

arraigning himself, as it were, before an imaginary tribunal, much more concerned about the justification of his acts than about their quality or consequences. His epitaph may be written by a variation of that witty one of Rochester on Charles the Second: "*Here lies our moderate man, who never did anything foolish, nor anything great.*"

From "*Lectures by a Certain Professor.*"

IV.

60. KING ROBERT OF SICILY.

ROBERT of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane
And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,
Appareled in magnificent attire,
With retinue of many a knight and squire,
On St. John's eve, at Vespers proudly sat,
And heard the priests chant the Magnificat.
And as he listened, o'er and o'er again,
Repeated, like a burden or refrain,
He caught the words, "*Deposuit potentes
De sede, et exaltavit humiles;*"
And slowly lifting up his kingly head,
He to a learnèd clerk beside him said,
"What mean these words?" The clerk made answer meet,
"He has put down the mighty from their seat,
And has exalted them of low degree."
Thereat King Robert muttered scornfully,
"Tis well that such seditious words are sung
Only by priests and in the Latin tongue;
For unto priests and people be it known,
There is no power can push me from my throne!"
And leaning back, he yawned and fell asleep,
Lulled by the chant monotonous and deep.

2. When he awoke, it was already night;
The church was empty, and there was no light,
Save where the lamps, that glimmered few and faint,
Lighted a little space before some saint.
He started from his seat and gazed around,
But saw no living thing and heard no sound.

He groped toward the door, but it was locked;
He cried aloud, and listened, and then knocked,
And uttered awful threatenings and complaints,
And imprecations upon men and saints.
The sounds re-echoed from the roof and walls
As if dead priests were laughing in their stalls.
At length the sexton, hearing from without
The tumult of the knocking and the shout,
And thinking thieves were in the house of prayer,
Came with his lantern, asking, "Who is there?"
Half choked with rage, King Robert fiercely said,
"Open: 'tis I, the king! Art thou afraid?"
The frightened sexton, muttering with a curse,
"This is some drunken vagabond, or worse!"
Turned the great key and flung the portal wide;
A man rushed by him at a single stride,
Haggard, half naked, without hat or cloak,
Who neither turned, nor looked at him, nor spoke,
But leaped into the blackness of the night,
And vanished like a spectre from his sight.

3. Robert of Sicily, brother of Pope Urbane
And Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,
Despoiled of his magnificent attire,
Bareheaded, breathless, and besprent with mire,
With sense of wrong, and outrage desperate,
Strode on, and thundered at the palace gate:
Rushed through the court-yard, thrusting in his rage
To right and left each seneschal¹ and page,
And hurried up the broad and sounding stair,
His white face ghastly in the torches' glare;
From hall to hall he passed with breathless speed.
Voices and cries he heard, but did not heed;
Until at last he reached the banquet-room,
Blazing with light and breathing with perfume.
4. There on the dais sat another king,
Wearing his robes, his crown, his signet-ring,

¹ Sen'eschal, an officer in the who has the superintendence of houses of princes and dignitaries, feasts and domestic ceremonies.

King Robert's self in feature, form, and height,
 But all transfigured with angelic light!
 It was an angel; and his presence there
 With a divine effulgence filled the air,
 An exaltation, piercing the disguise,
 Though none the hidden angel recognize.
 A moment speechless, motionless, amazed,
 The throneless monarch on the angel gazed,
 Who met his look of anger and surprise
 With the divine compassion of his eyes;
 Then said, "Who art thou? and why com'st thou here?"
 To which King Robert answered with a sneer,
 "I am the king, and come to claim my own
 From an impostor, who usurps my throne!"
 And suddenly, at these audacious words,
 Up sprang the angry guests and drew their swords.
 The angel answered, with unruffled brow,
 "Nay, not the king, but the king's jester, thou
 Henceforth shalt wear the bells and scalloped cape,
 And for thy counsellor shalt lead an ape;
 Thou shalt obey my servants when they call,
 And wait upon my henchmen in the hall!"

