

“lion-hearted.” We shall not trust ourselves to narrate this crowning horror of the siege of Acre, in any other words than in those of the chronicler, Geoffrey de Vinsauf, who was himself a crusader. Saladin had delayed to restore the cross, within the time agreed; and he had asked further time. “When it became clearly evident to king Richard that a longer period had elapsed than had been fixed, and that Saladin was obdurate, and would not give himself trouble to ransom the hostages, he called together a council of the chiefs of the people, by whom it was resolved that the hostages should all be hanged, except a few nobles of the higher class, who might ransom themselves, or be exchanged for some Christian captives. King Richard, aspiring to destroy the Turks root and branch, and to punish their wanton arrogance, as well as to abolish the law of Mahomet, and to vindicate the Christian religion, on the Friday after the Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary, ordered 2700 of the Turkish hostages to be led forth from the city and hanged; his soldiers marched forward with delight to fulfil his commands, and to retaliate, with the assent of the Divine Grace, by taking revenge upon those who had destroyed so many of the Christians with missiles from bows and arbalasts.”

In the guilt of Richard, the duke of Burgundy participated, by massacring the prisoners which had been taken under the banner of France. Saladin retaliated by the decapitation of his Christian prisoners. After this mutual slaughter, Richard led his army, now reduced to thirty thousand men, by the line of the coast to Jaffa. They marched, as in the time of king Stephen, with a high standard on a waggon. Pack-horses and loaded wains went slowly on by this difficult path on the side of the sea; and the Saracens, who hovered round their march, often attacked the troops and plundered the baggage. The Crusaders were moving on amidst sacred localities, and Capernaum and Cæsarea were familiar names, at least to the priests who marched with them. At night-fall, before the soldiers lay down to rest, a voice was heard in the middle of the camp, crying, “Help! help! for the holy sepulchre!” Then the whole army took up the words; and the herald again and again repeated them, and the men again and again cried, “Help! help! for the holy sepulchre!” During the night they were stung by venomous reptiles; and when again on their march, the troops of the indefatigable Saladin hovered around them—Turks and Bedouins—darkening the air with their showers of arrows. “The strength of all paganism,” says Vinsauf, “had gathered together from Damascus to Persia, from the Mediterranean to the East.”

CHAPTER XXII.

Victory of Richard over Saladin.—News from England.—Deposition of the Chancellor Longchamp.—Folk-mote in London.—Assassination of the Marquis of Montferrat.—Last Campaign for the Recovery of Jerusalem.—Richard retreats.—Battle of Jaffa.—Truce; and Death of Saladin.—Captivity of Richard.—Prince John's Proceedings in England.—Release of the King.—Condition of the English People.—William Fitz-Osbert.—Oppression of the Poor by the Civic Authorities of London.—The Cities and Great Towns.—The Outlaws of the Forests.—The Troubadours and the Ballad-singers.—The Industrious Classes.—Sports.—Richard, the King, leaves England.—His Wars in Normandy.—Richard's last Fight.—His Death.

A MOST signal victory was obtained by Richard over Saladin, on the 7th of September, 1191, which is briefly described in a letter of the king to the abbot of Clairval: “Our vanguard having gone before and pitched their tents at Assur, Saladin with a mighty host of Saracens made an attack upon our rear-guard; on which, by the favouring grace of the Divine mercy, he was put to flight by only four battalions who faced about against him, and for a whole league was pursued in his flight by the entire troop of the Christians; in consequence of which, such a slaughter took place of the more noble Saracens whom Saladin had with him, namely, in the vicinity of Assur, on the vigil of the Nativity of Saint Mary the Virgin, being Saturday, that Saladin had experienced none like thereto on any one day in the preceding forty years * Vinsauf is rapturous in admiration of the prowess of “the king, the fierce, the extraordinary king,” who, on this day, “wherever he turned, brandishing his sword, carved a wide path for himself.” In pitched fight, or in sudden skirmish, Richard was always foremost.

The “Melech Ric,” as the Turks called him, was as rash as he was dauntless. He goes hawking, leaving the line of his march, with a small escort; falls asleep on the ground; and is only saved from captivity by one of his companions, with the true heart of a noble soldier, calling out, “I am the Melech,” and so surrendered himself. † Richard was constantly exhorted to be more careful; but says Vinsauf, “the king's nature still broke out.” Jaffa was reached,

* This letter is given by Coveden.

† Richard did common justice to his faithful follower, by redeeming him at the price of the ransom of ten noble Turks, before he left Palestine.

and its walls were rebuilt. Again the Christian host marched forward, in the hope of reaching Jerusalem. They had halted long at Jaffa. They were within thirty miles of the Holy City, and Richard was eager for advance. The Templars and Hospitallers, who knew the country, endeavoured to dissuade him from the perilous enterprise; for the armies of Saladin were in every pass of the mountains. But the king went on. The rains set in; provisions failed; sickness daily thinned the reduced ranks; the Christians lost heart. Richard had the prudence to return, retreating rapidly to Ascalon. This strong place had been dismantled by the Saracens, and the Crusaders found its walls and gates but a heap of stones. They vigorously applied themselves to the labour of rebuilding the fortress. "All engaged in the work—princes, nobles, knights, esquires, clerks, and laymen," says Vinsauf. Richard's strong arm and more influential purse, were always ready. But there was disunion and jealousy in the crusading ranks. Richard is indifferent to the anger of the duke of Austria, or the desertion of the duke of Burgundy. Saphadin, the brother of Saladin, has interviews with him; and Richard "girds with the belt of knighthood the son of Saphadin." The courtesies of chivalry are exchanged between Christian and Pagan. As warriors, Richard and Saladin have learnt to appreciate each other. But the wise unbeliever knows that all the courage and all the magnificence of the "Melech Ric" will fail him in the end; and that the Christian alliance is harmless, when set against his own concentrated power. The great leader of the crusade is even shaken in his determination to recover Jerusalem. In that spring of 1192 Richard is depressed and irresolute. The prior of Hereford has brought news from England.

