed a sort of floating bridge, or long raft, by means of which he hoped to cross the moat in despite of the resistance of the enemy. This was a work of some time, which the leaders the less regretted, as it gave Ulrica leisure to execute her plan of diversion in their favor, whatever that might be.

When the raft was completed, the Black Knight addressed the besiegers: "It avails not waiting here longer, my friends. The

sun is descending to the west, and I have that upon my hands which will not permit me to tarry with you another day. Besides, it will be a marvel if the horsemen come not upon us from York, unless we speedily accomplish our purpose: Wherefore one of ye go to Locksley, and bid him commence a discharge of arrows on the opposite side of the castle, and move forward as if about to assault it; and you, true English hearts, stand by me, and be ready to thrust the raft endlong over the moat whenever the postern on our side is thrown open. Follow me boldly across, and aid me to burst yon sallyport in the main wall of the castle. As many of you as like not this service, or are but ill armed to meet it, do you man the top of the outwork, draw your bowstrings to your ears, and mind you quell with your shot whatever shall appear to man the rampart. — Noble Cedric, wilt thou take the direction of those which remain?"

"Not so, by the soul of Hereward!" said the Saxon, "lead I cannot; but may posterity curse me in my grave if I follow not with the foremost wherever thou shalt point the way. The quarrel is mine, and well it becomes me to be in the van of the battle."

"Yet, bethink thee, noble Saxon," said the knight, "thou hast neither hauberk nor corselet, nor aught but that light helmet, target, and sword."

"The better," answered Cedric: "I shall be the lighter to climb these walls. And — forgive the boast, Sir Knight — thou shalt this day see the naked breast of a Saxon as boldly presented to the battle as ever ye beheld the steel corselet of a Norman."

"In the name of God, then," said the knight, "fling open the door, and launch the floating bridge."

The portal, which led from the inner wall of the barbican to the moat, and which corresponded with a sallyport in the main wall of the castle, was now suddenly opened; the temporary bridge was then thrust forward, and soon flashed in the waters, extending its length between the castle and outwork, and forming a slippery and precarious passage for two men abreast to cross

the moat. Well aware of the importance of taking the foe by surprise, the Black Knight, closely followed by Cedric, threw himself upon the bridge, and reached the opposite side. Here he began to thunder with his ax upon the gate of the castle, protected in part, from the shot and stones cast by the defenders, by the ruins of the former drawbridge, which the Templar had demolished in his retreat from the barbican, leaving the counterpoise¹ still attached to the upper part of the portal. The followers of the knight had no such shelter. Two were instantly shot with crossbow bolts, and two more fell into the moat: the others retreated back into the barbican.

The situation of Cedric and of the Black Knight was now truly dangerous, and would have been still more so but for the constancy of the archers in the barbican, who ceased not to shower their arrows upon the battlements, distracting the attention of those by whom they were manned, and thus affording a respite to their two chiefs from the storm of missiles which must otherwise have overwhelmed them. But their situation was eminently perilous, and was becoming more so with every moment.

"Shame on ye all!" cried De Bracy to the soldiers around him. "Do ye call yourselves crossbow-men, and let these two dogs keep their station under the walls of the castle? Heave over the coping stones from the battlement, an better may not be. Get pickax and levers, and down with that huge pinnacle!" pointing to a heavy piece of stone carved work that projected from the parapet.

At this moment the besiegers caught sight of the red flag upon the angle of the tower which Ulrica had described to Cedric. The good yeoman Locksley was the first who was aware of it, as he was hasting to the outwork, impatient to see the progress of the assault.

"St. George!" he cried, "merry St. George for England! To the charge, bold yeomen! Why leave ye the good knight and noble Cedric to storm the pass alone? Make in,² mad

¹ Weight for raising a drawbridge.

² Rush in.

priest! show thou canst fight for thy rosary!—Make in, brave yeomen!—The castle is ours, we have friends within. See yonder flag, it is the appointed signal. Torquilstone is ours! Think of honor, think of spoil! One effort, and the place is ours!"

With that he bent his good bow, and sent a shaft right through the breast of one of the men-at-arms, who, under De Bracy's direction, was loosening a fragment from one of the battlements to precipitate on the heads of Cedric and the Black Knight. A second soldier caught from the hands of the dying man the iron crow, with which he heaved at and had loosened the stone pinnacle, when, receiving an arrow through his headpiece, he dropped from the battlements into the moat a dead man. The men-at-arms were daunted, for no armor seemed proof against the shot of this tremendous archer.