5. Deaf to King Robert's threats and cries and prayers,
 They thrust him from the hall and down the stairs;
 A group of tittering pages ran before,
 And as they opened wide the folding-door,
 His heart failed, for he heard, with great alarms,
 The boisterous laughter of the men-at-arms,
 And all the vaulted chamber roar and ring
 With the mock plaudits of "Long live the king!"
 Next morning, waking with the day's first beam,
 He said within himself, "It was a dream!"
 But the straw rustled as he turned his head,
 There were the cap and bells beside his bed,
 Around him rose the bare, discolored walls,
 Close by, the steeds were champing in their stalls,
 And in the corner, a revolting shape,
 Shivering and chattering, sat the wretched ape.



There on the dais sat another king,
 Wearing his robes, his crown, his signet-ring,
 King Robert's self in feature, form, and height,
 But all transfigured with angelic light!

It was no dream ; the world he loved so much
Had turned to dust and ashes at his touch !

6. Days came and went ; and now returned again
To Sicily the old Saturnian¹ reign ;
Under the angel's governance benign,
The happy island danced with corn and wine,
And deep within the mountain's burning breast
Ençel'adus,² the giant, was at rest.
Meanwhile King Robert yielded to his fate,
Sullen and silent and disconsolate.
Dressed in the motley garb that jesters wear,
With look bewildered and a vacant stare,
Close shaven above the ears, as mōnks are shōrn,
By courtiers mōcked, by pages lāughed to scorn,
His ōnly friend the ape, his ōnly fōōd
What others left—he still was unsubdued.
And when the angel met him on his way,
And hālf in earnest, half in jest, would say,
Sternly, though tenderly, that he might feel
The velvet scabbard held a swōrd of steel,
“ Art thou the king ? ” the passion of his woe
Burst from him in resistless overflow,
And, lifting high his forehead, he would fling
The haughty answer back, “ *I am, I am the king !* ”
7. Almost three years were ended ; when there came
Ambassadors of great repute and name
From Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine,
Unto King Robert, saying Pope Urbane
By letter summoned them forthwith to come
On Holy Thursday to his city of Rome.
The angel with great joy received his guests,
And gave them presents of embroidered vests,
And velvet mantles with rich ermine lined,
And rings and jewels of the rārest kind.

¹ Sa tur'ni an, pertaining to Saturn, a mythical character, whose mild and wise reign is known as “the golden age.”

² En cēl'a dūs, one of the giants who warred against Jove. Sicily was flung upon him, his motions causing the eruptions of Ætna.

Then he departed with them o'er the sea
 Into the lovely land of Italy,
 Whose loveliness was more resplendent made
 By the mere passing of that cavalcade,
 With plumes, and cloaks, and housings, and the stir
 Of jewelled bridle and of golden spur.

8. And lo ! among the mēnials in mock state,
 Upon a piebald steed, with shambling gait,
 His cloak of fox-tails flapping in the wind,
 The solemn ape demurely perched behind,
 King Robert rode, making huge merriment
 In all the country towns through which they went.
 The Pope received them with great pōmp and blare
 Of bannered trumpets on St. Peter's Square,
 Giving his benediction and embrace,
 Fervent and full of apostolic grace,
 While with congratulations and with prayers
 He entertained the angel unawares.
9. Robert, the jester, bŭrŭsting through the crowd,
 Into their presence rushed, and cried aloud,
*"I am the king ! Look, and behold in me
 Robert, your brother, King of Sicily !
 This man, who wears my semblance to your eyes,
 Is an impostor in a king's disguise.
 Do you not know me ? does no voice within
 Answer my cry and say we are akin ?"*
 The Pope in silence, but with troubled mien,
 Gazed at the angel's countenance serene ;
 The emperor, laughing, said, "It is strange sport
 To keep a madman for thy fool at court !"
 And the poor baffled jester in disgrace
 Was hustled back among the populace.
10. In solemn state the Holy Week went by,
 And Easter Sunday gleamed upon the sky ;
 The presence of the angel, with its light,
 Before the sun rose made the city bright,