The news which Richard receives is not of an exhilarating nature. He has some interest in England, although he was never but once in the country, and then stayed only four months. But it is a great treasure-house of money, and a great hive of men. His brother John is playing him false. He perambulated the kingdom courting popularity, as soon as Richard was fairly on his way to Palestine. His followers called him the king's heir. He had received homage for the royal castle of Lincoln. Richard had entrusted him with no authority; but had placed the government of the country in the hands of William de Longchamp, the chancellor, —who was also bishop of Ely,—in association with the bishop of Durham. Longchamp, a native of Beauvais, is represented under very

different aspects by two of his contemporaries. Hugh, bishop of Coventry, describes him as a grasping priest, who, "slighting the English nation on all occasions, attended by a troop of Franks and Flemings, moved pompously along, bearing a sneer in his nostrils, a grin in his features, derision in his eyes, and superciliousness on his brow." This prelate adds, that "Longchamp and his revellers had so exhausted the whole kingdom, that they did not leave a man his belt, a woman her necklace, a nobleman his ring, or anything of value even to a Jew." On the other hand, Peter of Blois describes Longchamp as "a man amiable, wise, generous, kind, and meek; bounteous and liberal to the highest degree."* There were evidently two parties in the kingdom, one of which clung to the chancellor, and the other to Prince John. At last, a solemn meeting was held in London, which is of more historical importance than the characters or actions of these ambitious rivals. At that meeting a sentence of removal and banishment was passed upon the chancellor; and his high powers of regent and justiciary, conferred upon him by the king, were revoked. "It was a remarkable assumption of power by that assembly, and the earliest authority for a leading principle of our constitution, the responsibility of ministers to parliament."† The most striking account of these proceedings is given by Richard of Devizes. On the 8th of October, 1191, Prince John had arrived in London at night, and was joyfully received by the citizens with lanterns and torches. On the 9th there was a great assembly of nobles and prelates in St. Paul's Church, at which Geoffrey, archbishop of York, whose landing in England had been resisted by the chancellor, preferred heavy complaints against him. Prince John warmly espoused the quarrel of his illegitimate brother; and the assembly finally deposed the chancellor, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." John was then elected chief justiciary of the whole kingdom. There was another meeting on the 10th, which offers a curious picture of the participation of a large body of the people in state deliberations: "The sun having now appeared, the earl (John), with his noble troop, withdrew to the open field which is without London, towards the east; the chancellor went thither also, but less early than his adversaries. The nobles took the centre, around whom was next a circle of citizens, and beyond

* The curious letters in which these conflicting descriptions occur are given by Hoveden.

† Hallam, "Middle Ages," vol. ii. p. 325.

an attentive populace, estimated at ten thousand men." There was much speaking. The chancellor was overthrown; and the citizens of London swore fealty to John, against all men, saving always their fealty to king Richard. This meeting of the great body of the citizens, in co-operation with the nobles and prelates who had assembled on the previous day in St. Paul's Church, was, we may believe, what before the conquest was called a folk-mote—a people-meeting. In the struggle between Henry III. and the barons, there was a great folk-mote at Paul's Cross; and that people-meeting is not spoken of as if it had been new to that time. The popular voice had, however feebly, contrived to make itself heard, from the Saxon days; and out of these rude beginnings arose, in gradual development, the perfect idea of a representative system of government, in which the body of the people should assert their rights to consideration, without the partialities of a mere privileged assembly, or the tumultuous impulses of an indiscriminate gathering of excited masses.

We leave Prince John to pursue his political triumph. There are some curious pictures of society in the bishop of Coventry's sarcastic narrative of the escape of William de Longchamp from the popular fury at Dover. The deposed chancellor, who it appears was lame, walked down from the heights of the castle to the beach disguised in a woman's green gown of inconvenient length, having some brown cloth in his hand, as if for sale, and carrying a measuring rod. He sits upon a rock on the shore, and a fisherman is rude to the supposed lady. A woman comes up, and asks the price of an ell of cloth, to which the unhappy chancellor can give no answer, for he understands not a word of English. Other women gather about him, and, having pulled off his hood, beheld a swarthy man, recently shaved. He is then rabbled, and dragged through the town, the men and women crying, "Come, let us stone this monster, who is a disgrace to either sex." Thrown into prison, the chancellor is at length liberated by an order from Prince John; takes ship; and lands in Flanders. From king Richard he demands redress; to whom he writes, that his brother John had taken possession of the kingdom, and would place the crown on his own head unless the king should return with all speed. The Pope espoused the cause of Longchamp; and John, having had offers of bribes from him, made efforts for his recal. But the papal bull and the ex-chancellor's purse were equally ineffectual; and the fallen man sat down in Normandy to wait for the time when Richard

should take thought of the people whom he had left to the misgovernment of faction, or the no-government of anarchy.