"Do you give ground, base knaves!" said De Bracy. "*Mount joye Saint Denis!*¹ Give me the lever."

And, snatching it up, he again assailed the loosened pinnacle, which was of weight enough, if thrown down, not only to have destroyed the remnant of the drawbridge, which sheltered the two foremost assailants, but also to have sunk the rude float of planks over which they had crossed. All saw the danger, and the boldest, even the stout friar himself, avoided setting foot on the raft. Thrice did Locksley bend his shaft against De Bracy, and thrice did his arrow bound back from the knight's armor of proof.

"Curse on thy Spanish steel coat!" said Locksley. "Had English smith forged it, these arrows had gone through, and as if it had been silk or sendal."² He then began to call out, "Comrades, friends, noble Cedric! bear back and let the ruin fall."

His warning voice was unheard, for the din which the knight

¹ The war-cry of French soldiers. According to tradition, the place where St. Denis suffered martyrdom was a height in Paris termed Mont-joie.

² Greek, *sendon* ("a fine cloth"); a kind of thin silk.

himself occasioned by his strokes upon the postern would have drowned twenty war-trumpets. The faithful Gurth indeed sprung forward on the planked bridge to warn Cedric of his impending fate, or to share it with him. But his warning would have come too late. The massive pinnacle already tottered; and De Bracy, who still heaved at his task, would have accomplished it, had not the voice of the Templar sounded close in his ear.

"All is lost, De Bracy! The castle burns!"

"Thou art mad to say so!" replied the knight.

"It is all in a light flame on the western side. I have striven in vain to extinguish it."

With the stern coolness which formed the basis of his character, Brian de Bois-Guilbert communicated this hideous intelligence, which was not so calmly received by his astonished comrade.

"Saints!" said De Bracy, "what is to be done? I vow to St. Nicholas of Limoges¹ a candlestick of pure gold!"

"Spare thy vow," said the Templar, "and mark me. Lead thy men down, as if to a sally. Throw the postern gate open. There are but two men who occupy the float: fling them into the moat, and push across to the barbican. I will charge from the main gate, and attack the barbican on the outside; and if we can regain that post, be assured we shall defend ourselves until we are relieved, or at least till they grant us fair quarter."

"It is well thought upon," said De Bracy. "I will play my part.—Templar, thou wilt not fail me?"

"Hand and glove, I will not!" said Bois-Guilbert. "But haste thee, in the name of God!"

De Bracy hastily drew his men together, and rushed down to the postern gate, which he caused instantly to be thrown open. But scarce was this done, ere the portentous strength of the Black Knight forced his way inward in despite of De Bracy and his followers. Two of the foremost instantly fell, and the rest gave way notwithstanding all their leader's efforts to stop them.

¹ A city of France, in the department of Haute-Vienne.

"Dogs!" said De Bracy, "will you let *two* men win our only pass for safety?"

"He is the Devil!" said a veteran man-at-arms, bearing back from the blows of their sable antagonist.

"And if he be the Devil," replied De Bracy, "would you fly from him into the mouth of hell?—The castle burns behind us, villains! Let despair give you courage, or let me forward! I will cope with this champion myself."

And well and chivalrous did De Bracy that day maintain the fame he had acquired in the civil wars of that dreadful period. The vaulted passages to which the postern gave entrance, and in which these two redoubted champions were now fighting hand to hand, rung with the furious blows which they dealt each other,—De Bracy with his sword, the Black Knight with his ponderous ax. At length the Norman received a blow which, though its force was partly parried by his shield,—for otherwise never more would De Bracy have again moved limb,—descended yet with such violence on his crest, that he measured his length on the paved floor.

"Yield ye, De Bracy," said the Black Champion, stooping over him, and holding against the bars of his helmet the fatal poniard with which the knights dispatched their enemies (and which was called the dagger of mercy)—"yield thee, Maurice de Bracy, rescue or no rescue, or thou art but a dead man."

"I will not yield," replied De Bracy faintly, "to an unknown conqueror. Tell me thy name, or work thy pleasure on me. It shall never be said that Maurice de Bracy was prisoner to a nameless churl."

The Black Knight whispered something into the ear of the vanquished.

"I yield me to be true prisoner, rescue or no rescue," answered the Norman, exchanging his tone of stern and determined obstinacy for one of deep though sullen submission.

"Go to the barbican," said the victor in a tone of authority, "and there wait my further orders."

"Yet first let me say," said De Bracy, "what it imports thee to know: Wilfred of Ivanhoe is wounded and a prisoner, and will perish in the burning castle without present help."