- And with new fervor filled the hearts of men,
 Who felt that Christ indeed had risen again.
 Even the jester, on his bed of straw,
 With haggard eye the unwōnted splendor saw ;
 He felt within a power unfelt before,
 And kneeling humbly on his chamber floor,
 He heard the rushing garments of the Lord
 Sweep through the silent air, ascending heavenward.
11. And now the visit ending, and once more
 Valmond returning to the Danube's shore,
 Homeward the angel journeyed, and again
 The land was made resplendent with his train,
 Flashing along the towns of Italy,
 Unto Salerno, and from thence by sea,
 And when once more within Palermo's wall,
 And seated on the throne in his great hall
 He heard the Angelus from the convent towers,
 As if the better world conversed with ours,
 He beckoned to King Robert to draw nigher,
 And with a gesture bade the rest retire ;
 And when they were alone, the angel said,
 "Art thou the king ?" Then bowing down his head,
 King Robert crossed his hands upon his breast,
 And meekly answered him, "Thou knōwest best !
 My sins as scarlet are ; let me go hence,
 And in some cloister's school of penitence,
 Across those stones which pave the way to heaven,
 Walk barefoot, till my guilty soul be shriven !"
12. The angel smiled, and from his radiant face
 A holy light illumined all the place,
 And through the open window, loud and clear,
 They heard the monks chant in the chapel near,
 Above the stir and tumult of the street,
 "He has put down the mighty from their seat,
 And has exalted them of low degree !"
 And through the chant a second melody
 Rose like the throbbing of a single string,
 "I am an angel, and thou art the king !"

King Robert, who was standing near the throne,
Lifted his eyes, and lo! he was alone!
But all appareled as in days of old,
With ermined mantle and with cloth of gold;
And when his courtiers came, they found him there,
Kneeling upon the floor, absorbed in silent prayer.

LONGFELLOW.

SECTION XV.

I.

61. THE SIEGE OF PARIS.

PART FIRST.

LADY MARGARET was busy writing some good-by notes to friends in Paris one morning—it was Tuesday, and she was to leave on Thursday—when the door opened, and Burke announced “The Reverend Mr. Ringwood.” It was a welcome meeting on both sides. “Where have you come from, and where are you going?” was Lady Margaret’s enquiry, as soon as the glad surprise of the meeting was over.

2. “I have just returned from Rome, and was on my way to Switzerland, but my plans are suddenly changed. I am on the invalid list—the old trouble in my chest—and ordered to spend the winter out of England; my intention was to go to Paris on my return from the mountains, but I have determined now to attach myself to a regiment that is about to start for the north; I shall remain with it as long as my services are wanted, and when the war is over, I shall go south somewhere; unless,” he added, laughing, “a Prussian bullet sets me free before then.”

3. “And that is what you call coming abroad for your health?” He laughed. “The only thing I am under orders for is the climate; that is good everywhere, just in the seat of war.”—“But consider how the service will try your strength; think of the risk to your life,” said Lady Margaret. “What better can I do with them both than to lose them in such a

cause?”—“What! the cause of the French against the Germans? Are your political sympathies as strong as all that?”

4. “If I have any political bias, it is rather the other way. I was indignant with the French for going to war; and I quite expected—I will not say hoped—that they might get the worst of it at first: since the tide has set so overpoweringly against them, however, I have veered round to their side, though not to the extent of exalting them and vituperating the Germans. No; the cause that I am enlisting in is neither French nor German; it is the cause of souls: I am going to help the wounded and the dying; I hope to be of use to a good many.”

5. “But is there not a chaplain attached to every regiment?”—“Yes, but what is one among so many? On a field of battle there may be a hundred dying men, all in want of him; at such a time an extra priest is an immense mercy to the soldiers, and if I am only the means of saving one soul, if I come in time to absolve one poor dying sinner, that will be worth the risk ten times over.”

6. There was a quick ring of exultation in Mr. Ringwood’s voice as he uttered the last sentence, raising his hand with a sudden movement, and letting it drop quickly. Lady Margaret looked at him in puzzled admiration. They were a singular race, those Catholic priests; here was a refined, studious man, possessed of an independent income, quite sufficient to supply all his moderate wants and comforts, suddenly starting off, of his own accord, to expose his life, and in all probability ruin his health—for what? For the chance of giving absolution to a fellow-creature at his death-hour! What faith he must have in his own priestly power!

7. “How long do you remain in Paris?” inquired Lady Margaret. “Until my regiment starts; they are a band of raw recruits, mere boys some of them, who are hardly strong enough to handle their muskets. I have just been assisting at their drill; it is a very sad spectacle.”—“It is abominable! it is butchery! I am glad I am going!” said Lady Margaret, impetuously. “How did you find me out? at the embassy?”—“No; I never thought of inquiring; I did not know you were here: it was Crampton who told me. I met him at Galignani’s (gā lēn yā’nēz). You are one of his flock, are you not?”