Richard, who, whatever were his faults, was too brave to resort to the cowardly guilt of conspiring to put to death one whom he disliked, had at this time his honour blackened by an imputation that he was concerned in the murder of Conrad, Marquis of Montferrat. The king of England had opposed his claim to the sovereignty of Jerusalem, and had supported Guy of Lusignan. Some of the fatal dissensions amongst the Christian leaders arose out of these rival ambitions. The marquis was at length chosen king of Jerusalem, Richard having abandoned his opposition. Shortly after, Conrad was murdered in the streets of Tyre. One of the two young men who had stabbed him confessed that they were sent to do this deed by the chief commonly known as The Old Man of the Mountain. The history of the sects called The Assassins,—from whose fanatical crimes the word Assassin has found a place in European languages,—would appear to belong to the wildest romance, if modern times had not exhibited something of the same character in the Thugs of India. These assassins had possession of many hill-forts in Syria; and from their colony of Mount Libanus went forth the secret ministers of the revenge or the avarice of their Scheik, to whom his followers vowed a blind obedience. From their earliest youth, the chosen instruments of this Scheik were trained to believe that his commands were those of a divinity; and that if they fell in the discharge of the duties assigned them, all the joys of paradise would be their reward. In every variety of disguise these missionaries of the dagger found their way to the courts of princes, in the East and in the West; and Christian and Mussulman equally dreaded the danger against which no vigilance could guard. Richard was accused of having bribed the Scheik to the murder of Conrad; and the Scheik, in two letters, vindicated the king from any participation in what the fanatic avowed as his just revenge for an injury sustained by one of his people: "He justly perished, by our will and command, by our satellites, for that act in which he transgressed against us, and which, when admonished, he had neglected to amend." These letters were produced in Richard's behalf, when he was solemnly accused as the instigator of the crime. He was also accused of having endeavoured to procure a similar murder of Philip of France, which is also denied in this evidence of the Scheik. The historian of the Assassins, Von Hammer, doubts the genuineness of these letters. But

the account given in them of the reasons for the murder of Conrad is, we agree, "the least objectionable, the most consonant to Eastern manners, and, as the most simple, the most unlikely to have been invented."*

The spring of 1192 had set in, "after the cold winter months, and King Richard began again to attack the Turks with indefatigable ardour." Thus Vinsauf begins his narrative of the last eastern campaign of Cœur de Lion. Single-handed he destroys innumerable Saracens. Single-handed, with his lance for a hunting-spear, he attacks and kills an enormous boar. The crusaders are marching a second time upon Jerusalem. Richard is disturbed in spirit about England; and the report goes through the armies that he is about to leave the scene of so many of his gallant exploits. But all the leaders agree to advance, with or without Richard. The king sits alone in his tent, in sullen meditation. His chaplain, William of Poitou, approaches him with tears; and, being commanded to speak, exhorts him to continue to be the chief in the great enterprise. "The king's heart," says Vinsauf, "was changed by this address;" and his herald proclaimed to the army "that the king would not depart from the Holy Land before Easter." They march on; but there is a long rest again in a valley, from whose surrounding hills Richard gazes upon Jerusalem. But he does not advance. He has become prudent, and will not take the responsibility of a hazardous attempt. Saladin, he says, "is aware of our precise strength, and that we are so distant from the sea-coast, that if the enemy were to come down with force from the mountains to the plain of Ramula, to watch the roads, and block up the passage, against those who convey our provisions, the consequence would be most disastrous."† The matter was now referred to twenty discreet men, who agreed that it was the most eligible plan to proceed direct to the siege of Babylon. The French were violently against this proposal. The army was put into good humour by the capture of an enormous caravan by Richard and a select band of his own soldiers, and of the French. This prize was not obtained without a severe battle. But the luxuries of the East were poured into the laps of the captors—gold and silver, silks, spices, robes, cushions, pavilions, sugar, wax; besides the most useful necessities of bread, meat and grain. Vinsauf records that four thou-

* Mackintosh, History, vol. i. p. 187. See the letters in "Secret Societies of the Middle Ages."

† Vinsauf.

sand seven hundred camels and dromedaries, besides mules out of number, were left by the slaughtered or fugitive Turks.

But, however Richard might be delighted with the battle and the spoil, the avowed objects of the crusade were advancing slowly. The people began to murmur. The "twenty discreet men" now said that the enterprise of besieging Jerusalem was become more difficult; for, except the stream of Siloah, not a drop of water fit for drink could be found within two miles of the city. To the indecision of Richard the French imputed these delays. Even seven hundred years ago, commanders who failed to satisfy the popular impatience had to bear those keen assaults of ridicule which are more easily borne now when they are universal. There were minstrels in the French camp; and, at the instance of the duke of Burgundy, men and women went about singing a scurrilous ballad against the king of England. "On this composition becoming current amongst the soldiers," says Vinsauf, "king Richard was much annoyed." But king Richard here acted with more real heroism than when he brought back the heads of a dozen Turks who had fallen in his way. "King Richard was much annoyed; but he thought that a similar effusion would be the best mode of revenging himself on the authors, and he had not much difficulty in composing it, as there were abundance of materials." He was grown wiser since he kicked the duke of Austria, when he refused to work on the walls of Ascalon. At last, Saladin, knowing the distracted state of the Christian councils, refused to agree to a truce; and Richard retreated in the direction of Jaffa, and thence proceeded to Acre, with a part of his forces. Saladin now assaulted Jaffa with petrarria and mangonel; and captured the town after a great slaughter. Richard was preparing to embark at Acre, when the news arrived of the siege of Jaffa. At the first words of messengers from the besieged, Richard determined to go to the relief of the Christians in the citadel. The French refused to be again under his command; but the Templars and Hospitallers, with soldiers of all nations, retraced their steps; and Richard embarked with many knights in his fleet of galleys, and arrived after some delay in the harbour of Jaffa. He found the citadel surrendered to the Turks. But the king, without waiting for the land forces, threw himself into the water, and with a small band of followers recovered the castle. He then boldly encamped outside the gates, having amongst his two thousand men only ten who were mounted. A great body of Turkish cavalry attacked this small force of bowmen and spear-