"Wilfred of Ivanhoe!" exclaimed the Black Knight. "Prisoner, and perish! The life of every man in the castle shall answer it if a hair of his head be singed. Show me his chamber!"

"Ascend yonder winding stair," said De Bracy. "It leads to his apartment. Wilt thou accept my guidance?" he added in a submissive voice.

"No. To the barbican, and there wait my orders. I trust thee not, De Bracy."

During this combat and the brief conversation which ensued, Cedric, at the head of a body of men, among whom the friar was conspicuous, had pushed across the bridge, as soon as they saw the postern open, and drove back the dispirited and despairing followers of De Bracy, of whom some asked quarter, some offered vain resistance, and the greater part fled towards the courtyard. De Bracy himself arose from the ground and cast a sorrowful glance after his conqueror. "He trusts me not," he repeated; "but have I deserved his trust?" He then lifted his sword from the floor, took off his helmet in token of submission, and, going to the barbican, gave up his sword to Locksley, whom he met by the way.

As the fire augmented, symptoms of it became soon apparent in the chamber where Ivanhoe was watched and tended by the Jewess Rebecca. He had been awakened from his brief slumber by the noise of the battle; and his attendant, who had, at his anxious desire, again placed herself at the window to watch and report to him the fate of the attack, was for some time prevented from observing either by the increase of the smouldering and stifling vapor. At length the volumes of smoke which rolled into the apartment, the cries for water, which were heard even above the din of the battle, made them sensible of the progress of this new danger.

"The castle burns!" said Rebecca. "It burns! What can we do to save ourselves?"

"Fly, Rebecca, and save thine own life!" said Ivanhoe, "for no human aid can avail me."

"I will not fly," answered Rebecca. "We will be saved or perish together. And yet, great God! My father, my father! What will be his fate?"

At this moment the door of the apartment flew open, and the Templar presented himself,—a ghastly figure, for his gilded armor was broken and bloody, and the plume was partly shorn away, partly burnt from his casque. "I have found thee," said he to Rebecca. "Thou shalt prove I will keep my word to share weal and woe with thee. There is but one path to safety: I have cut my way through fifty dangers to point it to thee. Up, and instantly follow me!"

"Alone," answered Rebecca, "I will not follow thee. If thou hast but a touch of human charity in thee, if thy heart be not as hard as thy breastplate, save my aged father, save this wounded knight!"

"A knight," answered the Templar with his characteristic calmness—"a knight, Rebecca, must encounter his fate, whether it meet him in the shape of sword or flame; and who reck¹ how or where a Jew meets with his?"

"Savage warrior," said Rebecca, "rather will I perish in the flames than accept safety from thee!"

"Thou shalt not choose, Rebecca. Once didst thou foil me, but never mortal did so twice."

So saying, he seized on the terrified maiden, who filled the air with her shrieks, and bore her out of the room in his arms in spite of her cries, and without regarding the menaces and defiance which Ivanhoe thundered against him. "Hound of the Temple,—stain to thine order,—set free the damsel! Traitor of Bois-Guilbert, it is Ivanhoe commands thee! Villain, I will have thy heart's blood!"

¹ Cares.

"I had not found thee, Wilfred," said the Black Knight, who at that instant entered the apartment, "but for thy shouts."

"If thou be'st true knight," said Wilfred, "think not of me: pursue yon robber, save the Lady Rowena, look to the noble Cedric!"

"In their turn," answered he of the fetterlock; "but thine is first."

And seizing upon Ivanhoe, he bore him off with as much ease as the Templar had carried off Rebecca, rushed with him to the postern, and, having there delivered his burden to the care of two yeomen, he again entered the castle to assist in the rescue of the other prisoners.

One turret was now in bright flames, which flashed out furiously from window and shot-hole, but in other parts the great thickness of the walls and the vaulted roofs of apartments resisted the progress of the flames; and there the rage of man still triumphed, as the scarce more dreadful element held mastery elsewhere, for the besiegers pursued the defenders of the castle from chamber to chamber, and satiated in their blood the vengeance which had long animated them against the soldiers of the tyrant Front-de-Bœuf. Most of the garrison resisted to the uttermost; few of them asked quarter, none received it. The air was filled with groans and clashing of arms. The floors were slippery with the blood of despairing and expiring wretches.

Through this scene of confusion, Cedric rushed in quest of Rowena; while the faithful Gurth, following him closely through the *mêlée*, neglected his own safety, while he strove to avert the blows that were aimed at his master. The noble Saxon was so fortunate as to reach his ward's apartment just as she had abandoned all hope of safety, and, with a crucifix clasped in agony to her bosom, sat in expectation of instant death. He committed her to the charge of Gurth, to be conducted in safety to the barbican, the road to which was now cleared of the enemy, and not yet interrupted by the flames. This accomplished, the loyal Cedric hastened in quest of his friend Athelstane, deter-

mined, at every risk to himself, to save that last scion of Saxon royalty; but, ere Cedric penetrated as far as the old hall in which he had himself been a prisoner, the inventive genius of Wamba had procured liberation for himself and his companion in adversity.

When the noise of the conflict announced that it was at the hottest, the Jester began to shout with the utmost power of his lungs, "St. George and the Dragon! Bonny St. George for merry England! The castle is won!" And these sounds he rendered yet more fearful by banging against each other two or three pieces of rusty armor which lay scattered around the hall.

A guard, which had been stationed at the outer or ante room, and whose spirits were already in a state of alarm, took fright at Wamba's clamor, and, leaving the door open behind them, ran to tell the Templar that foemen had entered the old hall. Meantime the prisoners found no difficulty in making their escape into the anteroom, and from thence into the court of the castle, which was now the last scene of contest. Here sat the fierce Templar mounted on horseback, surrounded by several of the garrison both on horse and foot, who had united their strength to that of this renowned leader, in order to secure the last chance of safety and retreat which remained to them. The drawbridge had been lowered by his orders, but the passage was beset; for the archers, who had hitherto only annoyed the castle on that side by their missiles, no sooner saw the flames breaking out, and the bridge lowered, than they thronged to the entrance, as well to prevent the escape of the garrison as to secure their own share of booty ere the castle should be burned down. On the other hand, a party of the besiegers who had entered by the postern were now issuing out into the courtyard, and attacking with fury the remnant of the defenders, who were thus assaulted on both sides at once.

Animated, however, by despair, and supported by the example of their indomitable leader, the remaining soldiers of the castle fought with the utmost valor, and, being well armed, succeeded more than once in driving back the assailants, though much inferior in numbers. Rebecca, placed on horseback before one of

the Templar's Saracen slaves, was in the midst of the little party; and Bois-Guilbert, notwithstanding the confusion of the bloody fray, showed every attention to her safety. Repeatedly he was by her side, and, neglecting his own defense, held before her the fence of his triangular steel-plated shield; and, anon starting from his position by her, he cried his war-cry, dashed forward, struck to earth the most forward of the assailants, and was on the same instant once more at her bridle rein.

Athelstane, who, as the reader knows, was slothful but not cowardly, beheld the female form whom the Templar protected thus sedulously, and doubted not that it was Rowena whom the knight was carrying off, in spite of all resistance which could be offered.

"By the soul of St. Edward,"¹ he said, "I will rescue her from yonder over-proud knight, and he shall die by my hand!"

"Think what you do!" cried Wamba. "The hasty hand catches frog for fish. By my bauble, yonder is none of my Lady Rowena. See but her long, dark locks! Nay, an ye will not know black from white, ye may be leader, but I will be no follower. No bones of mine shall be broken, unless I know for whom. And you without armor, too! Bethink you, silk bonnet never kept out steel blade. Nay, then, if willful will to water, willful must drench."² *Deus vobiscum*, most doughty Athelstane!" he concluded, loosening the hold which he had hitherto kept upon the Saxon's tunic.

To snatch a mace from the pavement, on which it lay beside one whose dying grasp had just relinquished it; to rush on the Templar's band, and to strike in quick succession to the right and left, leveling a warrior at each blow,—was for Athelstane's great strength, now animated with unusual fury, but the work of a single moment. He was soon within two yards of Bois-Guilbert, whom he defied in his loudest tone.

¹ See Note 1, p. 186.

² "If willful will," etc., i.e., if willful will go to the water, willful must drink.

"Turn, false-hearted Templar! Let go her whom thou art unworthy to touch! Turn, limb of a band of murdering and hypocritical robbers!"

"Dog!" said the Templar, grinding his teeth, "I will teach thee to blaspheme the holy Order of the Temple of Zion!" and with these words, half-wheeling his steed, he made a demi-courbette¹ towards the Saxon, and rising in his stirrups, so as to take full advantage of the descent of the horse, he discharged a fearful blow upon the head of Athelstane.