men. Their ranks were unbroken by the clouds of horse; for the spearmen fixed the butts of their lances in the sandy earth, and with the pointed shafts made a fence of steel against the light-armed Turks; whilst the archers discharged their arrows from the arbalasts. Richard and his ten knights scattered the Saracens wherever they rushed. The large-hearted courtesies of chivalry had extended to the Mussulman leaders, amongst the other refinements of the eastern races. Saphadin, the brother of Saladin, sent Richard during the fight two noble horses, requesting him to accept them. From the morning sun to the setting sun Richard had fought against great odds. That day's terrible toil was followed by fever. His true friend, Saphadin, was at hand, to arrange an armistice. A truce for three years was finally determined on; by which the pilgrims were to have free access to Jerusalem. Some of the Turkish chiefs proposed to take vengeance on the Christians who were in their power. Saladin preferred honour to revenge. The great Curdish soldier, the magnanimous and wise Saladin, died within six months of this truce. He had a higher notion of the duties of a sovereign than the Richard whose courage he admired. "Spill no blood," he said to his son, "for it will one day reach thy head. Preserve the hearts of thy subjects by loving care, for they are entrusted to thee by God."

Richard sailed from Acre on the 9th October. The Solitary ship in which he had embarked was detained a month by contrary winds before he reached Corfu. Here he hired three coasting-vessels to take him and twenty companions to Ragusa. They landed in the guise of pilgrims; but the lavishness of the king was so little in keeping with his assumed character, that his real rank was soon suspected. The impatient adventurer, with a single attendant, rode day and night, till he arrived in the neighbourhood of Vienna. He rested at a little village, whilst his companion went out to buy food. The person of this attendant was known to one who had been with the duke of Austria in Palestine; and this knowledge led to the captivity of Richard. Leopold of Austria had been scorned by Richard at Acre; and he was also brother-in-law to Isaac of Cyprus. His mean soul had the gratification of a cowardly revenge; and he sent Richard a prisoner to the castle of Tyernsteign. The terrible Richard was now in worse hands than those of Saracens. The duke of Austria sold his captive to the emperor of Germany, and the emperor was ready to sell him again to the highest bidder. He kept Richard safely chained in a castle

in the Tyrol. His imprisonment was made known to Europe by a letter from the emperor to the king of France. In England, the people were faithful to their captive king. Prince John was in open hostility to his brother. He surrendered to Philip some portions of the continental dominions of Richard, and did homage to him for the rest. He returned to England with a band of mercenaries, and proclaimed that the king had died in prison. But the prelates and barons were firm; and the schemes of John were overthrown. Philip invaded Normandy, but with very partial success. Longchamp, the deposed chancellor, was the first to make any active exertions for the deliverance of Richard; and he succeeded in bringing him before the diet of the empire at Hagenau. An investigation of the charges against the king took place; but he defended himself with such spirit, that his chains were struck off, and the amount of ransom was the only question in dispute. It was some months before a sufficient instalment of the amount required—a hundred thousand marks—could be raised by taxation in England; and even then the emperor negotiated with John for a bribe to detain his brother. The treaty was finally accomplished. When the king of France knew that this game of state-craft and treachery was at an end, he wrote to John, "Take care of yourself, for the devil is let loose." After a captivity which, Hoveden says, lasted one year, six weeks, and three days, the king of England was delivered to his mother Eleanor. He hastened on his way to Antwerp; and after a long delay in navigating the river, and by contrary winds, reached England for a short sojourn.

Richard had been absent more than four years from the land of which he was king. According to a letter of Pope Celestine to the prelates of England, "Richard, the illustrious king of the English, having assumed the cross, and prepared himself for avenging the injuries done to the Redeemer, has therein, like a prudent man, and one who fears the Lord, considered that the cares of governing his kingdom ought to be postponed to the performance of his duty, and has left the same under the Apostolic protection."* The duty of governing his subjects, being thus held by such high authority as a very inferior part of his office, it is not likely that Richard felt much compunction when he came back to an impoverished, discontented, and distracted people. The churches had been stripped of their sacred vessels; the traders had been taxed to the utmost extent of their small ability; the agriculturists had

* Hoveden.

sold their scanty stocks to gather the large amount required for the king's ransom. There is a curious piece of evidence of the impatience of some of the people of London, as it showed itself in the year when Richard was set free. It is connected with the story of William Fitz-Osbert, or William with the Long Beard; and is derived from the roll of the king's justiciars. William Fitz-Osbert, on the 21st of November, 1194, preferred an appeal before the justices at Westminster against Richard Fitz-Osbert, his brother, which appeal he supported by his own testimony. He made oath that, at a meeting held at the stone house of Richard Fitz-Osbert, a discussion arose concerning the aids granted to the king for his ransom, when Richard exclaimed, "In recompense for the money taken from me by the chancellor within the Tower of London, I would lay out forty marks to purchase a chain in which the king and his chancellor might be hanged." Jordan, the tanner, and Robert Brand, heard this speech; and wished that the king might always remain where he then was,—meaning in prison; and they all exclaimed, "Come what will, in London we never will have any other king except our mayor, Henry Fitz-Ailwin, of London Stone." The story of William with the Long Beard has been told by historians without this preliminary incident, the knowledge of which we owe to one of the most judicious of antiquaries.* The causes of the insurrection which this William headed in 1196, and in which he lost his life, are rendered clearer by this curious illustration of popular feeling in 1194. Henry Fitz-Ailwin was the first mayor of London, the city, prior to 1189, having been governed by a portreeve, who was an officer of the crown. But the popular magistrate appears to have been as unjust in his exactions, as the chancellor whom Richard Fitz-Osbert and his friends desired to hang. Hoveden's account is very distinct of the oppressions which were exercised in the great trading city, governed by its own magistrates and guilds. "More frequently than usual, in consequence of the king's captivity and other incidents, aids of no small amount were imposed upon the citizens; and the rich men, sparing their own purses, wanted the poor to pay every thing." For this reason, William Fitz-Osbert, in 1196, "went over the sea to the king in Normandy, and demanded his protection for himself and the people." It was not of royal cupidity, but of civic corruption that he went to complain to king Richard. "He informed the king," says