Well said Wamba that silken bonnet keeps out no steel blade. So trenchant² was the Templar's weapon, that it shored asunder, as it had been a willow twig, the tough and plaited handle of the mace which the ill-fated Saxon reared to parry the blow, and, descending on his head, leveled him with the earth.

"Ha! *Beau-seant!*" exclaimed Bois-Guilbert, "thus be it to the maligners of the Temple knights!" Taking advantage of the dismay which was spread by the fall of Athelstane, and calling aloud, "Those who would save themselves, follow me!" he pushed across the drawbridge, dispersing the archers who would have intercepted them. He was followed by his Saracens and five or six men-at-arms, who had mounted their horses. The Templar's retreat was rendered perilous by the number of arrows shot off at him and his party; but this did not prevent him from galloping round to the barbican, of which, according to his previous plan, he supposed it possible De Bracy might have been in possession.

"De Bracy, De Bracy!" he shouted, "art thou there?"

"I am here," replied De Bracy, "but I am a prisoner."

"Can I rescue thee?" cried Bois-Guilbert.

"No," replied De Bracy: "I have rendered me, rescue or no rescue. I will be true prisoner. Save thyself — there are hawks abroad — put the seas betwixt you and England — I dare not say more."

"Well," answered the Templar, "an thou wilt tarry there, re-

¹ A half-leap.

² Sharp.

member I have redeemed word and glove. Be the hawks where they will, methinks the walls of the Preceptory¹ of Templestowe will be cover sufficient, and thither will I, like heron to her haunt."

Having thus spoken, he galloped off with his followers.

Those of the castle who had not gotten to horse still continued to fight desperately with the besiegers after the departure of the Templar, but rather in despair of quarter than that they entertained any hope of escape. The fire was spreading rapidly through all parts of the castle, when Ulrica, who had first kindled it, appeared on a turret in the guise of one of the ancient Furies, yelling forth a war-song, such as was of yore raised on the field of battle by the scalds² of the yet heathen Saxons. Her long, disheveled gray hair flew back from her uncovered head; the delight of gratified vengeance contended in her eyes with the fire of insanity; and she brandished the distaff she held in her hand as if she had been one of the fatal Sisters, who spin and abridge the thread of human life. Tradition has preserved some wild strophes of the barbarous hymn which she chanted wildly amid that scene of fire and of slaughter: —

I.

Whet the bright steel,
Sons of the White Dragon!
Kindle the torch,
Daughter of Hengist!
The steel glimmers not for the carving of the banquet.
It is hard, broad, and sharply pointed;
The torch goeth not to the bridal chamber,
It steams and glitters blue with sulphur.
Whet the steel, the raven croaks!
Light the torch, Zernebock is yelling!
Whet the steel, sons of the Dragon!
Kindle the torch, daughter of Hengist!

¹ See note, p. 351.

² Icelandic, *skald*. Scandinavian name for a poet, a bard. See Longfellow's Saga of King Olaf.

2.

The black cloud is low over the thane's castle,
 The eagle screams — he rides on its bosom.
 Scream not, gray rider of the sable cloud,
 Thy banquet is prepared!
 The maidens of Valhalla look forth,
 The race of Hengist will send them guests.
 Shake your black tresses, maidens of Valhalla,
 And strike your loud timbrels for joy!
 Many a haughty step bends to your halls,
 Many a helmed head.

3.

Dark sits the evening upon the thane's castle,
 The black clouds gather round;
 Soon shall they be red as the blood of the valiant!
 The destroyer of forests shall shake his red crest against them,
 He, the bright consumer of palaces,
 Broad waves he his blazing banner,
 Red, wide, and dusky,
 Over the strife of the valiant:
 His joy is in the clashing swords and broken bucklers!
 He loves to lick the hissing blood as it bursts warm from the
 wound!

4.

All must perish!
 The sword cleaveth the helmet;
 The strong armor is pierced by the lance;
 Fire devoureth the dwelling of princes,
 Engines break down the fences of the battle.
 All must perish!
 The race of Hengist is gone —
 The name of Horsa is no more!
 Shrink not then from your doom, sons of the sword!
 Let your blades drink blood like wine;
 Feast ye in the banquet of slaughter,
 By the light of the blazing halls!
 Strong be your swords while your blood is warm,

And spare neither for pity nor fear,
 For vengeance hath but an hour;
 Strong hate itself shall expire!
 I also must perish.¹

The towering flames had now surmounted every obstruction, and rose to the evening skies one huge and burning beacon, seen far and wide through the adjacent country. Tower after tower crashed down, with blazing roof and rafter, and the combatants were driven from the courtyard. The vanquished, of whom very few remained, scattered, and escaped into the neighboring wood. The victors, assembling in large bands, gazed with wonder, not unmixed with fear, upon the flames, in which their own ranks and arms glanced dusky red. The maniac figure of the Saxon Ulrica was for a long time visible on the lofty stand she had chosen, tossing her arms abroad with wild exultation, as if she reigned empress of the conflagration which she had raised. At length with a terrific crash the whole turret gave way, and she perished in the flames which had consumed her tyrant. An awful pause of horror silenced each murmur of the armed spectators, who for the space of several minutes stirred not a finger save to sign the cross.