* Sir F. Palgrave, in his official publication of the Rolls, from which we learn that the unbrotherly denunciation of Richard Fitz-Osbert by William was not successful.

our good old chronicler Holinshed, "of certain great oppressions and excessive outrages used by rich men against the poor (namely the worshipful of the city, the mayor and aldermen), who in their hustings, when any tallage was to be gathered, burthened the poor further than was thought reason, to ease themselves; whereupon the said William, being a seditious person, and of a busy nature, ceased not to make complaints." This very troublesome lawyer, for lawyer he was, "sharp of wit and somedeal lettered; a bold man of speech, and sad of countenance,"* was a type of many a bold man of speech, who from time to time, even to this day, has asserted the equal laws of justice against "rights and privileges." Such men are generally persecuted in their generation. William of the Long Beard had a hard fate, though fifty thousand of the "common people" stood at his back. He was seized in the church of Saint Mary Bow, of Cheap, and, being first stabbed, was then hanged. He was long revered as "a holy man and martyr." His quarrel with the civic functionaries might have been disregarded by the nobles and prelates as a mere quarrel amongst obscure burgesses, had not Fitz-Osbert gone across the sea to appeal to Richard. For this reason Hubert Fitz-Walter, archbishop of Canterbury, who was the king's justiciary, interfered with the free movements of "the common people," who were to be arrested wherever they were found outside the city; and accordingly some humble London merchants were seized at Mid Lent at the fair at Stamford.

We can only obtain such glimpses as this story of William of the Long Beard, affords, of the condition of the cities and great towns of England at this period. In all of the trading communities there were stringent regulations for buying and selling, enforced by the universal machinery of guilds. This organisation was as complete as that of the military system of feudality; and as the lord controlled his tenant and received his fealty, and the tenant commanded his socman, and the socman his serf, so the chief of a guild ruled over his company, and his company over their apprentices, and their apprentices over their servants. There was perpetual watchfulness and command in every branch of industry. No one could pursue a trade to which he had not been duly trained. No one could make an article except of a prescribed size and quality. No one could fix his own price upon what he

* Fabyan

made or sold. Such a system was adapted to the times into which it grew, and in which it continued, either for protection or oppression, for many centuries. That all these laws impeded production there can be no doubt. How far they promoted the welfare of the humblest classes, defending them against extortion, adulteration, and the other manifold evils and disgraces of modern trade, is a question not so easily determined. The story, however, of William Fitz Osbert shows that municipal rapacity may be as tyrannous as regal; and that there could be no real safety against injustice till the force of public opinion should hold all authority in its proper position of responsibility as well as power.

There is a curious, though exaggerated representation of the condition of the cities and towns of England, in the chronicle of Richard of Devizes. It occurs incidentally in a popular story of a Christian boy of France, who through the artifices of a French Jew is sent to Winchester, to be there offered as a sacrifice by the Jews. The story is altogether worthless; but the exhibition of manners has an historical interest. Go not to London, says the Jew. Every race of every nation abides there, and have there brought their vices. It is full of gamblers and panders, of braggadocios and flatterers, of buffoons and fortune-tellers, of extortioners and magicians. At Canterbury people die in open day in the streets for want of bread and employment. Rochester and Winchester, mere villages, are cities only in name. Oxford barely sustains its clerks. Exeter supports men and beasts with the same grain. Bath is buried in a low valley full of sulphury vapour. Worcester, Chester, and Hereford are infested by the desperate Welshmen. York abounds in rascally Scots. Ely is putrefied by the surrounding marshes. At Durham, Norwich, and Lincoln there are none who can speak French. At Bristol, every body is, or has been, a soap-maker, and every Frenchman esteems soap-makers as he does night-men. But Winchester is the best of all cities, and the people have only one fault—they tell lies like watchmen. All this belongs to the region of fiction; but, like many other of the products of that fertile empire, there are riches to be found amongst the rubbish. It is in legend and ballad, rather than in chronicle, that we must look for the traces of the remarkable condition of large numbers of men who frequented the royal forests of England as organised plunderers, defying the just legal enactments against robbers, as well as utterly disregarding the fearful punishment denounced against those who carried bows and

arrows in these forests, or "offended against the king relative to his venison."

Richard landed at Sandwich on the 12th of March, 1194. On the 28th of March, the castle of Nottingham, which was held by men at arms in the interest of John, surrendered to the king. He is now ready for a short holiday. "On the 29th day of March, Richard, king of England, went to see Clipstone and the forests of Sherwood, which he had never seen before, and they pleased him greatly; after which, on the same day, he returned to Nottingham."* Thierry intimates that it was something beyond the charm of woodland scenery that took Richard to Sherwood, in this early spring of 1194. The fame of the forest outlaws had, he imagines, presented an object of attraction to Richard's adventurous spirit. If the king of the crusades and the greenwood king had met, either as friends or foes, the chroniclers would not, in all likelihood, have been silent on the matter. The first distinct mention of Robin Hood is by Fordun, the Scottish historian, who wrote in the 14th century. He says, "Then arose among the disinherited the famous brigand Robert Hode, with his accomplices, whom the common people are so fond of celebrating in their games and stage-plays; and whose exploits, chanted by strolling ballad-singers, delight them above all things." Upon these ballads, adapting themselves, generation by generation, to the changes of language, rests the only historical evidence of the individuality of Robin Hood, beyond this mention by Fordun. A theory has been set up by some enthusiastic interpreters of song and legend, that Robin Hood, and Little John, and many a nameless outlaw, were great heroes who had been defeated, with Simon de Montfort, at the battle of Evesham in 1265. Others make Robin Hood to have been an Earl of Huntingdon. He is the Saxon yeoman, Locksley, of Sir Walter Scott. According to Thierry, the whole of the band that ranged the vast woodland districts of Derby, Nottingham, and Yorkshire, were the remnants of the old Saxon race, who had lived in this condition of defiance to Norman oppression, from the time of Hereford,—the same type of generous robbers and redressers of wrongs, as the famous Cumberland bandits, Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough, and William of Cloudesley. Without entering upon these controversial theories, we accept Robin Hood as a real personage. There may have been a succession of Robin Hoods, during the long term of Norman tyranny; but whoever he was, and in whatever reign he