The voice of Locksley was then heard, "Shout, yeomen! The den of tyrants is no more! Let each bring his spoil to our chosen place of rendezvous at the trysting-tree² in the Harthill

¹ These verses are intended to imitate the antique poetry of the scalds, the minstrels of the old Scandinavians, — the race, as Southey so happily terms them,

"Stern to inflict, and stubborn to endure,
 Who smiled in death."

The poetry of the Anglo-Saxons, after their civilization and conversion, was of a different and softer character; but in the circumstances of Ulrica, she may not be unnaturally supposed to return to the wild strains which animated her forefathers during the time of Paganism and untamed ferocity.

² A tree appointed as a place of meeting, hence also a place where confidences were exchanged.

Walk; for there at break of day we will make just partition among our own bands, together with our worthy allies in this great deed of vengeance."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE daylight had dawned upon the glades of the oak forest. The green boughs glittered with all their pearls of dew. The hind led her fawn from the covert of high fern to the more open walks of the greenwood; and no huntsman was there to watch or intercept the stately hart, as he paced at the head of the antlered herd.

The outlaws were all assembled around the trysting-tree in the Harthill Walk, where they had spent the night in refreshing themselves after the fatigues of the siege, some with wine, some with slumber, many with hearing and recounting the events of the day, and computing the heaps of plunder which their success had placed at the disposal of their chief.

The spoils were indeed very large; for, notwithstanding that much was consumed, a great deal of plate, rich armor, and splendid clothing, had been secured by the exertions of the dauntless outlaws, who could be appalled by no danger when such rewards were in view. Yet so strict were the laws of their society, that no one ventured to appropriate any part of the booty, which was brought into one common mass to be at the disposal of their leader.

The place of rendezvous was an aged oak; not, however, the same to which Locksley had conducted Gurth and Wamba in the earlier part of the story, but one which was the center of a silvan amphitheater, within half a mile of the demolished castle of Torquilstone. Here Locksley assumed his seat,—a throne of turf erected under the twisted branches of the huge oak,—and the silvan followers were gathered around him. He assigned to the Black Knight a seat at his right hand, and to Cedric a place upon his left.

"Pardon my freedom, noble sirs," he said, "but in these glades I am monarch, they are my kingdom; and these my wild subjects would reck but little of my power, were I, within my own dominions, to yield place to mortal man. Now, sirs, who hath seen our chaplain? Where is our curtal friar?¹ A mass amongst Christian men best begins a busy morning." No one had seen the Clerk of Copmanhurst. "Over gods forebode!" said the outlaw chief. "Who saw him since the castle was ta'en?"

"I," quoth the miller, "marked him busy about the door of a cellar."

"Now, the saints, as many as there be of them," said the captain, "forfend,² lest he has perished by the fall of the castle!—Away, miller! take with you enow³ of men, seek the place where you last saw him, throw water from the moat on the scorching ruins. I will have them removed stone by stone ere I lose my curtal friar."

The numbers who hastened to execute this duty, considering that an interesting division of spoil was about to take place, showed how much the troop had at heart the safety of their spiritual father.

"Meanwhile let us proceed," said Locksley; "for when this bold deed shall be sounded abroad, the bands of De Bracy, of Malvoisin, and other allies of Front-de-Bœuf, will be in motion against us, and it were well for our safety that we retreat from the vicinity.—Noble Cedric," he said, turning to the Saxon, "that spoil is divided into two portions. Do thou make choice of that best suits thee, to recompense thy people who were partakers with us in this adventure."

"Good yeoman," said Cedric, "my heart is oppressed with sadness. The noble Athelstane of Coningsburgh is no more,—the last sprout of the sainted confessor. Hopes have perished with him which can never return. A sparkle⁴ hath been quenched

¹ A friar who acted as gate-keeper of a monastery.

² Fend off; forbid.

³ Enough.

⁴ Spark.