* Hoveden.

lived, Robin Hood is the representative of the never-ending protest of the people against misrule,—a practical protest which set up a rude kind of democratic justice against the manifold atrocities of aristocratic tyranny. It was a contest, no doubt, of robber against robber; but the popular admiration of the hero of the forests was based upon a more enduring principle than the knightly admiration of the hero of the crusades. The ballad-singers have outlived the troubadours. The “blind harpers, or such-like tavern minstrels, that give a fit of mirth for a groat, their matters being for the most part stories of the old time, made purposely for the recreation of the common people,”*—these touched the largest sympathies of yeoman and labourer, even when recitals of heavy wrongs and terrible redress were “stories of the old time.” For they sang of one who took the goods of the rich baron to bestow them upon the lowly serf, and defied the horrible penalties of the forest laws, whilst he killed his venison in spite of earl and sheriff. The great body of the people were a suffering race long after the difference in suffering between Saxon and Norman had passed away. The Normans, indeed, brought into England a contempt for the labouring people, the serfs and villans (by whatever special name called), which did not exist in any such degree before the Conquest. The peasant was, under the Norman rulers, in every respect in bondage. His foreign master plundered him and held him in contempt. His foreign king taxed him by the most odious tallage, whenever a penny was put by after the necessities of life and the exactions of the lord were supplied. The humblest cabin and the coarsest fare were thought almost too good for the villan. “Why should villans eat beef or any dainty food?” asks one of the Norman jongleurs.† These charitable poets give us a pithy proverb:

“Il fait à Dieu honte
Qui villain haut monte.”

(He shames God who raises a villan.) Thus, the privations of the peasantry, and the insults, still harder to endure, went on amidst a smouldering hatred, till the great outbreak of the time of Richard II. In such compositions as the Robin Hood ballads, the detestation of the oppressors was long kept alive. How thoroughly artificial and extravagant are the lyrics and romances of chivalry

* Pottenham, “Art of English Poesie,” 1589.

† See an interesting Essay on the English Peasantry, by J. Wright, Esq., in “Archæologia,” vol. xxx. p. 238.

compared with these songs of the rustics! Of Richard the Crusader, the least extraordinary feat is that he tore out the heart of a hungry lion, which the emperor of Germany introduced into the royal prisoner’s dungeon. But when these minstrels record, not at all implying anything to Richard’s disadvantage, that he gaily supped upon the flesh of a young and fat Saracen, having a longing for pork which could not be gratified; and that he caused a Saracen’s head to be served up to the ambassadors of Saladin;—we feel how this “specimen of what crusaders were supposed capable of performing, although totally fabulous, shows the idea which the minstrels conceived of such a character, when carried to the highest and most laudable degree of perfection.”* On the other hand, having put aside the exaggerations of the Robin Hood ballads, we feel that we are in the natural regions of poetry, surrounded by adventures that might have been real, and by men that have human hearts in their bosoms, when we read the stories of “the gentlest thief that ever was.”† Fuller, who places Robin amongst his “Worthies,” says: “Know, reader, he is entered on our catalogue, not for his thievery, but for his gentleness.” In the most popular poetry of what we call the rude ages, the outlaw had the same attributes of bravery and generosity with which the character of Richard the lion-hearted has been invested; with out exhibiting those ferocious traits which belonged to the chivalric worship of mere brute courage and blind fanaticism. The popular notion of a hero is the more refined one, although Robin be merely “a good yeoman.”

“So curteyse an outlawe as he was one,
Was never none yfounde.”

In spite of the tyrannous laws which banded men together in the forests, and the oppressions which invested robbers with the character of redressers of wrong, the evils of society had some mitigations. The small agricultural tenants of the feudal lord; the socmen, who were allowed allotments for defined contributions of labour; and even the serfs, who were wholly dependent upon one master, without a choice of other service, these had some compensating circumstances, amidst a great deal of injustice, and a habit of life which we now regard as miserable. The duties of these, as well as of every other working member of the community, were in great measure defined. Industry was spared many of those evils of competition which are almost inseparable from the struggles of

* Sir Walter Scott, in “Edinburgh Review,” vol. vii. p. 405.

† Camden.

modern society. The capitalist was the Jew; but his mode of dealing suited only unthrifty abbots and plundering barons; for when the borrower came into the gripe of the Israelite, bond was heaped upon bond, so that we have a record how a debt of two hundred pounds became, with accumulated interest, eight hundred and eighty pounds in four years.* The yeoman and the burgess sold as fast as they produced, and turned the penny as soon as possible, without the desire or the ability to speculate upon the rise or fall of commodities. The military training of all classes gave a sort of distinction even to the race of villans, and kept them in healthful excitement. The universal feeling of devotion, and of obedience to one dominant church, lifted their minds out of the mere material cares of life. They were ignorant, in our sense of ignorance. Their religious observances carry with them an air of much that is ridiculous and debasing. But they were not debased by the undoubting earnestness with which they confided in their spiritual leaders. The distinctions of rank were so clearly defined, that no one aspired to belong to a station above him, or to affect to be what he was not. The peasantry had their holidays and rustic games, on which neither the lord nor the priest looked unkindly. The people of the towns had their in-door amusements, of which gambling was the most attractive to high and low. They had chess; but the rattle of the dice was far more seductive than the marshalling of bishop and knight. The passion of playing for money was so universal, that, in the crusade, in which all ranks of men were engaged, the kings of England and France made the most stringent regulations to keep gambling within limits. No man in the army was to play at any kind of game for money, with the exception of knights and the clergy; and no knight or elerk was to lose more than twenty shillings in any one day. The men-at-arms, and "other of the lower orders," as the record runs, who should be found playing of themselves—that is, without their masters looking on and permitting—were to be whipped; and, if mariners, were to be plunged into the sea on three successive mornings, "after the usage of sailors." These regulations were to prevent the quarrels which were the natural consequence of gambling, at this period and in most other periods when force stood in the place of argument. We find in an old record, that "John, son of King Henry, and Fulco Guarine fell at variance at chess; and John brake Fulco's head with the chess-board, and then Fulco

* See the "Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond."

gave him such a blow, that he had almost killed him."* In the smooth garden-lawns of the towns, and on the village green, the favourite game of the sixteenth century was known in the twelfth or thirteenth; for many "a marvellous good neighbour, in sooth, and a very good bowler" of the days of Elizabeth, practised the art as it was practised, with little variation, in the days of John. The rougher games of the people were a supplementary part of their military training. Wrestling was the national pastime, from London to the Land's End, from the West to the North. The sturdy yeomen wrestled for prizes—a ram or a bull, a red gold ring or a pipe of wine. One of the Robin Hood ballads says:—

"What man beareth him best, ywis,
The prize shall bear away."

The quarter-staff was the rustic weapon of the West; but the Tanner of Nottingham, whose "staff of oak was eight foot and a half," and Robin Hood, had a bout in Sherwood, long celebrated in song and picture. The sword-dance of the Saxons came down to their successors, and held its honoured place among popular sports long after the conquest. The acrobat, who went about to market and fair, was the genuine descendant of the Saxon gleeman, who made knives and balls circle through his hands as adroitly as the modern conjuror. The Anglo-Norman juggler balanced his wheel and his sword; and "the musical girls," whose attractions Richard of Devizes denounces, tumbled before knight and peasant, as the daughter of Herodias "tumbled before Herod." The bearward was not unknown in the towns with his monkey and his drum; and to the country revel came the taborer and the bagpiper, the dancers and the minstrel. The minstrel was the privileged wanderer. History says that Longchamp, the chancellor, was the chief instrument of the release of Richard from his dungeon in the Tyrol; but romance will not surrender to chancellor or bishop the fame of Blondel, who, searching about for his beloved master, "became acquainted with them of the castle, as minstrels do easily win acquaintance anywhere." The English minstrels, we may suppose, did not sing such refined verses as those of which Blondel sang one verse before Richard's prison window, and the king replied with the second verse. Chester fair, in the time of John, was a great resort of vagabonds; for by the charter of the city no one could be there apprehended for any theft or misdeed except it were committed in the fair.

* Quoted from Leland's "Collectanea," in Percy's "Essay on the Ancient Minstrels."

Ranulph, earl of Chester, was a prisoner in Rhuydland Castle; and Lord de Lacy, the Constable of Chester, by the help of "the minstrels of all sorts that met at Chester fair, by the allurements of their music got together a vast number of such loose people as, by reason of the before specified privilege, were then in that city." The minstrels and the loose people alarmed the warders of the Welsh castle, and released the earl. We have said enough to show that even in the Norman times of unequal government, the free spirit of the people broke forth in that mingled temper of frolic and kindness which has ever been their characteristic, and that, under the worst rulers, there was no very enduring time to be chronicled when this was not "Merry England."

Had Richard the king chosen to remain in the island after his return from Palestine, it is not impossible that his ardent nature might have taken a generous interest in the brave people, of whom so many had been his companions in danger and suffering. But Richard never saw England after this visit of two months. The record of his proceedings from the 12th of March to the 9th of May, 1194, as given by Hoveden, shows how this energetic Plantagenet employed himself in this limited visit. A fortnight of March is passed in the favourite occupation of fighting for the castles which were occupied by the creatures of his brother John. On the 31st he holds a great council at Nottingham, and disposes certain barons of fortresses and shrievalties, and puts them up for sale to the highest bidder. He calls, too, for a judgment against John, who is cited to appear within forty days, or forfeit all right to the kingdom; for he had broken his fealty to Richard, taken possession of his castles, wasted his lands, and made a treaty with his enemy the king of France. The judgment was given. At this council, a land-tax was decreed, and knight's service was demanded to enable Richard to carry an army to Normandy. At the beginning of April, Richard had a meeting with the king of the Scots. They had many discussions about their respective rights, and a charter was finally granted at Northampton, which did much for the dignity of the king of Scotland, though Richard again and again refused to grant him Northumberland, as was desired. On the 17th of April the king of England went through the ceremony of a second coronation. He was now looking to depart; but he first reconciled Geoffrey, the archbishop of York, with Longchamp, the chancellor. With his mother, Eleanor, he stayed at Portsmouth till the 30th, "which appeared to

him very tedious." On the 2nd of May he persisted in sailing in one of his long-ships, but the adverse wind had no compassion for his impatience. He was forced to return to the Isle of Wight, where he was weather-bound for nine days. The royal long-ship of the twelfth century, and the royal steam-yacht of the nineteenth, offer a striking contrast. At length he lands at Harfleur, and his warriors with their horses and arms arrive in a hundred large vessels. John falls on his knees before him, and obtains his pardon. The king of France was besieging Verneuil; but on hearing of Richard's approach leaves his troops. "The king of England being full of activity, and more swift than the discharge of a Balearic sling," hurries to do battle with his great suzerain, and pursues his retreating army with the edge of the sword. Richard is now in his proper line of business. In a few months he drives Philip of France out of Normandy, Touraine, and Maine. In England Hubert, the archbishop of Canterbury, is guardian of the realm, and his chief duty is to raise money for these wars. We shall not attempt to pursue the records of this sanguinary contest, which was continued for six years, with an occasional truce when each of the combatants was exhausted. The horrible cruelties that were inflicted upon prisoners, the desolation of the seat of war, the privations endured by the English people to meet the exactions of their rulers,—these are the consequences at which we must steadily look, instead of following the narratives of siege and skirmish, of towns burnt and churches plundered. The modes by which the lion-hearted king, through his ministers, raised money in England, appear to combine the attributes of the tyrant and the swindler. To order the great seal to be broken, and proclaim that no grant under that seal should be valid, unless the fees due to the crown were paid a second time for affixing the new seal, is an act which scarcely accords with the magnanimity which it has been somewhat the fashion to ascribe to this Plantagenet. The mean qualities of his brother John excite no surprise. In the characters of these two sons of Henry II. there were striking points of resemblance as well as of difference. The last scene of Richard's life is an epitome of his qualities. He perished, not fighting for a dukedom, but for a paltry treasure which one of his barons had discovered on his estate. The royal right to treasure so found was asserted by the king. The viscount of Limoges refused to surrender all the gold and silver, though he offered a large portion. Richard, accordingly, laid siege to the viscount's castle of Chaluz;

and would allow the garrison no conditional surrender. They asked for safety of life and limb; but the king "swore that he would take them by storm, and hang them all, and accordingly the knights and men-at-arms returned to the castle in sorrow and confusion, and prepared to make a defence."* Reconnoitring the fortress, Richard was wounded in the arm by an arrow, aimed by Bertrand de Gurdun. The castle being captured, the king ordered all the people to be hanged, one alone excepted—the youth who had wounded him. In those days of the rudest surgery, the barbed iron head of the arrow could not be extracted from the flesh, without the limb being cruelly mangled. For twelve days Richard suffered the agonies of his wound, and saw, at last, that death was approaching. He bequeathed the kingdom of England and all his other dominions to John; and ordered a fourth of his treasures to be distributed amongst his servants and the poor. Hoveden tells the rest of the dying scene:—"He then ordered Bertram de Gurdun, † who had wounded him, to come into his presence, and said to him, 'What harm have I done to you, that you have killed me.' On which he made answer, 'You slew my father and my two brothers with your own hand, and you intended now to kill me; therefore take any revenge on me that you may think fit, for I will readily endure the greatest torments you can devise, so long as you have met with your end, after having inflicted evils so many and so great upon the world.' On this the king ordered him to be released, and said, 'I forgive you my death.'" This part of the dying man's wish—this last effort of a nature not altogether cruel—was disregarded. Marchades, the chief of the hireling soldiers called Routiers, after Richard's death flayed the youth alive, and then hanged him.

* Hoveden.

† In an ancient anonymous account of Richard's death, it is stated that the king had forced his way into the inner court of the castle; but that one tower held out, in which were two knights, and thirty-eight men and women. According to this account, the knight who shot the arrow from the cross-bow was Peter de Basile.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Accession of John.—Arthur of Brittany.—War for the succession to England and the French provinces.—Peace with Philip of France.—Blanche of Castile.—Insurrection in Poitou against John.—Arthur taken prisoner.—His death.—The States of Brittany demand justice against John.—Total loss of Normandy and other provinces.—Pope Innocent III.—His quarrel with John.—England placed under an Interdict.—Ireland.—Wales.—London Bridge completed.—Consequences of the Interdict.—John excommunicated and deposed by the Pope.—Philip about to invade England.—John swears fealty to the Pope.—The barons resist John's demands.—Stephen Langton, the archbishop.—League of the Churchmen and Barons.—Runnymede.—Magna Charta.—Its provisions, and their effects upon the nation.

THE first Richard died on the 6th of April, 1199. The reign of John commences from Ascension-day, the 27th of May, when he was crowned at Westminster. In this interval of fifty days the future destiny of England remained uncertain. It was the will of a beneficent Providence that the island should be separated from France; and that the interests of her ruling classes being concentrated under one monarchy, the people should rapidly advance in the attainment of just government. The crimes and weaknesses of the new king were the chief instruments of this important revolution.

Had the crown of England descended by strict hereditary succession, Arthur, the son of Geoffrey, the third son of Henry II., would have been king in preference to John, the fifth son of Henry. But Arthur was a boy of twelve years; John was thirty-two. According to the speech of Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the coronation, the claims of Arthur were glanced at "as a more lawful descent of inheritance pretended by others." But to the assembled prelates and peers the Archbishop said, "You are come hither this day to choose you a king, and such a one as, if need shall require, may be able of himself to take such a charge upon him; and having undertaken the same, ready to execute that which he shall think to be expedient for the benefit of his subjects." Much controversy has arisen about the authenticity of this speech, as given in the chronicle of Roger of Wendover;* for it assumes the monarchy

* This Chronicle, which precedes that of Matthew Paris, was, until recently, assigned to that historian, who merely transcribed it.